

# Stockton Camera Club

**The Shutter Tripper**      **October 2021**  
**September Image of the Month**



**Lady in a Corner**  
**Image of the Month - Em McLaren**

# September 10's



**Lazy Hummingbird**  
Karleen Gansberg



**Textures of Brick**  
Sharon McLemore



**White Cactus Flowers**  
Joanne Sogsti



**A Man, His Horse and His Dog**  
Em McLaren



**Golden Dahlia**  
Elizabeth Parrish





**Sunset Light at Joshua Tree**  
Dean Taylor



**Beard Texture**  
Joanne Sogsti



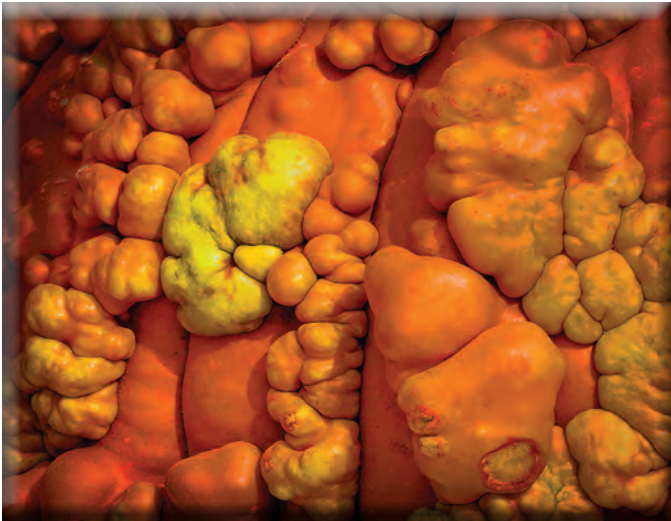
**Sunset at a Driftwood Bungalow  
on Wrights Beach**  
Trey Steinhart



**Swallowtail Butterfly With  
Wings Fully Open**  
Karleen Gansberg



**The Redwood Eye**  
Ron Wetherell



**Pumkin Skin**  
Em McLaren



**Magic Bubbles**  
Joanne Sogsti



**Inflatable Boat with Same Red Tanker Ship behind both ends both sides 180 degree Pano Inflatable Boat with Same Red Tanker Ship behind both ends both sides 180 degree Pano**  
Trey Steinhart





**Abandoned Shack on 395**  
Sharon McLemore



**Morning Campfire Gods Rays  
in the Magical Redwoods**  
Trey Steinhart

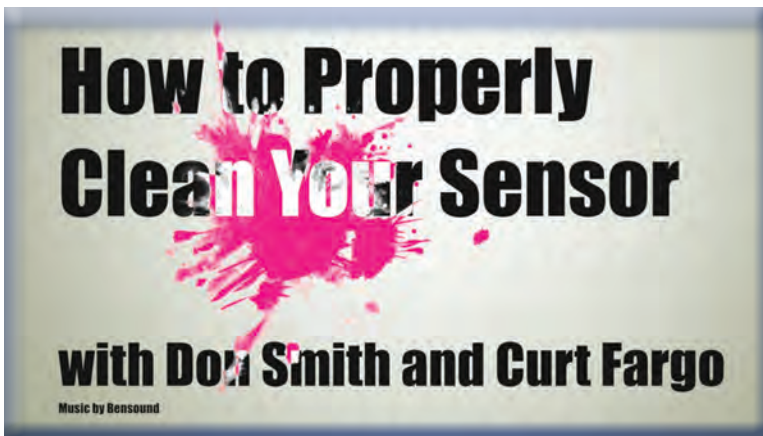


**Preening Great Blue Heron**  
Joanne Sogsti



**Swallowtail Butterfly With  
Wings Fully Open**  
Karleen Gansberg

Stockton Camera Club  
Sensor Cleaning Class  
October 16, 2021



On October 16, 2021 the Stockton Camera Club will be hosting a Camera Sensor Cleaning Workshop led by Curt Fargo. We will be meeting at 11:00 sharp at Wayne Carlson's home. After Curt's presentation, we will be having pizza for lunch and Curt will clean the sensors on our cameras.

We will be charging a nominal fee of \$15 for SCC members and \$20.00 for non-members. You can pay when you come to the workshop.

Bring your camera(s) to have their sensors cleaned. If you are interested, please contact Doug Ridgway at [doug.flyfisher@yahoo.com](mailto:doug.flyfisher@yahoo.com). I am limiting the workshop to 20 people, first come, first served.

Check out this link:  
[Sensor Cleaning](#)



### Learn From A Pro

Curt Fargo has been photographing for over 40 years. Curt graduated from the Naval School of Photography, and served six years as a Naval photographer, photographing a wide variety of subjects throughout the world. He still enjoys shooting and teaching photography.

Curt entered the service side of photography in 1980, when he graduated from National Camera Repair School. Since then he has been an educator, supplier, publisher, manufacturer, and author in the camera repair industry.

In 2000 Curt became deeply involved in sensor cleaning, training camera repair technicians on safe and proper sensor cleaning techniques, and advocating for all photographers to be able to clean their own sensors. Curt is the co-author of [www.cleaningdigitalcameras.com](http://www.cleaningdigitalcameras.com).

### Sensor Cleaning Demystified

Learn to clean your sensor safely and efficiently from an expert with over 15 years' experience. Cleaning your sensor only takes minutes, just a fraction of the time you spend removing sensor dust in processing. This training demystifies sensor cleaning with simple steps for safely and effectively cleaning any DSLR or mirrorless sensor. You'll be taught by Curt Fargo, one of the world's leading professional sensor cleaning educators who has been teaching sensor cleaning since DSLRs were released in early 2000. After providing a brief history of sensor cleaning, Curt dives into the details of simple steps that anyone can perform. You will learn how to examine your sensor, when to use both dry and wet sensor cleaning methods, and how to perform each method. More importantly, you'll learn the precautions that ensure safe sensor cleaning every time. Time permitting, Curt also provides free one-on-one training as he cleans the sensors of all in attendance. Curt Fargo is an educator, factory-trained camera repairman with 'over 20 years' experience, a Certified Photographic Consultant, and has photographed professionally and semi-professionally for over 40 years. He is also the co-founder of [www.CleaningDigitalCameras.com](http://www.CleaningDigitalCameras.com). You will also be able to have your camera cleaned by Curt for free while you watch and learn to do it yourself.

Please check our [Facebook Page](#) for a list of events where Curt will be offering this FREE class.

If you have an event or group meeting where you would like to offer this class, please contact eMail Curt at [support@thedustpatrol.com](mailto:support@thedustpatrol.com).



## SCC Officers 2021

### President

Heide Stover

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### Vice President Programs

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### Vice President Competition

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### Treasurer

Sharon McLemore - 401-0192

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## Committee Chairs

### Hospitality Chairperson

Chris DeRoos - 209-915-3208

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### Print Competition Chairperson

Trey Steinhart - 471-8438

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### Refreshments Chairperson

Sheldon McCormick 931-0461

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### Shutter Tripper/Educational

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Email: [jderuosiphotography@gmail.com](mailto:jderuosiphotography@gmail.com)

## President's Message

October 2021

By Heide Stover

Mike Schumacher was very good to us when he judged our last meeting. He had good comments about the images which helps us learn and improve.

This month we are having a sensor cleaning class which I'm looking forward to.

[Sandhill Crane Festival](#) is not happening this year but they will have limited tours and an online gallery. I will be sending a link soon. They had a glitch with the entering link.

See you all at the sensor cleaning class and/or our next zoom meeting.

Till then, keep shooting!

Heide

## A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!



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## 2021 Calendar of Events

Every 3rd Thursday (Except April & Aug) 6:30 PM	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	Membership Meeting Contact Heide Stover <a href="mailto:h1stover@aol.com">h1stover@aol.com</a>
Saturday October 16	Wayne Carlson's Home Stockton	Sensor Cleaning Class 11:00am
Thursday October 21	Zoom Meeting Stockton	October General Meeting Special Subject - Black & White/Monochrome
Thursday November 18	Zoom Meeting Stockton	November General Meeting Special Subject - Prints (if meeting) if not Open
Thursday December 18	Zoom Meeting Stockton	December General Meeting Special Subject - Trees

## 2022 Calendar of Events

Thursday January 20	Stockton	Annual Meeting/Banquet
Thursday February 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	February General Meeting Special Subject - Amore/Love
Thursday March 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Prints (if meeting) if not Open
April	TBA	April Workshop/Photo Opportunity
Thursday May 19	Zoom Meeting Stockton	May General Meeting Special Subject - Ice
Thursday June 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	June General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only (No Special Subject)
Thursday July 21	Zoom Meeting Stockton	July General Meeting Special Subject - Kids at Play



# **September Meeting's Notes**

## **September 2021**

**Heide opened the meeting. There were a total of 14 participants including the judge. There were 38 open images and 13 Special Subjects (TEXTURES) and 1 makeup.**

**Heide said that the time to nominate Board Members was coming soon. Please let her know if you want to continue in your positions or to nominate someone new. If vacancies come up, Heide will get together a nominating committee.**

**Doug plans to have the Sensor Cleaning Class with Curt Fargo on October 16th at 11:00am at Wayne Carlson's home. Please let Doug know if you plan to attend. (209) 617-7050. There is a \$15 charge for Members to attend. Bring your camera(s) to get the sensor cleaned.**

**Dean introduced the judge, Mike Schumacher. He has judged for us for the past several years. He is from the Placer Camera Club in Auburn. He is an excellent photographer and also very active in the Gold Rush Chapter.**

**The Image of the Month:  
"Lady In The Corner" by Em McLaren**

**The next Zoom meeting will be Thurs. Oct. 21 at 6:30 PM. The Special Subject will be: Black & White/ Monochrome.**

**Please let me know if there are any additions or changes to the notes.**

**Thank you, Em**

**Stockton Camera Club**  
**July 2021 Competition Standings**  
**Congratulations to the winner!!!**

Due to COVID-19 June's meeting was held via Zoom.

**JULY DIGITAL IMAGE OF THE MONTH WINNER -**  
**“A Night at the Museum, During the Day”**  
**by Doug Ridgway**

Please check out the website <http://www.stockton-cameraclub.com/home.html>”

Class A Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Lanny Brown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Doug Ridgway	226	169	57	38	39	40	36	36	37	0	0	0
Wayne Carlson	210	156	54	34	38	25	34	36	34	0	0	0
Ron Wetherell	210	164	46	38	39	35	35	26	37	0	0	0
Karleen Gansberg	204	169	35	33	37	35	29	0	37	0	0	0
Sheldon McCormick	197	146	51	36	35	28	32	30	36	0	0	0
Elizabeth Parrish	194	142	52	33	33	36	31	33	28	0	0	0
Joan Erreca	166	124	42	33	32	33	32	0	36	0	0	0
Christine Blue	76	58	18	36	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Darrell O'Sullivan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AAA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Sharon McLemore	227	170	57	39	38	40	37	35	38	0	0	0
Trey Steinhart	226	174	52	38	39	37	37	37	38	0	0	0
Joanne Sogsti	226	170	56	39	37	36	36	38	40	0	0	0
Em McLaren	224	169	55	37	38	37	39	34	39	0	0	0
Dean Taylor	222	165	57	39	39	36	38	33	37	0	0	0
Heide Stover	113	84	29	38	38	37	0	0	0	0	0	0



# 2021 Competition Policy

## A. GENERAL RULES

1. Only paid-up members may enter club competition.
2. Regular print and digital image competition period: Once each month except January. A competition year is February through December. Current regular meetings are February, March, May, July, September, October and December. The number of meetings may change from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and approval of the general membership as facilities permit. The Annual Awards Dinner will be held in January.
3. A total of four (4) images (all prints, all digital or a combination of both) may be entered each competition month. A total of three (3) images may be entered in the Open Division and a total of one (1) in the Special Subject Division. The number of entries may change from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and the approval of the general membership.
4. Each image will be scored from 6 to 10 points. All prints or digital images receiving 9 or 10 points will be classed as an honor image. The title of each print or digital image entered will be read before being evaluated. The name of the maker will be read for 9-point honor winners. Maker's names will be announced for the 10 point images after the Print & Digital Image-of-the-Month winners are chosen.
5. A print or digital image that does not receive an honor score, may be re-entered one more time in the same division.
6. A print or digital image may be entered in all divisions for which it qualifies; i.e., an honor image in Open may also be entered in the Special Subject Division at another competition. A print or digital image that receives an honor score may not be re-entered in the same division.
7. Any print or digital image that appears to be ineligible for competition or not qualified for a specific division could expect to be challenged. The Competition Vice-President shall decide whether or not the image is acceptable.
8. The exhibitor must have exposed each negative, slide or digital image entered. All images submitted for judging must be the work of the photographer/maker including the taking of the images and any digital enhancements and/or manipulation of the image. This does not apply to the processing of film or printing by a commercial processor.
9. The same image should not be entered both as a print and a projected digital image in the same competition.
10. In the event of absence or barring unforeseen circumstances, a member may submit make-up prints or digital images for one competition night per competition year; and whenever possible must submit all make-up prints or digital images at the meeting immediately following the month a member failed or was unable to submit the prints or digital images. Make-ups in the Special Subject Division must be the same subject as the month missed. Also, in case of absence a member may assign the responsibility of submitting his or her prints and/or digital images for competition to another member.
11. A club member who serves as judge cannot enter his or her own prints or digital images in the same competition. The judge's make-up prints or digital images can then be entered in another competition during that competition year. This is in addition to the once-a-year make-up provision already

allowed.

12. Prints or digital images may be projected/viewed briefly before the judging of each division if the judge indicates he/she would like a preview.

## B. PRINT ENTRY RULES

1. Each print entered must have a completed label attached to the back of the print including; name of maker, title, date entered and Division (Open or Special Subject). The writing or printing on the form must be legible. Labels must be attached on the back of the print in the upper left-hand corner for correct viewing of the print.
2. All prints must be matted or mounted with a total size (including mat board) of no larger than 18" X 24" and no smaller than 8" X 10". Exception: One side of a Panorama Print may be no larger than 36". Prints that are smaller than 5" X 7" will not be accepted. The maker's name must not appear on the viewing surface of the image. Framed prints shall not be entered.
3. Prints accompanied by entry forms should be submitted no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the regular monthly meeting.
4. Prints receiving a score of 10 points, in each class, will be regrouped and judged for selection for the Print-of-the-Month honors. Print-of-the-Month honors will be given in Class A, AA & AAA.

## C. DIGITAL IMAGE ENTRY RULES

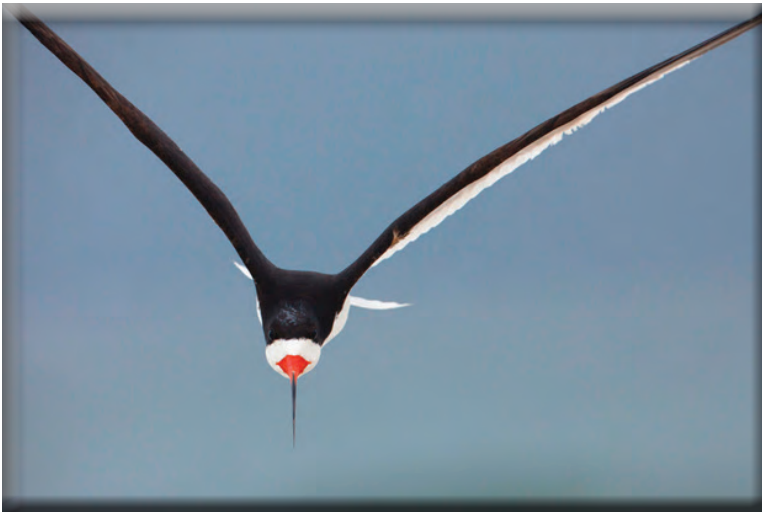
1. Digital images must be submitted in a format and by the deadline specified by the Competition Vice-President. Digital images may be submitted by email, mailed (CD) or delivered (CD) to the Competition Vice-President. Definition of Digital Image: An image taken with a digital camera, a negative, slide or print scanned into the computer and processed digitally.
2. Images must be in a format compatible with the projector. The key thing to keep in mind when formatting photos for submission is that the projector we use in the competition has a (maximum) resolution of 1400 x 1050 pixels. This means that any photo that exceeds this size in either dimension, could end-up being cropped by the projector. In other words: the image width cannot be more than 1400 pixels and the image height cannot be more than 1050 pixels. If your image is horizontal, only change the width to 1400, if your image is vertical, only change the height to 1050. Do not change both. Down-sizing the image from the "native" resolution coming out of your camera also significantly reduces the file size. This helps when emailing the files and takes-up less space on our hard-drives.
3. The maker's name, title of image, date entered and division (Open or Special Subject) must be included as the title of the image. When you have finished re-sizing your image save your image with a new title. For example do a Save as: Smith Sunrise Splendor 05-15 O.jpeg. (O-Open or SS-Special Subject). Specify whether you're Beginner, Advanced or Very Advanced.
4. Digital Images receiving a score of 10 points, in each class, will be regrouped and judged for selection for the Digital Image-of-the-Month honors. Digital Image-of-the-Month honors will be given in Class A, AA & AAA.

## *How to Photograph Birds in Flight*

By *Gerrit Vyn*



Hovering Ring-billed Gull in New York. 300 mm, 1/2500 second at f/8, ISO 400. Photo by Gerrit Vyn.



Difficult shots like this one of a Black Skimmer in Florida flying directly toward the camera would be impossible without today's autofocus technology. 500 mm, 1/1000 second at f/8, ISO 800.

Photo by Gerrit Vyn.

Successfully shooting birds in flight is rewarding and exciting, but it takes a lot of patience and there is no single surefire approach to it. If every bird in flight were a slow-flying, high-contrast Osprey against a clear blue sky, the task would be easier. But try photographing a puffin flying 50 mph against a dark cliff in flat light! Camera and lens capabilities, birds' flight styles and speeds, plumage effects on autofocus performance, quality of light, and variable backgrounds—all of these factors and more can make photographing birds in flight challenging and frustrating. But don't despair! Try these tips and best practices—they'll get you started photographing birds in flight.

### First, Set Up Your Shot

**Put the Wind and Sun at Your Back:** If you are going out specifically to shoot flight, try to do so at a time and location when you have both the wind and sun somewhere at your back. Birds generally fly into the wind, and when they are flying toward you at an angle, they are in the best position for pleasing flight images: underwings showing and their heads in the lead. Birds fly much slower into the wind, which makes them easier to track, and having the sun at your back illuminates them nicely.

**Identify Predictable Flight Paths:** Using your knowledge of bird behavior, identify places where birds fly, preferably in good numbers, giving you many opportunities to practice and make the perfect image. Flight photography is often a numbers game, so the more shots you can get off, the better. Is there a particular spot the Brown Pelicans or Canada Geese always fly over on their way to roost every evening? Is there a ridgeline that hawks follow during fall migration?

**Shoot Against Clean Backgrounds:** Your autofocus system will perform best when you shoot against a clean background with little contrast, like the sky or still water. If this isn't an option, remember that the farther away the background is, the better. A distant forest is much better than trees right behind the bird.

### Next, Sort Out Your Camera Settings

**Focus with the Shutter Release:** Though I recommend back-button focusing for most situations, don't use it for dedicated flight photography. Because you will be continuously focusing when shooting birds in flight, it will be more comfortable for your hands to half press the shutter button for focus and fully press to release the shutter, rather than having to hold two buttons at once.

**Use the Focus Limiter:** Set your focus limiter so that it ignores close objects. This can help your autofocus system work faster, as it can ignore part of your lens's range.

**Turn Image Stabilization Off:** When shooting flight, you will be using shutter speeds that negate any need for image stabilization. Having it on may make it harder to track subjects and may slow lens performance.

**Preselect Camera Settings:** In most cases, shoot flight in Manual exposure mode and set your aperture and shutter speed ahead of time. Usually this means shooting wide open at the lens's maximum aperture and using an ISO that allows for an optimal shutter speed. Your shutter speed should be quite fast—1/2500, 1/3200, or even higher if light allows. If there is not enough light or you are shooting slower subjects, drop down to 1/1600 or 1/1250 if necessary, though you'll have to accept that you may have a lower percentage of sharp images. If you are able to use optimal shutter speed and there is more light to spare, try closing





American White Pelican by Gerrit Vyn.

your aperture from wide open to f/5.6 or f/8 for more depth of field and a better chance of getting all of the crucial parts of the bird in focus—the head, body, and forewing. Also set your camera to the highest frame rate.

In even lighting conditions, shooting in Manual means the background in your photos can change and the exposure on the bird will not. Imagine you are shooting a Sandhill Crane flying across some farmland, and the background changes from open sky to a shaded forest. In one of the automatic exposure modes, this would throw your exposure off and may also dip your shutter speed to an unacceptable level. If your exposure is set in Manual, nothing changes and the bird will remain properly exposed against any background as long as the bird remains in the same light.

When shooting birds against a white or very light sky, consider using the sky as the basis for your exposure and make it as light as you can without overexposing any parts of the bird. I commonly meter the sky and open up 2 or 2 1/3 stops.

**Select Your Autofocus Settings:** For birds that are larger in the frame, use a single autofocus point so you can put it exactly where you want it on the bird. When that is too difficult, switch to one of the camera’s focus point patterns. On Nikon cameras, Group-Area AF (GrP) is a great all-around setting for birds in flight. On Canon cameras, I expand beyond a single autofocus point to a 9-point pattern or use Zone AF.



Osprey in flight in Florida. 600 mm, 1/4000 at f/8, ISO 1000. Photo by Gerrit Vyn.

An additional tweak on current Canon cameras is to customize the autofocus settings. I recommend creating a custom setting for birds in flight: set tracking sensitivity to -2 (-1 or 0 can be better against clean backgrounds), Accel/Decel Tracking to +2, and AF Pt Auto Switching to +2.

If you have trouble staying locked onto subjects, especially subjects flying against busy backgrounds, the most useful parameter to play with is Tracking Sensitivity (called Blocked Shot AF Response on Nikon cameras). The busier and more problematic the background, the lower (more delayed) you should set your AF Tracking Sensitivity.

### More Photography Advice



[4 Ideas for Your Feeder Setup That Deliver Great Bird Photos](#)



[Bird Photography Tips: How to Get Close to Birds Without Disturbing Them](#)

## Finally, Keep the Bird in Frame and in Focus as You Shoot

**Prefocus:** When you can, prefocus your lens to a distance within the range of where you expect to pick up the flying bird—otherwise it will be difficult to see your target in the viewfinder, and autofocus will struggle to find it quickly on its own. To prefocus, point the camera at some vegetation or the ground at roughly the distance you estimate you will pick up the bird, and set focus there. Then raise the camera and wait for the bird to come into range before activating autofocus.

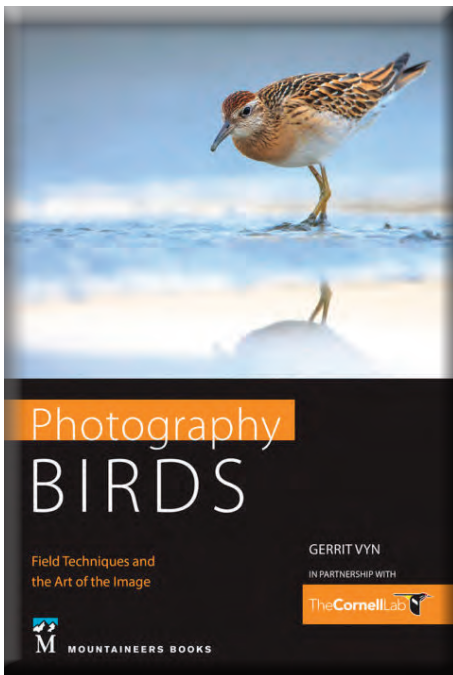
**Flip up the Lens Foot:** Flip your lens foot into the up position, if it has one, so you can cradle the lens and not the lens foot with your hand.

**Follow with Your Whole Body:** Use an athletic stance with legs spread a bit and knees slightly bent. Grip the camera firmly with the right hand, extend the left hand as far as comfortable to support the lens, tuck your elbows into your body, and follow the bird with your body rather than your arms or head.

**Bump Focus:** Once you have an approaching bird in the viewfinder, you have a better chance of tracking focus successfully if you “bump focus.” When you bump focus, you do not hold the autofocus button (whether it is the rear button or your shutter button) continuously as you track the subject. Instead, you press it intermittently as your subject approaches so that you are keeping the bird almost in focus. Doing this minimizes the chance that your focus point will fall off the subject and focus somewhere else entirely. Wait until the bird is in range, then fully press and hold the focus button.

**Fire and Follow Through:** It is easy to lose your subject when you start firing the shutter. Try to ignore everything else except keeping the subject in the frame and following through.

**Practice:** It takes a great deal of practice to become proficient at flight photography. Find opportunities to practice when you can on common subjects near home, whether they are images you want or not. Practicing gives you the opportunity not only to hone your technique but to become familiar with different autofocus settings, focus points and patterns, and what results you can get with them.



### About the Author

Gerrit Vyn is a cinematographer and producer in the Cornell Lab’s Center for Conservation Media and is a Senior Fellow at the International League of Conservation Photographers. Follow Gerrit on Instagram [@gerritvyn](#) and [on his photography website](#).

This post is excerpted from [Photography Birds: Field Techniques and the Art of the Image](#), published by Mountaineers Books in April 2020. Vyn’s previous book, *The Living Bird*, won the National Outdoor Book Award.

Vyn’s new book was published by Mountaineers Press in 2020.



All About Birds is a free resource Available for everyone, funded by donors like you





## *Those Beautiful Eyes: How a Photographer Uses Sharp Eyes to Convey Emotions*

*By Sastry Karra*



The Eyes Have It, 500 mm, 1/800 second, f/6.3, ISO 800  
© Sastry Karra



Song Sparrow's Glare, 500 mm, 1/500 second, f/6.3, ISO-800  
© Sastry Karra



Sparrow Conversation, 500 mm, 1/250 second, f/6.3, ISO 2800,  
© Sastry Karra

It is often said that the eyes are a window to the soul. The face of any living creature is usually the first thing that catches our attention, and the eyes are where we instinctively and immediately go. The eye figures prominently when it comes to conceptions of beauty. Sight (looking at others) is also a form of communication, an instinct that we inherit at birth, similar to art and music. Sometimes, poets emphasize that eyes speak what lips can't. So, the eyes of a subject can mean many things and it makes perfect sense that one of the first rules of wildlife photography is to make sure the eyes are sharp.

As a nature photographer, I spend a lot of time photographing different animals, and pay particular attention to their eyes. Yes, I work to get the eyes properly focused but I also think that these animals are saying something to me through their eyes. I realize this is anthropomorphizing, but it's fun to attribute emotions and intentions to the eyes and expressions of the animals we photograph, so please give me a little leeway here. And, after all, aren't we trying to convey emotions with our photos and create emotional reactions in viewers? Here are some examples of what I mean.

In this photo, which I took in February, 2020, at the Meadowlands, in New Jersey, the song sparrow's eyes are looking directly at me. When an animal's eyes are facing the camera, there is implied non-verbal communication between the animal and the viewer. What is it trying to say to us? Here, the eyes make it look as if the bird is angry that a human is in its territory. Despite giving it plenty of space, shooting with a 500mm lens, and being careful not to disturb the bird, it still looks almost as if it's shooting daggers at me from its eyes.

The last time I visited [Cattus Island Park](#) in South Jersey, in January 2020, I came across these two sparrows facing each other, as if they were having a conversation. They seemed to endlessly stare into each other's eyes. While it was really just few seconds that they looked at each other this intently, talking eyes don't need much time to speak in any language or species. I believe that, once another person understands what was communicated with my eyes, something magical happens. I feel the same way about animals, so I like to take photos showing two birds interacting with each other through their eyes.





Courting Geese, 500 mm, 1/2000 second, f/6.3, ISO 380,  
© Sastry Karra

In February 2020, when I visited New Jersey's [Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge](#) to see the snow geese before they started heading back to Canada, I noticed this male and female. It looked like the male was flirting with the female. Though she was keeping her distance, the female goose stayed close to the male and she was keeping tabs on him out of the corner of her eye. Meanwhile, the male spread his wings and splashed the water. Was it love at first sight? Perhaps, these initial looks sparked some sort of mutual attraction.



Cooper's Hawk, 500mm, 1/250 second, f/6.3, ISO 2000  
© Sastry Karra

Hawk-eyed. Eagle-eyed. When it comes to birds of prey, eyes are critical for finding food, for surviving. Raptors must have a precise sense of the distance between them and their prey. So, unlike some birds, their eyes can face front. Like humans, they have binocular vision. Both eyes can focus on the same subject and the brain receives two signals which, in turn, are converted into a 3D image, giving depth perception. Raptor eyesight is also many times better than that of humans. Here in this Cooper Hawk picture (taken at [Cattus Island State Park](#) in January of 2020), the bird is on the top of a tree, looking for prey on the ground. Raptors like hawks and eagles have a brow ridge that makes their eyes look mean and frightening. I don't want to be its target!



Heron Hunting, 500 mm, 1/500 second, f/6.3, ISO 1250,  
© Sastry Karra

In contrast, this great blue heron in in [Delaware Raritan Canal](#) in Amwell, New Jersey, is looking for a fish or crab in the water. For both predators, the deep concentration and wide eyes show them on the hunt. Without the hawk's menacing brow ridge, the heron looks more curious and less frightening.





Skeptical Frog, 500 mm, 1/500 second, f/6.3 , ISO 800,  
© Sastry Karra

When it comes to prey animals, the design of their eyes is completely different. They need to have a greater angle of view to sense the movements of predators and save themselves. The ability to look up, left, right, and forward gives this amphibian some extra time to recognize danger and take a counteraction to escape. Here a frog resting on a log in Raritan River Greenway in New Jersey, is looking me over to determine if I'm a predator. He seems skeptical.



Blue Jay, 460 mm, 1/20 second, f/6.3, ISO 100  
© Sastry Karra

Taken in May, at [Duke Island Park](#), this blue jay is busy looking for some food or, perhaps a mate. Jays are aggressive and territorial. When they're angry or agitated the crest on their head stands up. When they're relaxed and calm, it stays down, as it is here. It looks kind of chill but I could see the concentration in its eyes as it focused in on a target. I was careful not to intrude.



Scouting Sand Piper, 500 mm, 1/320 second, f/6.3, ISO 100  
© Sastry Karra

I found these sand pipers in May, when I visited [Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge](#) to see shorebirds. I noticed this one looking for some food as it walked down the beach, and I noticed the concentration in its eyes. Its entire attention seemed to be on the hunt, zoned into the search, and it reminded me of the focus required to solve some of the complex problems I face in my job.



With the eye autofocus modes of many newer cameras, getting tack sharp photos of the eyes of animals is easier than it's ever been. Still, that requires an aperture that give you enough depth of field to have a little wiggle room if the bird moves, along with a fast enough shutter speed to freeze any action. A good lens with image stabilization and proper technique holding the camera matter, too. All of these images were taken with a 500mm lens to give the birds and frog some space. Check [NANPA's Principles of Ethical Field Practices](#) for more information on sensitive and respectful nature photography.

And, while you're out there composing your photo and concentrating on getting the animal's eye sharp, don't forget to ask yourself what is the animal telling you with those beautiful eyes.



Jaganadha Karra (also know as Sastry – pronounced “sas three”) was born in India, but left when he was 24 years old. For the past 27 years, he's worked as an IT professional, and has been living in NJ since 2004. During his spare time, he goes outdoors and takes nature photos, especially waterfalls. With his wife (who loves hiking), they go to many nearby state parks where he can experiment with different compositions. In the summer, when his friends play cricket, he's been trying his hand at sports photography. Find him on instagram at [@sastrykarra](#), where he posts most of his pictures. On Facebook, he's active in some photography forums, like NANPA. “Maybe I'll see you there!” he says.