

AFTERWORD

How does one quantify a photograph? In the case of any of mine—over 15,000 in the last three years—it might be in terms of time spent in the blind, watching and taking pictures. I spent a total of 750 hours in my blind. Add to that travel and set-up time, and I'm well over 1,000 hours. I have absolutely no idea how many kilometres I've travelled, either by car or on foot—a rough guess would put it at more than 5,000. I know that I've photographed more than 50 different species of birds in these last three seasons alone. However, all of that effort and time seems to fade away when I look at my photographs. I think about all those individual moments I captured, tiny fragments of time when everything came together for an instant. I mostly remember what the birds were doing, and it never fails to evoke some sort of emotional response from me.

As I sit here writing this account, eight months have passed since I last ventured out in search of birds to photograph. Much of my time and energy, of course, have been wrapped up in the production of *Flights of Fantasy*. I long to get outside again and breathe the fresh air as I hike off in search of new nests to photograph. Whenever I think of the potential adventures that lie just outside my door, I feel a great anticipation. It must be spring.

I have plans to travel. Don and I have talked about another trip to Oregon, and possibly the Okanagan region of BC, this spring and summer. We both hope to produce more books—the format is constantly evolving as we strive to improve our work. I'd like to return to Arizona and Costa Rica to photograph wildlife. I've heard great things about New Zealand birding, and one day I hope to photograph birds and animals in the Galapagos Islands.

I also dream about opportunities to photograph particularly lovely North American birds. Lazuli Buntings, Pine Grosbeaks, Evening Grosbeaks, White-winged Crossbills, McGillivray's Warblers, Gray-crowned Rosy Finches, Bohemian Waxwings, and Western Tanagers are just a few of many birds Don and I have long hoped to photograph.

As this book goes to press, Don and I are collaborating with an electronics expert for the purpose of building several state-of-the-art high-speed strobe systems in readiness for the upcoming birding season. As well, I am hoping to upgrade my Nikon D70S camera body from a 6.1-megapixel (capable of producing 6.667" x 10.227" 300 dpi photo quality files) up to the new D2X body capable of producing 9.493" x 14.293" photo quality files. For this book several of the pictures have been computer-upsized by interpolation to the larger print sizes. Don's Canon EOS-1 Ds camera produces 11.093" x 16.64" photo quality files and is used in conjunction with a 100–400 mm zoom and a 180 mm macro lens.

For those photographers interested in my camera settings, I usually shot birds at f 22, at 1/500th of a second, and at an ISO of 200. The distance of the three strobes from the nest was approximately four feet (back light), five feet (main light), and six feet (fill light) respectively, and I shot everything with my 70–300mm zoom lens. My blind was generally about eight feet away.

Don and I have talked at great length about ways to improve our nest finding and photography. One piece of technology that may soon be more readily available (and affordable) to us is thermal vision—allowing one to find nests much more quickly and with less stress to the birds by recognizing heat "signatures." We also hope to have strobe units that fire three shots in rapid succession and are more rugged in the field.

Although all of these advancements in technology would aid me in my quest for great pictures, I also know that hard work, dedication, and perseverance will take me as far as I dare to imagine myself going. And that would be my advice to any fledgling photographers: Never give up! Keep striving to capture that fleeting moment—the next shot you take just might be the one.

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