bird photography
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Excellent bird photography is about knowing your subject—where it lives and how it interacts with its environment, how it finds a meal or a mate, and how it cares for its young.

This handbook is chock full of facts about birds and their behavior—the kind of knowledge that will help you get perfect bird photographs. You’ll learn—in the words of one of the featured photographers—when to anticipate a moment and when to chase one.

But beautiful images aren’t everything. Our images can also help scientists study wear patterns on feathers to understand the decline of the American kestrel pictured here, understand nesting behavior, train orinthologists, and save endangered species of all kinds.

First and foremost: observe, practice, and have fun.

© Jim Shane
Six Tips for Standout Bird Photographs

by Marie Read

Whether beautiful or bizarre, colorful or cryptic, exuberant or elusive, birds captivate us with their spirited ways and fascinating lifestyles.

It’s no wonder they top the list of favorite subjects for many nature photographers. That’s been true since the dawn of nature photography, even more so since the digital age brought getting great photos within reach of anyone with a camera. The result is a world saturated with gorgeous bird imagery. So, how do you create images that stand out from the crowd?

Once you’ve mastered the classic portrait, take your photos to the next level: make more meaningful images by showing the bird in its habitat or by capturing its behavior. Here are a few tips to help you.

Background Check!
It’s happened to all of us: you’re clicking away gleefully, enthralled by the gorgeous bird in your viewfinder. But when you play back the images, you realize you’ve somehow overlooked that annoying twig apparently growing out of its head! In a classic portrait nothing should draw attention away from the bird itself so be sure to check what’s behind and around it before you press the shutter button. The background need not be smooth and featureless but you definitely want to avoid distracting elements behind the bird’s head. Check for stray branches, bold horizon lines, or very bright or dark spots. Raise your tripod slightly up or down or move from side to side to change the juxtaposition of the elements in the frame. Alternatively, wait until the bird moves into cleaner surroundings or against a more distant backdrop. Or try attaching a teleconverter to the lens to throw distracting background elements out of focus.

Occasionally something that at first seems distracting...
can be worked into a composition. When I first composed the shot of a cedar waxwing (on the cover of this handbook), the bright spot behind the bird was on the left of the frame, competing with the subject. I nudged my tripod over a few inches to reposition the highlight directly behind the bird, giving a halo-like appearance.

**Include the Habitat for Story-telling Images**

Going beyond portraits, there are various ways to create more meaningful photos. One powerful strategy is to let the bird’s habitat be an important part of the image. Not only does this allow you to tell stories with your photos—telling the viewer where the bird lives and how it interacts with and is affected by its surroundings—but it also gives you more freedom to make compelling compositions.

In my favorite shot of a black oystercatcher (above), the bird takes up only a small part of the frame. It’s surrounded by the varied colors and textures of seaweed as it forages along the rocky intertidal zone of the Pacific Northwest, while the moving water hints at the incoming tide.

Pay attention to the composition for these bird-in-habitat shots. Avoid the boring bullseye look. The smaller the bird is in the frame, the more important it is to keep it out of the center of the composition. Instead, place the bird off-center (use the classic “rule of thirds” to guide you if you like) to create a dynamic composition that will keep the viewer interested.

**To Capture Behavior, First Understand Your Subject**

One of the best ways to improve your bird photography is to develop a deep understanding of birds. You need to know two types of information: species’ behavior and individual habits. The former includes the range of typical activities that all members of the species do and that you might want to capture, such as courtship displays (for instance, the red-breasted merganser’s “salute-curtsy” display shown below), nesting behaviors and feeding methods. You can glean this information from books and online resources such as *Birds of the World* (formerly Birds of North America Online).
Equally important are the day-to-day habits of the very individuals you plan to photograph. Get to know the locals by being a bird watcher as much as you are a bird photographer.

Notice repeated patterns of activity...where do the local birds feed, rest, or bathe? Which perches do they prefer? Do they have regular flight paths? Are they there only at certain times of day? From which direction is the best light? These things let you know where and when to position yourself (or set up a blind if need be) for the best opportunities.

Time spent in the field, observing individual birds closely and discovering their ways for yourself—even without a camera in your hand—has the added benefit of training you to notice birds’ subtle body language, something that can help you capture the decisive moment.

Anticipate Action by Reading Birds’ Body Language
Spend enough time with birds in the field and you’ll begin to recognize the subtle behavioral cues they give when something is about to happen. Perhaps the best known are pre-flight cues: postures that signal a bird intends to take wing. For instance, before taking off eagles, spoonbills, and herons crouch and may poop; swimming waterfowl (such as the cinnamon teal on page 4) sit up tall and flip their heads around agitatedly; cranes lean forward distinctively. Pay attention to these signals and be ready to fire off a burst of shots.

You can predict certain courtship behaviors too. Two Western or Clark’s grebes swimming toward each other with heads held low and giving shrill, raspy calls will shortly run in synchrony across the water in their “rushing” display. Duck courtship displays are difficult to predict and very brief, often taking just a second or two. Noticing the subtle cues preceding them is challenging. Mallard drakes may give subtle head shakes before displaying, while red-breasted mergansers, goldeneye, and ruddy ducks may simply hesitate briefly as they swim along, the only cue you’ll get! Recognizing such signals and having fast reflexes are the key to capturing the action.

Optimize Your Autofocus System
Birds are always on the move: preening, feeding, swimming, running around and, of course, flying. Even at rest they constantly make slight head movements to
keep a wary eye on their surroundings. And so it pays to take full advantage of your camera’s autofocus (AF) system. Let’s consider AF mode, AF area, and fine-tuning AF performance.

First, select the **AF mode** intended for moving subjects. This directs the camera to focus continuously as the subject-to-camera distance changes. Manufacturers’ terminology varies. Canon bodies call it AI Servo; Nikon and Sony call it AF-C.

Next, choose the **optimal AF area** for the situation. Distributed across your camera’s sensor field is an array of AF points, ranging in number from a dozen or fewer in entry-level cameras to hundreds in professional bodies. You can limit which AF points are active by manually selecting a single point or an area varying in size from a small cluster of points to a large zone. Alternatively you can let the camera choose automatically from all available points.

For that all-important tack sharp eye, the goal is to place the AF point over the bird’s face, but depending on how large the bird is in the frame and how fast it is moving, this is no trivial task! Let the camera help you. I tend to use a single AF point only for stationary subjects. For birds in flight or otherwise moving fast, an AF point cluster (Canon’s AF Point Expansion or Nikon’s Dynamic Area AF mode) is easier to keep over the subject. For fast erratic fliers such as nighthawks, small terns or swallows, or the barn swallow banking (on page 6), it’s hard enough to keep the bird in the frame, and a fully automatic option may work best (Canon’s Automatic AF Point Selection, Nikon’s Auto-Area AF or Group Area AF). Sony has taken AF a notch higher with its fast and accurate real-time Tracking AF—for moving birds I usually use Tracking Flexible Spot: Medium.

Finally, many cameras give you the option of **fine-tuning AF performance** to match the characteristics of subject movement. Consider, for instance, a great blue heron flying smoothly in a straight line versus the erratic stop/start action and sudden twists and turns of a foraging reddish egret. In Canon cameras, AF fine-tuning is done by means of the AF Configuration Tool, a drop-down menu offering several preset combinations of three parameters (Tracking sensitivity, Acceleration/deceleration tracking, and AF pt auto switching). For Nikon users it’s achieved via the Focus Tracking with Lock-on menu. Sony has five AF Tracking Sensitivity levels from Responsive to Locked-on. Other camera brands have similar settings. Read your user guide carefully to understand the effects of these adjustments.

**Take Risks!**

Digital technology has opened up a world of possibilities for bird photographers. For me it means the freedom and confidence to take photographic risks. Whether it’s creative use of shutter speed, lighting or composition, let yourself experiment. And when fast action happens, don’t hesitate—shoot. You might get something special like a red-winged blackbird (above) taking flight. If not there’s always the delete key!

Finally, practice, practice, practice. And above all, have fun!
How thrilling it is to photograph that defining moment when a great blue heron strikes the water and emerges with its prize of an unsuspecting fish! Even better is photographing a sequence of a great egret stalking its prey and then plunging head and neck into the water to seize the reward. Want something better than that? What about spending hours photographing a feeding frenzy of several species of wading birds? So many choices; it doesn't get any better or more exciting than that.

Understanding how each species of wading bird feeds will help you capture those amazing flashes of behavior. I mean flashes as they are quick, and before you blink your eyes, it's over.

Combine this knowledge with time in the field (referred to as experience) and a willingness to be patient, and the photographer becomes more successful recording that special "striking" moment.

Photographing wading birds as they feed is an excellent example of my mantra to my workshop students: Know when to anticipate a moment and when to chase one. When photographing wading birds as they feed, it's best to be skilled at both strategies.

We are fortunate in the U.S. to have many state wildlife areas and national wildlife refuges that are great for photographing wading birds. If you have access to a freshwater wetland, a tidal marsh or riverbank, you are going to have a wading bird of some sort to photograph. Two of my favorite locations near me are the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay region and the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge located along Virginia's eastern shore. Here are some feeding strategies of a few wading birds at these refuges:

**Snowy egret.** This little egret with the golden slippers chases its prey by jumping around and flying in short spurts before grabbing a fish. The snowy also stirs the muddy substrate with its gold-colored feet to get the prey moving, and it will hover before dropping down to dip its toes in the water, surprising the prey. Some ornithologists speculate the snowy startsle feet.

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have even photographed a snowy egret as it just stands and snatches insects as they fly around its head.

**Great blue heron.** This regal member of the heron family is stealthier in its approach, using slow and deliberate movements before striking the water with force. The great blue remains patient, standing motionless for lengthy periods of time, waiting for just the right moment. The great blue also gently strolls through the shallow wetland, moving its head back and forth to get a better angle and perspective before stabbing the water to snatch its meal.

The heron grabs smaller fish, but it impales its bigger prey. Regardless of size, once the prey is secured, the heron tosses the meal into the air before gulping it down. Great blue herons also hunt along the shoreline and nearby fields searching for snakes, frogs, and small birds. If it moves and the heron can catch it, it’s fair game.

**Great egret.** The great blue’s smaller cousin, the great egret, employs the same feeding tactics. They are mostly solitary when feeding, but if prey is widely available or concentrated, flocks of great egrets will feed together. They will not hesitate to use aggressive behavior to ensure there is some distance between them. The great egret will also rob smaller wading birds such as the snowy egret of its just-captured prey.

**Little blue heron.** The little blue is methodical in its approach, moving slowly through shallow waters, being observant and patient. Like the great blue heron, the little blue shifts its head slightly back and forth and from side to side to get a better angle of its prey.

**Tricolored heron.** Some wading bird species act as if their tails are on fire, rapidly moving about and spreading their wings as they chase their prey. The tricolored heron and its Gulf Coast cousin the **reddish egret** are notable examples of this feeding behavior. The tricolored will stand still and wait for fish to swim by them, but you are more likely to see it chasing its prey and canopy feed, a behavior where they extend their wings, throwing shade on the water enabling them to see the fish more clearly. The tricolored will also use its feet to stir and rake the muddy substrate, hoping to startle its quarry.

**Green heron.** This sleek little wader is a sneaky one. Walking gently through a thicket of shrubs along the water, the green heron stalks its prey until it gets close enough to jab it. The green heron also practices patience, crouching on a low hanging branch and waiting for small fish to swim by.

Green herons stir and rake the shallow water with their feet to get unsuspecting crayfish and other invertebrates to move. And when they strike, they strike with lightning speed. When you see the green heron crouch low, be ready! And get this: the green heron will sometimes drop a small twig or feather on the water as bait to lure the fish! How amazing is that?
Black-crowned and yellow-crowned night-heron. As their name implies, both of these short, stocky wading birds feed at night, but you are just as likely to see them during the day, especially in early morning and at dusk. Primarily solitary feeders, night-herons’ feeding behavior involves a slow (and I mean slow), methodical approach, walking leisurely (and I mean leisurely) along the marsh or water’s edge, looking for any movement that might reveal an opportunity.

When photographing night-herons, make sure you have lots of time to spare. Night-herons stand motionless for extended periods, waiting for a fiddler crab or crayfish to wander within striking distance. This is one wading bird that proves it’s important to know when to anticipate a moment and when to chase it! Patience is key. I’ve spent a couple hours with just one black-crowned night-heron before it finally made a strike.

Glossy and white ibis. Ibis use tactile feeding, probing the shallow wetlands and exposed mudflats with their curved bills for unsuspecting crayfish and other wetland critters. Flocks of both species will also congregate in fields and meadows to search for earthworms and other invertebrates. And speaking of flocks, both species much prefer to feed in flocks. In addition to probing, the white ibis also uses a sweeping motion of its bill in shallow water.

Photographing feeding behavior
Just as wading birds have hunting strategies to catch prey, nature photographers need a tactic to photograph these birds in action. I’ve already mentioned location, so let’s delve into a few other photographic strategies.

When you see a wader you want to photograph, think about where you want to be. Can you just stay in your vehicle and photograph from there? Can you slowly get out of the car and photograph from a lower perspective? When feeding, most waders become very tolerant of photographers, and if you’re in your car, they become even more relaxed.

If you’re approaching a wading bird that is hunting or feeding, the strategy changes. Before you even move, set up your camera and take some test shots to ensure you have the proper exposure. Check your histogram to confirm nothing is over exposed, especially those white-plumage wading birds. Then take a few steps, photograph, a few steps more, photograph, and so on. Once you are where you and the bird are comfortable with each other, move slowly, even keeping your hand motion restricted to slow movements. I have developed a technique of not moving my hands away from my camera, instead moving them slowly along the contours of the camera and tripod.

It can be easy to approach wading birds when they are feeding, just be respectful and take it slow. Know and abide by the park or refuge regulations. Avoid rushing to a scene; take your time and assess whether your approach is causing distress to the birds. If so, stop where you are and move back. Most of the time the wader will continue feeding, but it still doesn’t mean you should get as close as you can. Once the bird is comfortable with your presence, it may even approach closer to you, sometimes to where you might have to back up to retain focus.

In addition to close-up images, consider a wider-angle composition to show the bird in its habitat or a flock of waders as they feed. The crucial point is to not disturb the birds. When you see them stop feeding and start checking you out, then it’s time to stop, stay put or retreat. Once they start feeding again, you might approach a bit closer, but don’t overdo it. As with a
single wading bird, once you have positioned yourself, the flock may move closer to you, to the point where you become oblivious or they become bored with you. Just don’t take it personal!

If you witness what I call a feeding frenzy—a large grouping of wading birds feeding together at low tide or in a small shallow wetland—you have reached the motherlode. You’ll be rewarded and also overwhelmed with the different feeding strategies for each species. You will have lots of fun and challenges deciding where to point your camera.

At Chincoteague I’ve photographed great blue herons, great and snowy egrets, white and glossy ibis, and tricolored and little herons all congregating along a shallow pool of water feeding like crazy. Your challenge here is just deciding where to point your camera. And when you do have a moment, stick with it before turning your camera elsewhere. Remain observant and keep attention to all that is going on. It’s a challenge for sure, but again, with experience you become very adept at it.

Equally rewarding is to follow a solitary wader as it feeds. As many times as I have photographed a great blue heron or great egret feeding, I never tire of watching them. I have spent a couple hours just following a little blue heron as it feeds along a tidal channel at the refuge. Each time I do this, I capture yet another unique behavior or moment.

Whether photographing a feeding frenzy or a single wading bird, use a high enough ISO to get a fast shutter speed as the wader strikes the water. Remember, it’s going to be a split second of action that you’re going to capture. The faster the shutter speed, the better chance of freezing the action. If the light is exceptional and you can get an extremely high shutter speed, consider stopping down the aperture to give yourself a little more depth of field—this is helpful in achieving sharpness of the bird. For example, instead of shooting wide-open at f/4, stop down to f/5.6 or f/8 if you’re still getting a fast shutter speed. This will require some testing on your part and whether your camera model can do autofocusing at a smaller f/stop.

Set your camera for both continuous shooting and the fastest frame rate. When you suspect the bird is ready to strike, press that shutter and keep firing away!

During lulls in feeding, check the histogram and adjust your exposure to ensure you are not overexposing any white-plumaged wader. And when it comes to retaining details in the light tones or dark tones, remember to expose for the highlights and let the shadows fall where they may. You want to see the details in those white feathers of a great egret!

As you become more comfortable understanding wading bird feeding behavior, you will get more “keepers.” Expect lots of trial and errors at first—that comes with the territory. But believe me, the more you photograph, the more successful you will get.

And remember, even after the heron has captured its prey, continue photographing as it throws the fish up into the air and then swallows it. Now that is not only a striking moment, but a defining one too; not only for the bird, but for you as well!
### 35 Feeding Strategies that Wading Birds Use

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© Budd Titlow
Bicycle Birding

by Budd Titlow

If you are a bird photography aficionado, I have some great news!

The proliferation of "Rails-to-Trails" conversion projects throughout our nation has created a fantastic new modus operandi for practicing your passion. Plus, it also benefits your health by providing daily exercise. I call this activity bicycle birding, and here’s how it works for me.

Two years ago as a retiree, I moved to La Jolla, California—just north of San Diego—to be near one of my daughters and three of my grandchildren. As an avid but not very adventurous bicyclist, I immediately began researching local bike paths that offered long, flat rides on motor vehicle-free surfaces.

First, I found a book that described all the bicycle trails in San Diego County. Then I selected those that met my desired criteria. Fortunately—as is now the case in just about every municipality—I found an array of suitable options.

Next, I started doing “test rides” to evaluate each of my selected bike paths for bird photography opportunities. After three months of field testing, I came up with a winner. A five-mile paved route paralleling the south side of the San Diego River provided me with both of my objectives: an optimal biking distance coupled with spectacular bird photo opportunities on almost every ride.

The other key to this endeavor was acquiring new camera gear, including a telephoto lens and camera combination that would allow me to capture high-quality, handheld images. This was critical because—for me—biking with a tripod was not an option. I purchased a Canon EF 400mm f/4 DO lens and Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera.

As it has turned out, these were the best photographic purchases I have ever made. The thousands of bird photos I have taken during the past two years are—by far—my best in more than 45 years of outdoor photography.

Now—on at least five afternoons a week—I throw my binoculars, camera, and lens into a sturdy backpack, and I’m off to my favorite bikepath. I ride along the river until I see a bird or birding activity that I want to capture. Then I pull off to the side of the path, grab my gear out of my pack, and fire away until I’m happy with my results. Then it’s on to the next photo opportunity that I see along the route. I typically make four or five photo stops each time I go out riding.

As I mentioned at the start, the plethora of new bike paths all over the country means you can find similar bicycle birding opportunities no matter where you live. Of course, the extent of time you can enjoy this activity may be limited by climate, but you’ll always have some months—for example, during seasonal migrations—when birds and bird behaviors will be both plentiful and varied.

Give bicycle birding a try. Better health plus prize-winning bird photographs is a combination that’s hard to beat!
Connecting the Dots
from Photographing Birds to Saving Species

As a nature photographer, I spend a large percentage of my time photographing birds, and raptors are at the top of my list of favorite targets. Fortunately, the Peregrine Fund’s World Center for Birds of Prey is headquartered close to my home.

I started visiting the center to learn more about raptors and attended the fall live bird flight shows to hone my bird-in-flight shooting techniques. In a blatant attempt to establish some form of communication with the professional staff of bird handlers and biologists, I offered free use of my images which blossomed into a role as volunteer photographer and adviser. Now I get requests for help gathering images for use in educational programs, social media, corporate literature and gift shop materials in addition to sessions in the field to support scientific programs. The American kestrel photo shown above is one example. Scientists learn about feeding habits from looking at images of prey being delivered to chicks by the parent birds.

From interacting with the Peregrine Fund’s raptor biologists, I’ve learned that we as photographers have more in common with scientists than I imagined. Precise instruments. Sharp observational skills. A keen awareness that any disturbance of our subjects can alter the results. And like everyone who pursues their passion in wild places, we have a desire and responsibility to protect the life we observe and document. That intersection of mutual interests can create photographic results that can have a strong positive impact on the scientists’ conservation efforts.

Dr. Sarah Schulwitz, director of the Peregrine Fund’s American Kestrel Partnership (AKP) told me, “Photo and video records have always been the gold standard in documenting behaviors and patterns we can observe in the natural world.”

But non-profits live on tight budgets and depend on volunteers for a variety of services, including photography. Dr. Schulwitz’s project enlists citizen scientists to help find the source of kestrel declines across North America. Besides installing nest boxes and contributing nesting data to the project, participants have direct contact with professional scientists when something surprising occurs.

Michael Griffith, an AKP member in Boise, Idaho, noticed a female kestrel regularly feasting on the carcass of a domestic turkey on his neighbor’s property. He sent photos to Dr. Schulwitz, who knew of only two other documented instances of a kestrel eating carrion.

Michael’s photos became the core of a scientific paper on the phenomenon, and are
clues toward understanding the species as a whole. Michael’s photos, taken with a cell phone camera through a spotting scope, are not photo contest winners, but they do provide documentation of a rarely seen kestrel behavior.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s e-bird program is another example of all levels of photographers contributing to a large database that tracks migration, abundance, and other trends among numerous bird species. The system allows scientists to have “eyes” everywhere, vastly improving the quantity of data available for real-time analysis. These documentary applications don’t require great photographic artistry. The scientists are more interested in the story told by the photo than the beauty of the image. But, that said, the sharper, clearer photos that can be provided by serious photographers can provide more convincing evidence.

Another thing I learned from working with the scientists is that photos I have been throwing away can have value. For example, I have been trashing photos where the bird’s eyes are covered by their nictitating membranes. The membranes looked a bit nasty to me. But one of the Peregrine Fund’s trainers told me he couldn’t find any desperately needed photos he could take to schools to help teach children. Now he has a growing file to choose from.

Another example of science and art blending and helping make good things happen: I helped The Peregrine Fund create the Raptors at Risk international photo exhibition. Photographer Francis King submitted a photo of three African white-backed vultures to the exhibition in 2015. From ongoing partnerships with scientists across Africa, The Peregrine Fund found that some species had declined by 80% or more in only a few decades. The organization’s art director, Amy Siedenstrang, told me, “We published that vulture photo on the cover of the calendar knowing it might limit sales, but these birds were in catastrophic decline. They needed attention.”

What followed was like a line of dominoes falling neatly into place: based on King’s photo, an editor wrote an extensive article about the value of vultures, which are endangered not just in Africa, but worldwide. The Peregrine Fund named 2016 “Year of the Vulture” and refocused its efforts, including outreach to more than 75,000 social media followers. Vultures have since been featured in National Geographic and other prominent media, the status of many vulture species has been “uplisted” to Critically Endangered, government and private resources have been redirected, and the uphill battle toward saving them is making real progress.

Did a single photo spark that much action? Not likely, but there’s no doubt it fueled an already flickering interest.

If there’s one lesson I’d like photographers to absorb, it’s that their contributions to conservation are valued far beyond their realization.

We can be the “eyes and ears” for scientists, and our very best work can also touch hearts and minds. Your images could be used for training young people about nature, but they might also provide scientists with information that helps save an endangered species.

© Jim Shane
About the Authors

Jim Clark
A past NANPA president and former contributing editor for Outdoor Photographer magazine, Jim Clark is a nature photography instructor for the Chincoteague Bay Field Station, Wallops Island, Virginia. He is also a guest columnist for Virginia Wildlife Magazine and the author/photographer of six books. He is particularly proud of two children’s books he did with his son Carson.

Jim was also a major contributor to several other books, including Coal Country. Jim’s website is http://jimclarkphoto.com, and you can visit him on Facebook.

Marie Read
Marie Read is a professional wildlife photographer based near Ithaca, New York. Her images and articles about birds and their lives appear in magazines and books worldwide. She has authored or co-authored several books of her own, including Mastering Bird Photography: The Art, Craft and Technique of Photographing Birds and Their Behavior, available in print or as an e-book from Rocky Nook.
About the Authors

Jim Shane

Jim Shane is evolving into a wildlife/conservation photographer with an emphasis on raptors. In his late twenties he used the GI Bill to get a two-year degree in photography from a small junior college in Southern California while working the night shift in the photo lab for Douglas Aircraft. Those early skills led to a relationship with Car & Driver magazine and then a long-time career in motorsport. But for nearly 25 years, Jim didn’t even own a camera.

The seed for wildlife/conservation photography came after Jim retired. He walked out the door of his house about 12 years ago, camera in hand, and found birds...everywhere. Now he’s a volunteer for The Peregrine Fund and has started shooting for the American Kestrel Partnership and the Condor Reintroduction Project in addition to the training birds at their World Center for Birds of Prey.

In 2018 Jim was the photographic Artist in Residence for the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Recently, he was asked to become the Wildlife Photography Mentor for the Photographic Society of America-Worldwide.

Budd Titlow

A Professional Wetland Scientist (Emeritus) and Wildlife Biologist (MS), Budd Titlow is an award-winning nature photographer and a widely published writer/author currently living in Pacific Beach, California.

Budd has authored four books, including Protecting the Planet: Environmental Champions from Conservation to Climate Change, Bird Brains: Inside the Strange Minds of Our Fine Feathered Friends, and Seashells: Jewels from the Ocean. He has also published 500 magazine/newspaper photo-essays and 5,000 photographs.

Since moving to California, Budd has worked as an instructor for the Ocean Institute in Dana Point, California, and as an on-call workshop lecturer for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at UC San Diego. He also serves on San Diego Audubon’s Conservation Commission, San Diego County’s Climate Action Campaign, and as nature walk leader for Sea and Sage Audubon’s San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary in Irvine, California.

Budd is currently using his writing and photography skills to focus public attention on the climate crisis—the most serious environmental threat Earth has ever faced.
More resources

**Bird Photography** is just one in a series of free handbooks available to you through NANPA. Check out others at [nanpa.org/handbooks](http://nanpa.org/handbooks), including:

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**Conservation Photography**

Nearly a dozen accomplished conservation photographers collectively created this handbook to help nature photographers at all levels of experience put their images to work for nature and the environment. Our goal is to encourage and enable all people to become good stewards of our earth. What you’ll learn in this free handbook includes:

- What motivates and inspires conservation photography
- How to think like a conservationist
- How images support scientists and others in the field
- How to tell a story using photography
- What ethical considerations to keep in mind as you pursue the perfect conservation photo
- and more

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**Make It Work: The Business of Nature Photography**

Can you make a living as a nature photographer? Get the hard facts, tips, insight, and inspiration you need from five highly accomplished nature photography pros. Topics covered include:

- Differences between full-time and part-time pro
- How to earn an income
- How to get published
- What you should *not* send a photo editor
- What skills you need to succeed
- Pros and cons of leading workshops and tours
- What the day-to-day grind *really* looks like
- and more

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**Contest Secrets: What to Know Before You Enter a Photo**

Two winners of prestigious nature photography contests offer inspiration and tips, and a widely published nature photographer who is also a retired attorney helps us look critically at contest rules—with protection of our own rights in mind. Questions answered include:

- Why should you consider entering a contest?
- How do you choose which image(s) to submit?
- What contest terms are red flags for photographers?
- What are the most common mistakes to avoid?
- What are some popular subjects that aren’t likely to catch judges’ attention?
- What information should you put in a caption or description?
- and more
NANPA members share a passion for nature photography and a desire to shine light on what’s beautiful, threatened, and/or unique in the natural world. They believe in the power of storytelling to effect change.

Whether you’re a professional nature photographer, hobbyist, vendor, publisher, conservationist, or other nature photography enthusiast, you’ll find inspiration, resources, and opportunities at www.nanpa.org.