

the Fisheries Department from the hatchery's holding tanks, located less than half a mile above the falls. It is little wonder that the dippers often choose to build their nests along the creek. Appearing almost tail-less, and slate gray in color, this plump, robin-sized bird of the fast flowing creeks has the characteristic habit of continually bobbing up and down while resting. Capable of walking underwater, the bird has a nictating eyelid, similar to goggles worn by a skin diver. As protection against cold water, it has a secondary coat of oily down, making it unique among land birds.

It was not until 1982 that I finally got my chance to photograph the dipper. I found the nest in the early part of May just above the falls on Blaney Creek and deduced that it should be ready for photography around the beginning of June. For several evenings I observed this pair feeding, marvelling at their musical communications. A few days after the young hatched, Stan and I began to set up. We discovered that early morning was the best time to photograph these birds. Shortly after 6:00 a.m., the female flew out of the nest. In the first hour she made four trips back with two-inch-long salmon fry. Her movements soon became totally predictable. Landing at the water's edge just below the nest, she carved the fry in half by rubbing it against a rock. She then landed on a rock outcropping adjacent to the nest, and after a moment's hesitation fed the two halves to the first two young to poke their heads out of the nest. She soon became so accustomed to our presense that when I placed my hand in front of her nest, she would serve the food to her young between my fingers. Around 7:00 a.m. the male made an appearance. He was much chunkier than his mate, not surprising since he averaged one trip to the female's four, and usually brought stonefly or mayfly nymph, and by 10:00 a.m., when it became quite warm, the feeding trips dwindled to one every two hours."

I never wrote about the fun that I had with Stan photographing the dippers nor did I mention that the nest was located underneath a bridge that crossed over Blaney Creek just above the falls. Stan and I used a step-ladder and six-foot tripod to set up my equipment in the middle of the creek. By this time I had purchased a 100-foot electric cable release with which to fire

the electric camera. For a couple of consecutive days, Stan and I had arranged to arrive out at the dipper nest at 6:00 a.m. Instead of packing up each evening upon leaving, we left most of the equipment covered over with large black garbage bags to speed setting up in the mornings. One morning I arrived out at the nest location only to observe Stan positioning the lights in readiness for the morning's photography session. I had managed to lower myself down a steep embankment to the end of the 100-foot cable without Stan seeing me. I fired the camera when one of the plate-sized strobes was not more than a foot in front of Stan's face. Predictably, he did a recoil but then started carefully to look at the camera in an attempt to determine why the unit had fired. A short time later I revealed my position only to have Stan announce, "Now I know how the birds feel the first time they get their picture taken!"

I wrote in the book: "The years 1976 through 1980 could be categorized as expensive learning experiences and the best advice I could ever give anyone breaking into the field of bird photography would be to apprentice with someone who has "been through the ropes". During those 4-years I spent considerably more time setting up and tearing down my equipment than actually taking photographs. My initial aim was for quantity; not quality, and one day I prided myself on having photographed three different species in a single day. That short paragraph surely shows where my priorities were in the beginning stages of my bird photography and no doubt the birds suffered because of my ignorance.

I once tried to photograph Belted Kingfishers either entering or exiting the burrow entrance with a good-sized fish but always seemed to only get a head or tail or nothing at all. This was very early on in my bird photography and unknown to me the long duration of the flash unit that I was using was incapable of stopping the bird in flight and all the photographs were blurred. Frustrated, I later opted to partially block the burrow entrance with a stick hoping that the bird might land at a location of my choosing. My strategy worked but my tactics were totally unethical." This was another example that would certainly be categorized as harassment and subject to heavy fines.



Setup to photograph an American Robin, 1982.

I wrote: "Bird photography is not without its failure and misadventure, and my experience working the nest of a Belted Kingfisher is a case in point. I had pushed a stick, to be used as a perch, into the gravel embankment close to the tunnel entrance to the nest, but all my attempts to get the bird to land on the perch were in vain. It landed on the stepladder, the ground, a tree, and eventually even attempted a landing on the zoom lens mounted on the camera body. The bird's rattling call could be heard for a mile or more when it failed to grasp a footing on the polished black surface. Finally, the kingfisher landed on the perch where the camera was pre-focused. When I got the film back from the lab the shot was out of focus. The bird, in attempting the landing on the lens, had rotated the focusing ring!"

One blunder that I made back in 1977 resulted in one bird species attacking the babies of another. This is what I wrote: "The relationship between Marsh Wrens and other bird species was graphically demonstrated in 1977 when I was photographing an Eastern Kingbird nest. This nest, which contained two young, three or four days old, was built well out on a limb of a red alder and over water, making set up difficult. Then I discovered that the kingbird parents were reluctant to accept my photographic

equipment. Leaving some of the gear set up, I moved the rest of it back from the nest to give the birds time to adjust. There I fell asleep, awakening to a great commotion at the nest. When I approached a small brown bird was frightened off the nest. Throughout all the excitement both kingbird parents hovered nearby, but their fear of my equipment overrode their instincts to defend their young, which had been killed by the wren." This admission in print was one time that my lack of knowledge and inexperience caused the deaths of two baby birds.

I wrote: "Some aspects of bird photography are best handled by two people, and Isidor and I have developed partnerships with other bird enthusiasts and photographers which have been richly rewarding. Stan Pavlov and I have worked together for many years and Isidor's long standing partner is Lawrence F. Parsons. Ingenuity is one of the prerequisites of a wildlife photographer, who is often called upon to devise his own props in the field, or to construct equipment that is simply not available commercially. Here two heads are better than one, and the labour of packing in equipment, setting up scaffolding and blinds, and 12 to 14 hour photographic sessions, is easier when shared.

The ultimate challenge in bird photography involves the higher nesting birds, especially the birds of prey such as eagles, owls, and hawks, since a blind must be erected at nest level or higher, and at a suitable distance from the nest. A project of this magnitude usually is attempted only by a team of two photographers. Isidor and Larry have had some interesting experiences photographing some of these raptors, two of which were the Great Horned Owl and the Northern Goshawk. Great Horned Owls do not build nests, but simply take over the unoccupied nests of other birds, or those of squirrels. On this occasion the site chosen was the unoccupied nest of a Red-tailed Hawk situated fifty feet up in a maple tree. Widespread over much of North and South America, the breeding season for this large, majestic bird starts during the cold winter months, and it is not unusual to find fresh snow covering both nest and owl during the incubation period. Incubation takes 30 days and for this particular pair, hatching day came on April 3. The food, provided by the



The author and his older son Kevin pose with some of the 'tools of the bird photography' trade back in 1983—10-feet of steel scaffolding and a wooden blind on top of a roof rack, a high-speed strobe lighting system and a medium format camera.

male, was already placed over the nest and consisted of a rabbit and two dead rats. Ten days later, Isidor and Larry began putting up the tower and blind.

“The scaffolding, which was previously prepared and left waiting nearby, was carried out to the site and erected piece by piece. Since their presence disturbed the parent birds, they never worked longer than one hour at a time, and then only during warm afternoons so that the chicks would not become chilled during the parents’ absence. It took them six days to set up, but by April 19, the eyes of the young had opened, and conditions were ideal for photography. As owls feed at night, Isidor entered the blind at dusk. The nest was faintly illuminated by a six-volt bulb powered by his flash battery. When hunting was good there might be five or six feedings a night, but this often dwindled to one or two. When the young were 68 days old they left the nest. They could not yet fly, but upon jumping from the nest, they flapped their wings until they reached the ground. There the parents continued to feed them until they were strong enough to fly.” This setup today would certainly be considered harassment and could not be carried out without working in conjunction with the Canadian Wildlife Service.



Isidor Jeklin’s setup for winter photography consisted of two cameras of different focal lengths that were both connected to a high-speed strobe, winter 1983.



American Dipper, Maple Ridge BC, 1982.



Orange-crowns, Maple Ridge, BC, 1985

“Isidor and Larry also photographed the aggressive Northern Goshawk, nesting at a relatively low 33-feet above the ground. The female, noticeably larger than the male, was the fiercest in defending the nesting territory, and tried to strike the heads of the intruders by diving rapidly, while uttering a loud “cac cac cac cac”. For protection both men wore helmets while erecting the tower. Once inside the blind they were safe and their photography did not disturb the birds.

“There was very little available light in this setting, and with no way in which to light the distant background with artificial light, Isidor had to compromise by using a wide aperture with a slow shutter speed. The photographs were taken at f-8 at 1/15 second, barely enough light to avoid a black background. The birds of course were illuminated with flash. With the lens opened up to f-8 the depth of field was extremely shallow, and, because he was shooting at such a slow shutter speed, both the camera and the subject had to be absolutely motionless to prevent blur.

To photograph these birds of prey, two people need to enter the blind at the same time and then later one of them leave. Once someone climbs down the blind and leaves, the adult birds return to the nest believing that no one is left in the blind.

“For the first 10 days the female brooded constantly and the male only came to drop the food. It was the female’s job to tear it into small bits with her powerful beak and serve it to the young. Once the young were 10-days old, the female occasionally left the nest but remained nearby, patrolling the territory and keeping watch. When the male (who was the sole provider) arrived with food, the female returned to the nest for about 15-minutes and fed it to the young. Feeding times were irregular, which is common among predators, as their elusive prey is unpredictable. A chipmunk was the usual menu for the first three weeks. Later, when the young goshawks were able to swallow larger morsels, the food was usually the plucked nestling of a small bird, which was dropped by the adult in flight, and picked up by the young and swallowed whole. Once the young reached this stage of development the female did not

bother coming to the nest, ending any further chance for photography. The young goshawks left the nest when 40 days old. Although the Northern Goshawk is not a common bird, it is not a rare or threatened species either, and an encounter with one is uncommon only because it frequents the deep woods far from human habitation.

“The Marsh Hawk, unlike the hawks, kites and their larger cousins, the eagles, is a harrier, and in a recent change in classification, it has been officially renamed the Northern Harrier. The distinguishing feature of this bird is its facial disc, resembling that of an owl. The male is a light blue-gray above, with primarily whitish underparts and blackish wing tips. The female is larger and predominately brown. Both have yellow eyes and feet and a pure white rump patch. It is a common bird, found coast to coast from Alaska to Mexico.

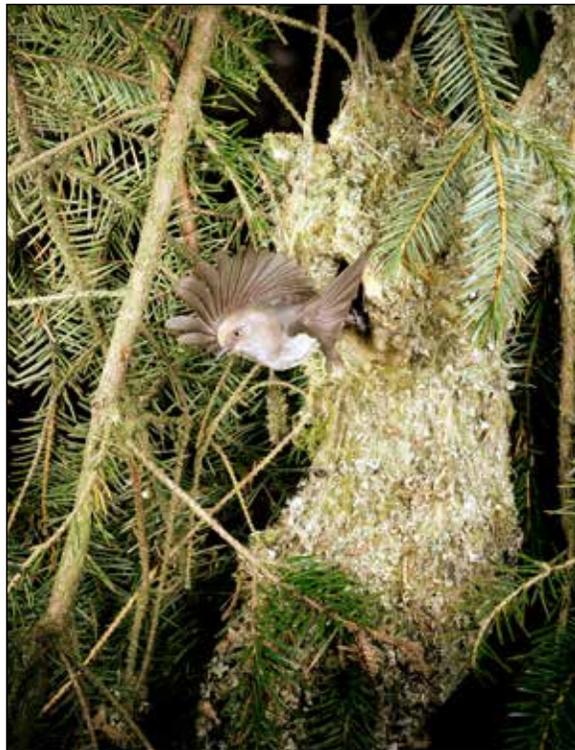
“Larry flushed the harrier from its nest, which contained six white eggs, lightly speckled with brown, in late spring 1978. The nest was almost non-existent, consisting of just a few weed stems around the eggs. It was well concealed in a heavy growth of tall gray goldenrod. Larry and Isidor, planning to photograph this nest, kept it under observation, and a week later the eggs hatched.

“They proceeded with caution on this project, in order to test the harrier’s reaction. The first day Larry left the disassembled blind on the ground in the vicinity of the nest. The following day he erected the blind to a height of one and half feet. The female harrier circled above and swooped down on him several times, in an attempt to drive him away. The next day the blind was raised to 3-feet with diminishing opposition from the bird. Assured of the bird’s acceptance a day later, they raised the blind again, this time to the full height of 6-feet.

“Both harrier parents hunt for food, but the female was never far from the nest, and did all the feeding. The male seldom made an appearance at the nest, but could be seen in the air during food transfer between the adult birds, which was accomplished in mid-air. The male arrived with the food and circled above the nest until the female began flying below. When the male dropped the food, usually a skinned nest-



Swainson's Thrush, Maple Ridge, BC, 1983



Common Bushtit, Maple Ridge, BC, 1985.

ling, the female caught it in mid-air with her talons, then brought it down to the nest.

“Isidor soon realized that the 250 mm lens (for his 2.25” x 2.25” Hasselblad) he was using was fine when the birds were on the ground, but it could not catch the mother in flight, as the wings overfilled the frame. This was a good opportunity for him to use two cameras. He fitted the second with a 150 mm lens, with cross-coupled synchronization with the other camera, so that the same flash equipment could be used for both cameras. Isidor alternated between looking through the viewfinder’s of both cameras. It was a complicated procedure that worked well, resulting in full-frame dramatic shots of the adult both landing and feeding her young.

“Photographing these high-strung, difficult to locate raptors is undoubtedly one of the most time consuming projects a bird photographer can undertake. But almost any nesting situation requires uncounted hours of work, and the nature photographer must be prepared to pay a high price for his achievements. He will soon discover that a particular situation has a specific time allotment, and that if the moment is missed, it is gone forever. In many instances, the opportunity for a second chance at a species never comes the photographer’s way again. The photographer must be prepared to sacrifice time, comfort and social activities in order to grasp that opportunity when it presents itself.”

“It takes a fraction of a second to record a picture on film, yet this fraction represents untold hours of labour. The finished photograph ideally captures those qualities which first captivated the photographer, transmitting in a lasting form the beauty of birds in their forest environment. If this can be appreciated and understood by others, then the photographer is well rewarded.”

In 1981 I had the rare opportunity to visit Triangle Island, a seabird reserve located in the Pacific Ocean, 60 kilometers (40 miles) off the northern tip of Vancouver Island. In August I flew there by helicopter, accompanied by Richard J. Cannings, Assistant Curator of the Vertebrate Museum of the University of British Columbia, to spend a week photographing seabirds. We were greeted on arrival by Anne Vallée, who was collecting data for her Ph.D.

thesis, ‘The Breeding Success of the Tufted Puffin’, and her assistant Robin Cohen.

When one is first learning about bird photography, there is often very little to show for the efforts involved, but the experiences are invaluable. My trip to Triangle Island with its enormous seabird population was a case in point. The island’s seabird population was comprised of Cassin’s Auklet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Tufted Puffin, Pelagic Cormorant, Glaucous-winged Gull, Common Murre and Pigeon Guillemot. Shortly after our arrival Dick and I followed Anne and climbed Puffin Rock—aptly named—where we observed several hundred Tufted Puffins, sitting only feet apart near their burrow entrances. These birds had so thoroughly honeycombed the hillsides with tunnels, that by stepping off the pathway one inevitably punched through the dry earth into a burrow or tunnel. Near the summit we could barely hear each other over the cries of the Glaucous-winged Gulls circling overhead, while the fledgling gulls hid from us by tucking their heads and shoulders under the grass, leaving their posteriors in full view.

One morning, determined to photograph a family of Pelagic Cormorants basking in the early morning sun, I set up my camera on a 35-degree slope across a deep ravine from one of the nests. Just below my position, the slope made a 60 meter (200-foot) perpendicular drop to the sea. I was using a long lens and was able to completely fill the frame with just the nestlings and an adult parent. Unfortunately, my tripod was not strong enough for the meantime, comfort and social activities in order to grasp the opportunity when it presents itself. I was in a dangerous situation and when a sudden updraft funnelled up the ravine and caught me unawares, my nerves gave out and I began dismantling my equipment. I came down off the slope soaked in perspiration.

Near the edge of a cliff we found two Pelagic Cormorants’ nests, and further exploration revealed the nests of the Common Murres on the ledges off the precipitous cliffs. Murres are highly sociable seabirds that live in large colonies. The parents take turns incubating a single egg and sheltering the chick after hatching. One cliff shelf, quickly estimated, contained



A colony of Common Murres, Triangle Island, 1981.

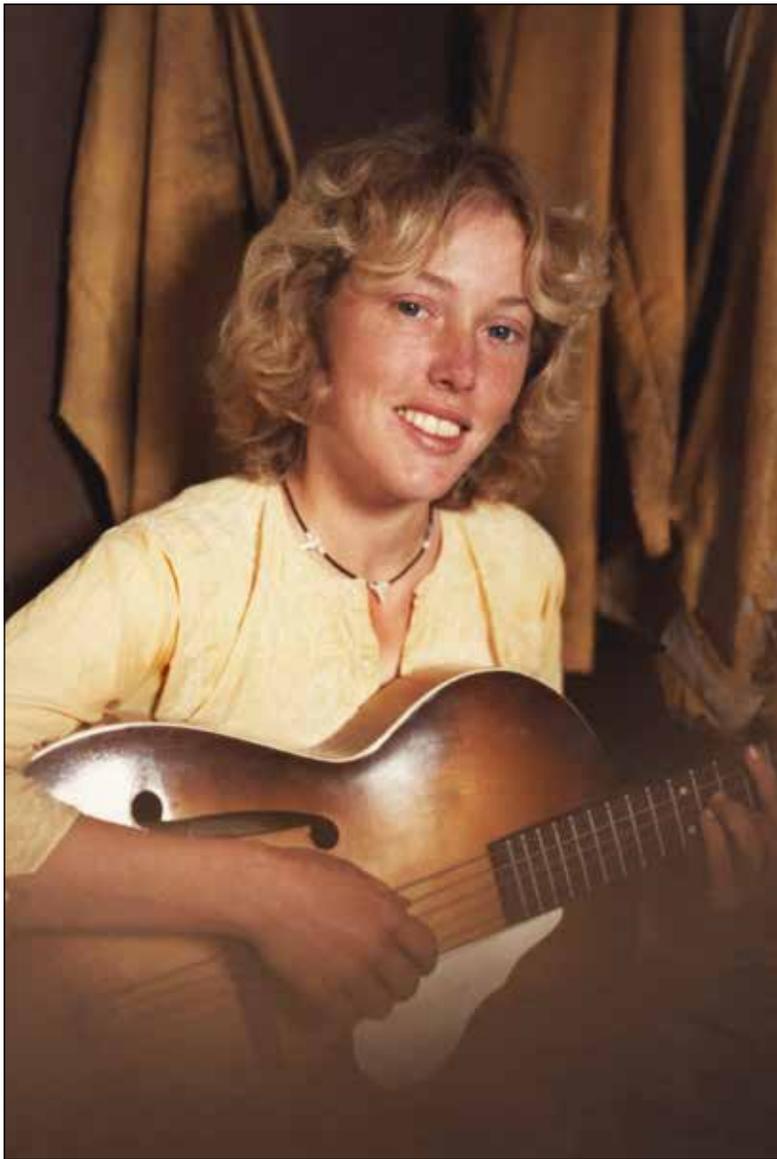
at least 500 birds. For survival against the marauding crows and gulls, murres breed synchronously: they incubate their eggs and brood their young at the same time. When the chicks finally leave their rock shelves and plunge the 60 to 90 meters (200 to 300-feet) into the sea, the bonanza for predators is short-lived, because of the vast numbers of the young birds.

The bird I especially hoped to photograph on Triangle Island was the Rhinoceros Auklet. Studies had shown that the parent rhino makes only two feeding trips per day, and these occur at night. I planned to use a photo-electric triggering device on this bird. I dug a small hole just below the active rhino's burrow entrance into which I placed the device. Its operation was simple: it fired the prefocused camera automatically whenever a pencil-beam of infrared light, emitted from a flashlight clamped to a wooden stake above the burrow, was broken. When I realized the device was malfunctioning, I decided to keep the burrow under observation and fire the camera by remote control.

Around 8:00 p.m. I took up my position concealed in a bed of tufted hairgrass. My dress consisted of two pairs of socks, hiking boots,

bluejeans, rain pants, two t-shirts, a wool sweater, a vest, a coat, a nylon rain jacket, two scarves, a toque, and wool gloves—and still I felt the cold gusts coming off the Pacific Ocean. The entrance to the burrow was dimly illuminated by the flashlight, its lens covered with red acetate, bathing the scene in a faint red glow. Between 10:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. a number of birds crash-landed in the tufted hairgrass and salmonberries. It seemed that these birds were no better able to see in the darkness than I was. Often I heard the whir of wings alarmingly close; and once I was hit squarely on the back of the head by a rhino that had taken off from a slope just above me. After landing, the adult would begin making a mewling call, that was answered by calls from the chick. When I turned on my headlamp I saw a most attractive bird with an orange-brown bill with horn—hence the name—and white plumes behind its eye and bill. Between 11:30 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. few birds landed, and shortly after 2:30 a.m. I came down off the slope. All I had managed to photograph was a deer mouse.

As it happened, that was my last chance for a rhino photo opportunity. The weather took a



M.J. Anne Vallée visited Triangle Island in 1981 and 1982 to complete a Ph. D. thesis on 'The Breeding success of the Tufted Puffin'. She lost her life when she slipped and fell from a cliff into a tidal pool.

turn for the worse and it stormed for two days, making photography difficult. The last day was perfect, and I took several scenic photographs before the helicopter picked us up.

Just after a return from Ontario the following year, I learned that Anne had fallen from a cliff on Triangle Island and drowned a few weeks before. She had returned to the island to complete her research, and while checking a nesting area on one of the cliff faces, had lost her footing and fallen into a tidal pool. Anne was keenly interested in my book projects and it was understood that I would perhaps publish some of her seabird photographs. Her parents showed me some of Anne's slides and they were excellent, allowing me to fulfil a promise, a Tufted Puffin photograph that she had taken was published in the 1984 title 'The Art of Photographing North American Birds'.

Triangle Island was breathtakingly beautiful, but it was also a harsh and hostile environment, where a misplaced step could mean certain death. In most places the ground was turf-like and dry, so that a rugged tripod could not give the necessary support for even a medium-sized format camera. I was impressed with Anne's dedication and zeal in carrying out her research despite the difficult conditions, and left the island determined to return someday with the equipment that could properly record its beauty.

As a follow up to the book title 'The Art of Photographing North American Birds', Isidor and I agreed to meet in Altona, Manitoba, for a two-week sharing of experiences photographing prairie birds. I left Vancouver by car on 7 June and made a rendezvous on 10 June with Isidor and his field companion Lawrence F. Parsons. Through correspondence we had learned that a pair of Swainson's Hawks were nesting in a poplar shelter belt some 60 miles west of Altona in another farming community called Pilot Mound. We found this area so productive that we decided to spend our entire time working its sloughs and treed area. My time with Isidor, with his more than 20-years experience photographing birds, proved to be an opportunity of a lifetime and I learned more "tricks of the trade" than I thought possible.

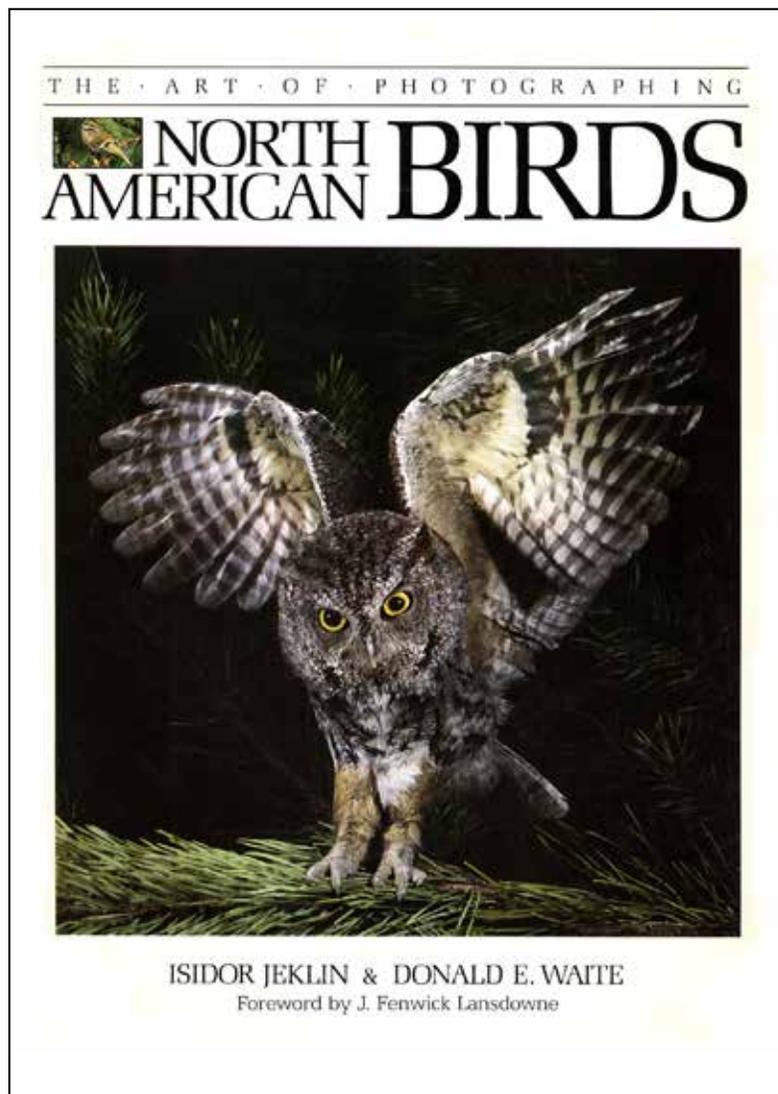
For the first several days, Isidor, Larry, and I checked out the different areas in order to line

up some different nesting situations. Larry often used a telescopic golf ball retriever with a large mirror to check out the progress of nests 20 to 25-feet up in trees. As the mirror was positioned above the nest, Isidor would look at it with a pair of binoculars and report that the nest was empty, contained a clutch of eggs, or had young. Larry used a dentist's mirror, which also telescoped, and flashlight to check out the progress of hole-nesting birds.

At one particular pond, Isidor and I worked the nests of Yellow-headed Blackbirds while Larry concentrated on the nest of a Red-winged Blackbird. The nests of both blackbirds were built from dead marsh grass cleverly woven and lashed to the sides of living cattail stems. Because the stems supporting the nest I was working grew unevenly, it was tipped over on its side almost dumping its ready to fledge occupants. The antics of the adult male was amusing to watch. After feeding his young, he would retire to a nearby cattail or land on crusteal algae floating in the deeper part of the pond. At irregular intervals the bird would fly after an insect on the wing. These erratic aerial acrobatics often resulted in several misses before the insect was caught giving the impression that the bird had gone berserk. Often he would fly twenty to thirty feet up into the sky only to parachute back down in order to show off his white epaulets to rival males. On the second day the parents began withholding food and instead of flying directly to the nest, the male approached by walking on the ground. His ploy worked and one of the young, in begging for food, leaned too far and tumbled from the nest. Moments later the rest of the babies jumped out into the cattails where the parents resumed feeding.

In the past I had often worked a nest for several days but would dismantle all my equipment each night and go home. At Pilot Mound things were different. It was not uncommon for Isidor and Larry to put in three shifts of 3-4 hours each in their blinds and take 50-60 photographs per day of a single nesting situation. Most mornings they would be up at daybreak and shooting for three hours before breakfast since that was when the birds were most active feeding. A drizzle did not put them out of operation since the flash heads were covered by clear plas-

tic bags that allowed the light to pass through without any loss in intensity or shift in color. Instead of using cumbersome three-legged tripods in the water to hold the flash heads, they used 1" x 2" stakes of various lengths that could be pushed into the mud. The flash heads were then duck-taped into position. If the ground was hard Isidor used a "hole-maker", a tool similar to a crowbar, to start holes for the stakes.



The title 'The Art of Photographing North American Birds, first published in 1984, eventually sold 44,000 copies. The first run consisted of 10,000 paperbacks and 2,000 hard copies with Whitecap Books of North Vancouver. I later did a buy back of 8,000 copies along with the contract for .10 cents on the \$. A short time later I signed a contract with Galahad Books of New York. They ran 10,000 copies on 3 different occasions over the next 7 years.

He also used the hole-maker when setting up his blind posts in hard ground. Since we were camped near our equipment, they would place garbage bags over their cameras and tripods just before retiring. Only the wet cell batteries for their flash heads were removed for recharging overnight at the home of a nearby farmer. The last task on the agenda each evening before crawling into our sleeping bags was a detailed accounting of the day's events as it was always from these notes that any books are written.

At one slough near Pilot Mound I discovered the nest of a Blue-winged Teal. Once everything was set up I hid in my blind and waited. The pair of bluewings would do a fly pass before alighting in some blow down sedge midway between the nest and the slough. The female would sit for twenty minutes before flying within twenty-five feet of the nest. Slowly, over a period of fifteen to twenty-minutes, she walked to the nest. Once at the nest, she used her bill to uncover the down from on top of the eggs before straddling the clutch with her legs. After turning the eggs with her feet, she settled down and very carefully tamped the down around herself with the bottom side of her bill. She sometimes elevated her tail much higher than her head or stretched her wings revealing her pale blue shoulder patches.

The next day Isidor volunteered to do a stint in my blind using my equipment to compare methods of operation. He criticized me for not removing more of the dead grass. Isidor acknowledged that purists might condemn his tidying up of a site but went on to say that many images were ruined by distracting surroundings. He was most impressed with two features of my camera—the meter prism and a correction lens identical to the prescription for my glasses that included a Fresnel lens that made it four times brighter than the stock meter that came with the camera. This Fresnel lens made critical focusing much faster in low light situations. During our time together Isidor had ample time to examine my custom-made high-speed strobes and make several suggestions for improvement.

Isidor and Larry each discovered the nest of an American Avocet. Isidor's nest was discovered right on the path that steers used to their

watering hole while Larry's nest was located on a small island in the middle of the slough. Neither situation was ideal for photography. I watched as Isidor began preparation for photography. He first did a 360 degree walk around the nest hand holding his camera and 250 mm lens examining the various angles, heights and distances from the nest through the camera's viewfinder. Once satisfied with the right angle and height he set up his tripod and camera before building his blind around his equipment. Once the blind was in place, Isidor did something that really intrigued me. He drove several stakes into the ground in a bee-line with the nest and blind. By following along these stakes he was able to come and go using the blind as a cover without ever disturbing the incubating bird. During the set up on the nest I talked to Isidor about the cattle pasturing nearby and mentioned that his project stood between them and their watering hole. Since I had been raised on a farm, I knew that bovines were extremely curious. I recommended that he dismantle his project upon leaving it daily. Isidor told me not to worry as he and Larry would be sleeping in the nearby truck and would be able to monitor the movements of the steers but the following morning they awoke to find the nest and the blind trampled into the mud.

Larry had better luck with his avocet nest on the island where he had set up his camera equipment and blind. The day was fairly windy and Larry had to use several large clamps to secure the cloth material to the blind's four posts to stop any movement that would frighten his subjects. Larry's major problem with this very tame and obliging subject was that the bird approached the nest in a crouch position and would slink onto the nest thereby covering the eggs. Larry wanted a shot of the avocet standing over its clutch and requested that I use the canoe and act as a "come-backster". Each time I rowed the canoe toward the nest at ninety degrees to the blind, the incubating bird would stand up allowing Larry to take several profile shots. This today, would certainly be another case of harassment.

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Lawrence F. Parsons, Isidor Jeklin and mesharing adventures photographing prairie birds at the tiny farming community of Pilot Mound in southern Manitoba in June, 1984.

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One of the "tricks" that Isidor used to find

ground nesting birds was a long 50-foot rope. He and I walked a grid and slowly dragged the rope over the grassy fields to flush birds. Once we lifted a Clay-coloured Sparrow with young babies.

The next morning at base camp Larry built a 4' x 4' pallet from 2" x 4" board to which he affixed four corner posts of 8" long by 1 inch in diameter pipe into which were placed the four posts from Isidor's blind. watched as Isidor began preparation for photography. He first did a 360 degree walk around the nest hand holding his camera and 250 mm lens examining the various angles, heights and distances from the nest through the camera's viewfinder. Once satisfied with the right angle and height he set up his tripod and camera before building his blind around his equipment. Once the blind was in place, Isidor did something that really intrigued me. He drove several stakes into they ground in a bee-line with the nest and blind. By following along these stakes he was able to come and go using the blind as a cover without ever disturbing the incubating bird. During the set up on the nest I talked to Isidor about the cattle pasturing nearby and mentioned that



Isidor Jeklin, co-author of the 1984 title 'The Art of Photographing North American Birds' at the nest of a Swainson's Hawk near the farming community of Pilot Mound, Manitoba. Isidor was in a blind atop a 20-foot scaffold photographing the hawks when a hurricane hit topling the structure into the nest tree.

his project stood between them and their watering hole. Since I had been raised on a farm, I knew that bovines were extremely curious. I recommended that he dismantle his project upon leaving it daily. Isidor told me not to worry as he and Larry would be sleeping in the nearby truck and would be able to monitor the movements of the steers but the following morning they awoke to find the nest and the blind trampled into the mud.

Larry had better luck with his avocet nest on the island where he had set up his camera equipment and blind. The day was fairly windy and Larry had to use several large clamps to secure the cloth material to the blind's four posts to stop any movement that would frighten his subjects. Larry's major problem with this very tame and obliging subject was that the bird approached the nest in a crouch position and would slink onto the nest thereby covering the eggs. Larry wanted a shot of the avocet standing over its clutch and requested that I use the canoe and act as a "come-backster". Each time I rowed the canoe toward the nest at ninety degrees to the blind, the incubating bird would stand up allowing Larry to take several profile shots. This today, would certainly be another case of harassment.

On the 14 June I watched while Isidor and Larry decided about the setup for the Swainson's Hawk. They had rented four sections of steel construction scaffolding and five 2" x 12" x 9' long spruce planks in Altona and had left them near the nest tree. Isidor decided that a field of flax on the east side of the shelter belt would make a pleasing green backdrop for photography. Larry placed the ladder against the tree and using it climbed up to check out the young hawks. From directly underneath the nest he lowered a rope weighed with a hammer to the ground. Where the hammer struck Isidor drove a stake while Larry measured the distance and found that the base of the nest was 20-feet from the ground. From the stake Isidor moved twelve feet west and drove a second stake. At a twelve-foot distance from the centre of the nest Isidor had determined earlier that the 250 mm lens of his Hasselblad would yield full frame images of the adult hawk and the young. The two men then quickly centered one five-foot high section planked platform and set up the blind.



Swainson's Hawk, Pilot Mound, Manitoba, 1984.



A freak storm topples a 20-foot scaffolding into the Swainson's Hawks' nest tree.

He also nailed 2" x 2" crosspieces to the spruce planks so they would not be able to shift once they were positioned on top of the scaffolding. He then placed the pallet in the centre of the 5-foot by 9-foot corner posts of the tower which he tied off to two trees and two stakes that had been driven into the field. Once the five planks had been pulled up by rope to the top of the scaffolding and positioned Larry added a three foot high scaffolding over the stake using plum lines to make sure that everything was absolutely level. Pieces of 2" x 4" x 12" board were used underneath the four corner posts for leveling. Once these tasks were completed we left to allow the female to get back to feed and brood her babies.

On the 19 June Larry ran out two 1" x 2" x 12" slats towards the nest from the planks to which he attached two flash heads for lighting. Although the battery for the two flash heads were in the blind, the heads themselves were positioned only 6-feet from the nest permit-

ting exposures at f-8 at 125 second. This camera setting allowed the light from the sun to properly illuminate the green field background while the light from the strobes acted as fill on the hawk family. Isidor then climbed the tower and entered the blind. With the camera on the tripod, he was shooting down and into the nest. He told me that he would stick his hat out of the corner of the blind when he wanted to be relieved. Larry and I played the role of "go-awayster" or decoy and left the area in an effort to trick the birds of prey into believing that no one was left in the blind. Fortunately Isidor was shooting in an easterly direction and the wind was from the north. Since all birds of prey prefer to fly into the wind when landing, he was able to obtain several profile shots of the female alighting at the nest. Twice the male appeared with a ground squirrel for the female. He would land in a nearby field, devour part of the animal, and then scream for his mate to come for what was left. She always flew down



Me installing a photo-electric triggering device at the burrow of an Ancient Murrelet on Reef Island, Haida Gwaii, 1985.



An employee of the Canadian Wildlife Service holds a breeding Ancient Murrelet upside down to show its brood patch in the pitch darkness on Reef Island, Haida Gwaii, 1985.

In 2007, 22 years later, this image was used as part of a 463-page prosecution package against me for photographing a Yellow-breasted Chat at Oliver, British Columbia.

to him for the food. At the nest she would tear the squirrel into tiny morsels and feed it to her young. During his hours in concealment Isidor managed to obtain thirty photographs. Larry and I also took our turns in the blind.

Our time at Pilot Mound certainly produced its share of excitement and my diary for June 21 reads in part: "At 6:00 p.m. a freak storm hits without warning and winds go from zero to 75 to 100 m.p.h. in less than one minute. I start the car and race to the blind. The dust coming off the ploughed in summer fallow between us and the scaffolding is so thick that it is difficult to see the tower. I drive the car near the scaffolding and jump out with Larry on my heels. By this time one of the guy ropes has pulled up a stake and the rope is blowing wildly in the wind. The storm has also torn open the velcro slits on the blind and all four sides are blowing at the same height as the blind's roof. The wind is so severe that I have to run crouched over to keep from being bowled over. Just as I am within twenty feet of the tower a second stake pulls loose and the tower begins to topple over with Isidor still on top of the 20-foot high platform. Miraculously the scaffolding gets hung up in the nest tree and does not crash to the ground. Both flash heads shoot past the nest and anything not nailed down is blown into the next shelter belt. During all the commotion Isidor still has not become visible. As Larry climbs the ladder against the nest tree, Isidor emerges clutching his camera. He is badly shaken but not injured. Realizing this I race back to the car and grab my camera and tripod and begin taking photographs. Incredibly the sky is blue with big towering cumulus clouds." Later that evening we returned to the truck and toppled the twisted scaffolding with a winch. A check of the nest revealed that the young hawks had come through the ordeal unscathed. Isidor informed me that the incident was among the most dangerous he had experienced in his 70 plus years. Had Larry not nailed the 2" x 2" crosspieces to the planks they would most certainly had slid off the tower resulting in serious injury or even death to Isidor.

Upon my return from the prairies, I had a stack of mail. The two that had the most impact were from Marcel Vallée and Eric Hosking. The let-

ter from Marcel informed me that grant money would be available to me if I returned to Triangle Island and continued with my seabird photography. The family had set up the Anne Vallée Ecological Fund. The letter from Hosking condemned my methods of obtaining my images. After fuming for several days, I decided that it would be in my best interest to take to heart the criticisms of a man with fifty years of experience under his belt. I received letters from Eliot Porter, North America's premier bird photographer, and his assistant. While Porter praised my images his assistant told me that she was a purist and never photographed birds at the nest. She lied to me as I had seen some of her bird photographs at nests in published books. She returned my book. Roger Tory Peterson was gracious and even offered to write a testimonial on future editions. He wrote: "This is one of the most beautiful collections of photographic portraits of North American birds yet produced. It is technically superb and esthetically pleasing." He agreed to write the Foreword in a second title.

I got in touch with the Canadian Wildlife Service office in Vancouver to ask if anyone had plans of going back to Triangle Island. I was told that my request had come too late and that the season had already past. I then learned that three biologists with the service would be carrying out research on seabird populations on Reef Island on Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands) and that they would be returning again in 1985. I learned that a graduate student had carried out experiments on Reef Island for a masters degree on 'The vocalizations of the Ancient Murrelet' and that he would be returning to complete his project. I wrote to Dr. Anthony J. Gaston, the Co-ordinator for Seabird Research with the Migratory Birds Branch of the CWS, and learned that Ian L. Jones, the graduate student from the Department of Zoology at the University of Toronto, and his assistant brother would be going out to the island on 6 April, himself the 10 May, and the student's professor on 25 May. All would come off the island on 22 June. Tony suggested I fly in with him and out when the professor came in. I wrote to my sponsors and they agreed to allow me to spend the grant money for air fare for the trip.

I talked to Ian in an attempt to learn everything I could about conditions on the island and its seabirds. He told me that a five-mile crossing in a 13.5-foot inflatable rubber boat would in all likelihood be extremely wet and to make sure all my equipment was well sealed in plastic garbage bags for protection against salt water. He went on to say that my most serious problem while on the island would be the continuous wet weather. When questioned about the Ancient Murrelets he explained that these seabirds spend their days far out at sea and visited their burrows only during total darkness. When I mentioned my infra-red light triggering device he stated that the birds' eyes would be sensitive to any light emitting gadget and that the birds would likely desert their burrows.

Before my departure for the island I purchased a Polaroid back for my Hasselblad camera and found that camera settings that resulted in slightly overposed Polaroid prints yielded properly exposed transparencies. For backup I brought two extra motorcycle batteries that were each capable of firing the Ken Olson high-speed strobe unit 75 times when fully charged. In order to keep them fully charged I borrowed an Arco Solar Electric Module 81 Generator from authors Sally and Ian Tatlow.

I also picked up spare batteries for my camera's meter prism but decided not to purchase a second expensive rechargeable battery for the camera's motor drive. I did pack a small box with a 2" x 3" lid under which was fitted a tiny micro-switch. Any pressure on the lid shorted the switch that was hooked up to fire the camera.

On 10 May 1985 Tony and I flew by chartered aircraft from Vancouver International Airport to Sandspit on Haida Gwaii and from there by a Beaver on floats to Thurston Harbour, on the eastern rim of Moresby Island. From there Ian picked us up in the inflatable boat. The two flights and the boat ride to Reef Island went smoothly. Shortly after landing I accompanied Ian up a mountain slope in the rain to one of the high density study plots for nesting Ancient Murrelets. I noticed that Ian had placed plastic knock-down tabs in each of the burrows to monitor the comings and goings of the parent birds. It was then that he explained that these birds only exchanged incubation duties every third night and that they did not feed their young at the burrows. Instead the two young fledged a few days after hatching and made a mad dash down the slope to join their parents at sea. If I was going to have any success with my micro-switch, I would have to find my own study area, set up my own tabs made of sticks, and attempt to discover which burrows were active, and then choose one and hope for the best.

A few days after my arrival I packed my five cases of equipment up the slope to set up on a burrow just below one of Ian's plots in readiness for nightfall. With my jackknife I dug a hole in the soft earth just outside the burrow and in it placed the box containing the micro-switch. I then covered everything over with a sprinkling of earth mixed with Western Hemlock needles. That night



An American Black Oystercatcher hides in lava rock on Reef Island, Haida Gwaii, 1985.



Cassin's Auklet, Reef Island, Haida Gwaii, 1985.

I accompanied the biologists and students up the slope with the aid of head lamps and safety ropes. When all the lamps were turned off it was so dark that I was unable to see my hand held in front of my face. All I could see after several minutes of staring into the black void were patches of stars through the 150-200 feet tall virgin growth of Sitka Spruce, Western Red Cedar and Western Hemlock.

Ian and I parted company with his only request being that I not begin my photography that night until after 2:00 a.m. as he had experiments in progress. In my enthusiasm to make some Polaroid test shots I forgot to check my watch and was just examining my first exposure when a mad demon in the form of Ian appeared out of the darkness. The graduate student told me that my strobe lights had illuminated his entire study plot putting all the birds into flight thus ruining his experiment. He went on to say that his brother had been tape recording murrelet vocalizations and that immediately after the flash they had stopped. The conversation then terminated with him telling me that he wanted my camera, my strobes and me off the slope for the rest of my stay. My watch revealed that it was just 2:00 a.m. I had started my photographs a few minutes before his experiments were to have ended. After tempers cooled I was told to carry on with my photography work for the duration of the night but to move further down the slope the next day.

The following day I chatted with Ian and his brother about my screw up of the previous night. Ian told me that he had been using a Night Viewing Device that amplified light very similar to the way a loudspeaker system amplifies sound. He had been looking through the device when I took the photograph and the result was similar to being hit in the eyeball with a bolt of lightning. The burst of light illuminated the sidehill so brilliantly that his brother instinctively dove for cover.

My move partways down the slope proved to be a blessing since I was able to find burrows no more than a five minute walk from base camp. Now when it rained, I could quickly box the camera and strobes' chassis and carry the cases to my tent. My first night at the new location ended abruptly when the rechargeable battery

for the camera's motor drive refused to advance the film after the first exposure. Although I was able to use the camp's gas generator the next morning the battery failed to take on any charge and remained as dead as a door nail. At this low point I was ready to call it quits when Tony suggested I try and hot wire the camera using a six-volt battery. Although the wires and battery were an inconvenience the camera functioned for the rest of my stay. As it turned out, we had 9 continuous days without rain—something almost unheard of for Haida Gwaii—and I made the most of the opportunity by working the nocturnal seabirds at night and the diurnal species such as the American Black Oystercatcher during the day.

By the time bad weather set in the outsides of both my knees were badly bruised from packing my cases of equipment between locations daily. At the end of two weeks I had managed to photograph Ancient Murrelets, a Cassin's Auklet and an American Black Oystercatcher.

It was interesting to watch the method that the CWS to capture Ancient Murrelets for study. The team chased down the murrelets and captured them with the aid of headlamps and fish nets.

Aware that I wasn't having any success with my night photography, Gaston gave me non-breeders to place down a burrow and the subjects would take their own portraits by stepping on the triggering device upon flying out of the hole. One time Tony had a non-breeder that he had not bothered to band for me. He held it on the branch of a tree while I focused and I managed to obtain several great shots.

I used headlamps and a net and sometimes helped the researchers capture birds. One night I was quite surprised to capture a nocturnal bird that was not an Ancient Murrelet. It turned out to be a Cassin's Auklet.

In 1992 Tony published his book 'The Ancient Murrelet A Natural History in the Queen Charlotte Islands'. In 2011 I talked to Tony about being charged with photographing a Yellow-breasted Chat and that part of the crown's prosecution package against me made reference to an image from my web site of an Ancient Murrelet being held upside down to show its brood patch. Ironically although I took the



Ancient Murrelet, Reef Island, Haida Gwaii



Breaking Dawn 1990 -

Oil painting by Dinah 'Tina' Waite

My wife made this oil painting using my photograph & a skin borrowed from Dick Cannings when he ran the Vertebrate Museum at the University of BC.

photograph, the person holding the bird was an employee of Tony's team. Tony and I talked about the wrongs that were allowed to take place back then that are longer acceptable today.