

For most of you who don't know me and that would be just about everyone, with the exception of Bekkie. My name is Rodney Brown and I reside in Kingsville, Ontario with my beautiful wife Jennie.

Between us we have 4 children and 2 grandchildren, I work as a electrician at Chrysler Canada and when I am not at work I am out doing what I love the best photographing birds, rapture and wildlife.

I love the art of photography and yes it is an art, because it is the only art form that enables you to capture and preserve a point in time at an exact moment that can never be duplicated but can viewed for years to come.

Now the question probably on everybody's mind is how did a Canadian boy like myself end up becoming a member of the Ohio Valley Camera Club of West Virginia

Well, you can blame Bekkie for that, I meet Bekkie through a photography forum and we just seem to hit it off and after finding out she was from St. Catharine's Ontario and was kidnapped and sold to some Ohio man named Jim Harper and I think he told me it only cost him his heart and soul. I had to meet her.

We decided to meet up in Niagara Falls when they were visiting her mom and dad and had a wonderful time, even though the temperature on that day was the hottest day of all summer, now come to think of it the last couple years we have visited with Jim and Bekkie it has either been blistering hot, raining or freezing cold. Hopefully this year might be a little different.

On one of our chats she had asked if I wanted to join a photography club that she was a member of and she told me about all the wonderful photographers and that everyone was down to earth and just loved sharing their photos and their photography knowledge.

I wasn't quite sure how this was all going to work out but I said what the hay and decide to give it go. I have not regretted it. I've had the privilege of talking to, members like Joe Browning and with the word Brown in his last name I knew he had to be good. (Just kidding) I have also greatly enjoyed the waterfall shots and his book (thanks for autographed edition) of none other than Randall Sanger and hopefully after tonight I will have some new photography friends.

I have taken beginners, intermediate and advanced photography at St Clair College as well as some workshops in Texas and Cincinnati and had the privilege of shooting with top notch photographers like Fab and Alfred Forns.

I have also read just about every photography book I could get my hands on so my knowledge is pretty decent, but I know that I have only touch the tip of the iceberg and there is always so much more to learn.

Well, I would like to just say thanks to everyone for allowing me to join your photography family and look forward to talking to each of you. If I can in anyway help or answer any questions you may have or any questions on my photography please feel free to chat with me.

I have been asked if I would do a little presentation on my wildlife and birding photography and offer up a few tips as well talk about the equipment that I use and my camera settings.

I would like to first of all say that I am by no means an expert in this field, and these are just my views of how I do my photography and what I have learnt or been shown by others.

I wasn't quite sure how I was going to go about doing this so I thought I would try to do it in steps starting with birding ethics, my equipment, exposure set-up, camera set-up and ending with approaching and creating great bird pictures even in your own backyard.

1. American Birding Assoc Birding Ethics states that you are to promote the welfare of the bird and their environment, Respect the law, and right of others and their property, Ensure that feeders, nest structures and other artificial bird environments are safe. All in all the point being that the welfare and safety of the bird comes first your photo comes second.
2. Equipment – There is such a wide variety of equipment used with Nikon and Canon being in the fore front and the battle which is the better camera will never be agreed upon. The list of equipment on the market now and upcoming is always changing with high resolution, quicker camera and

longer lenses almost changing yearly. The cost of equipment is always rising and can cost you into the 10 of thousands of dollars for a single set up.

Equipment does make a difference and to shoot wildlife you will need a lens in the 300mm and above range and the glass does need to be somewhat fast.

Here is my set up.

- a) Camera Body – I shoot with the Nikon D700 and D800 DSLR camera body and I also have recently shot with Canon 5D Mark II with a 100 - 400mm zoom lens which I really enjoyed. The main reason I like Nikon is where the controls are.
- b) Lens – My main lens is the Nikon 500mm f/4 lens and Nikon 70-200 f/2.8 with or without a 1.4X or a 2.0X Teleconverter. I had looked at the 600mm lens but since I like to hand hold my lens when doing birds in flight the 600 is way heavier and the cost was more than I wanted to spent or could afford.
- c) Tripod – There are many great suppliers of tripods, make sure the one you purchase will be light enough for you to carry around and sturdy enough to handle the weight of your equipment. The money you save on a cheaper tripod can cost you plenty for camera and lens replacement or repairs if the tripod fails. My preference in tripods is Manfrotto for my smaller lens/camera setup and Gitzo for my larger lens/camera setup.
- d) Heads – For my large lens I use is a Wimberley Arc Swiss Heads with a Flash Bracket. I have tried other heads before I purchase the Wimberley to find that when I had locked the focus point on the subject and let go of the camera the camera would drifted due to the weight of the lens where the Wimberley held stead fast which is very important to me when trying to hold focus on the eyes. For my smaller lenses I have a wide variety of different Manfrotto. There are a wide variety of others heads but these are the ones I use.

- e) I also use a Protective Neoprene cover from Lens Coat to protect my lens and tripod from damage from twigs and trees and it makes it more comfortable when resting on your shoulder.
- f) I use Nikon SB-800 and SB-910 Flash with a Better Beamer Flash Extender that is attached to an External Battery Pak for quicker flash recycle. The Better Beamer is like a magnifying glass that narrows the beam of light emitted from your flash increasing the range by a little more than 2 stops.
- g) I also use extension tubes to be able to get closer to the subject.
- h) I also lug around a Backpack filled with:
 - a) The Sibley Guide to Birds, note pad and pen or pencil
 - b) pruners, tywrap, little water container for plants (get at your local florist), water, snacks, etc
 - c) Pair of good Binoculars
 - d) GPS and/or compass
 - e) Bug Repellent
 - f) Cell Phone
 - g) Garbage Bag (In case of rain)
 - h) Toilet Paper (in case of emergencies)
 - i) First Aid Kit
 - j) Tool Kit
 - k) Small chair
 - l) Kwik Camo Cover

Before I move on to exposure and camera set-up are there any questions on camera equipment.

Prologue: Just so you know there are no secret settings for photographing birds or wildlife, the same three settings (ISO, Shutter Speed, Aperture) that you use for photographing landscapes, portraits, sports, macro are the same that you use for wildlife and birding. The only thing different is how you use them to get proper exposure, how to blur the background or freeze any movement.

3. Exposure Set-up:

- a) Exposure Mode: A lot of my friends work in Aperture Priority but I like to work in manual mode 90% of the time, the reason I work in manual mode is because it gives me the greatest amount of control and consistency. I control the camera. In manual you set the exposure variables and as long as the light doesn't change, your exposure will be correct even if the background tonality or the size of the bird changes.

When I first started shooting in manual I would set the ISO first than my Aperture and then adjust my shutter speed to give me proper exposure.

Now that I am shooting cameras that can handle the higher ISO I have started shooting like this. **Taught by Robert OToole.**

- b) I set my aperture first anywhere from f/5.6 to f/11 depending upon how much depth of field I want. I usually try to get the whole bird into focus, but a little blurring of the tips of wing is ok as long as the eyes are tack sharp and most of the birds body.

- c) I then set my shutter speed next, for stationary birds I use a Shutter speed of 1/250-1/800s, for birds in flight and/or fast action I use a Shutter Speed of 1/1600s and faster.

- d) The last thing I set is my ISO because I use it to control my exposure, with the new technology in camera being able to handle high ISO I can use a higher ISO without fear of a lot of noise

“My Theory is it is better to have a sharp high ISO picture than a soft low ISO picture.”

Now, if I am working where the light is constantly changing I still use Manual but I switch over to Auto-ISO and fine tune with exposure compensation.

Are there any questions before I start on exposure set-up.

4) Camera Set-up:

a) Release Mode – I keep my camera bodies set on the fastest continuous release rate. Release rate is how many and how fast the camera can record photos when you hold down the shutter button.

b) Focus Mode – for photographing static subject you can set your Focus mode to S (Single Servo), which means when you press the shutter release button half way down the camera focuses on the subjects and locks the focus as long as you hold the shutter button or until you fully release the shutter button.

When photographing moving subject as Bird in Flight you should set the focus mode to C (Continuous Focus). In continuous focus when you aim the camera at the subject and push the shutter button half way the camera will track and continuously focus on the subject as it moves.

I shoot with my camera always on continuous focus. In my custom menu I activate the AF-ON for the back focus button.

What is AF-ON / back focus button: It is a button on the back of the camera that when set-up through the custom setting menu allows auto focus to be performed by pressing that AF-ON button only and the shutter release button used to take the picture.

c). **Metering Mode** – I use Matrix metering almost 85% of the time and will use spot metering in tricky lighting situation once in a while.

It would take me a while to explain all my camera settings I use so I have produced a spread sheet for your viewing to show all my settings.

Note: - as you can see I shoot in raw so I can set all my controls like sharpening, contrast, brightness, etc at 0 . Then I can control all my development settings in post production.

<i>Setting</i>	<i>Bank A (defaults)</i>	<i>Bank B (normal)</i>	<i>Bank C (Portrait)</i>	<i>Bank D (Wildlife)</i>
Active folder	100	100	100	100
File naming	DSC	DSC	DSC	DSC
Image quality	JPEG fine	NEF	NEF	NEF
Image size	Large	Large	Large	Large
JPEG compression	Size priority	Optimal quality	Optimal quality	Optimal quality
NEF recording type	--	Lossless compressed	Lossless compressed	Lossless compressed
NEF recording bit depth	--	14-bit	14-bit	14-bit
White balance	Auto	Auto	Auto	Auto
Set Picture Control	Standard	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Sharpening	3	0	0	0
Contrast	0	0	0	0
Brightness	0	0	0	0
Saturation	0	0	0	0
Hue	0	0	0	0
Color space	sRGB	sRGB	sRGB	argb
Active D-Lighting	Off	Off*	Off*	Off*
Vignette Control	Normal	Off*	Off*	Off*
Long exp. NR	Off	On	On	On
High ISO NR	On (normal)	Off	Off	Off*
ISO sensitivity value	200	200	200	200
ISO sensitivity auto control	Off	Off	Off	On
ISO sensitivity max sensitivity	--	--	--	3200
ISO sensitivity min shutter speed	--	--	--	1/250

	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Bank A (defaults)</i>	<i>Bank B (normal)</i>	<i>Bank C (Portrait)</i>	<i>Bank D (Wildlife)</i>
A1	AF-C Mode	Release	Release	Focus	Release
A2	AF-S Mode	Focus	Focus	Focus	Release
A3	Dynamic AF Area	9 points	21 points	21 points	51 points
A4	Lock-On	Normal	Normal	Off	Long
A5	AF Activation	Shutter/AF-ON	AF-ON only	Shutter/AF-ON	AF-ON only
A6	Focus Pt Illum	Auto	Auto	On	On
A7	Focus Wrap	No Wrap	Wrap	Wrap	Wrap
A8	AF Pt Selection	AF51	AF51	AF51	AF51
A9	AF-Assist	On	Off	Off	Off
A10	MB-D10 AF-ON	AF-ON	AF-ON	AF-ON	AF-ON
B1	ISO Step	1/3	1/3	1/3	1/3
B2	EV Step	1/3	1/3	1/3	1/3
B3	Exp Comp EV	1/3	1/3	1/3	1/3
B4	Exposure Comp	Off	Off	Off	Off
B5	Center Weight	12mm	12mm	12mm	8mm
B6	Fine tune Exp	0	0	0	0

C1	AE Lock	Off	Off	Off	Off
C2	Auto Meter Off	6s	6s	6s	6s
C3	Self Timer	10s	10s	5s	2s
C4	Monitor Off	10s, 20s, 10s, 4s	10s, 20s, 10s, 4s	10s, 20s, 10s, 4s	10s, 20s, 10s, 4s
D1	Beep	High	Off	Off	Off
D2	Viewfinder Grid	Off	On	On	On
D3	Screen Tips	On	On	On	On
D4	Shooting Speed	3 fps	1 fps	1 fps	5 fps
D5	Max Cont Release	100	100	100	100
D6	File No Seq	On	On	On	On
D7	Shooting info display	AUTO	AUTO	Auto	AUTO
D8	LCD Illumination	Off	Off	Off	Off
D9	Exp Delay Mode	Off	Off	Off	Off
D10	MB-D10 Battery	LR6	HR6	HR6	HR6
D11	Battery Order	MB-D10	MB-D10	MB-D10	MB-D10
E1	Flash Sync Speed	1/250 s	1/250 s (Auto FP)	1/250 s	1/320 s (Auto FP)
E2	Flash Shutter Speed	1/60	1/15	1/15	1/30
E3	Flash Mode	TTL	TTL	TTL	TTL
E4	Modeling Flash	On	On	On	Off
E5	Auto BKT Set	AE & Flash	AE only	Flash only	AE only
E6	Manual Mode Bkting	Flash/speed	Flash/speed	Flash only	Flash/aperture
E7	Bracketing order	Mtr, -, +	-, Mtr, +	-, Mtr, +	-, Mtr, +
F1	Power Switch	Illumination	Both	Both	Both
F2	Center Button	Center AF, Thumbnail	Center AF, Histogram	Center AF, Histogram	Center AF, Zoom
F3	Multi Selector	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing
F4	PhotoInfo	Default	Default	Default	Default
F5	FUNC Button	FV Lock	FV Lock	FV Lock	Spot metering
F6	Preview Button	default	default	default	default
F7	AE-L/AF-L Button	AE-L/AF-L	AE-L/AF-L, Bracketing	AE-L/AF-L, Bracketing	AE-L/AF-L, Bracketing
F8	Shutter/Aperture Lock	Off	Off	Off	Off
F9	Command Dials	Default	Default	Default	Default
F10	Buttons and Dials	Default	Default	Default	Default
F11	No CF Card	Enable release	Release Locked	Release Locked	Release Locked
F12	Reverse indicators	Default	Default	Default	Default

The next couple of pages are for your reading enjoyment and goes over recommendations on photographing birds, approaching shy birds and how to photograph birds in flight as well as a list of birding forums which contain an immense amount of information.

Here is how I recommend to photograph birds: : by Nasim Mansurov

1. Shoot at [high shutter speeds](#) of 1/800 and above to freeze the bird. For birds in flight and fast-action scenes, use shutter speeds above 1/1600. For birds that are just sitting on benches and not being active, you can use slower shutter speeds of 1/250-1/800 and lower ISO for better image quality (a tripod or a monopod for slower shutter speeds is highly recommended).
2. Always focus on the nearest (to the viewer) eye of the bird. It is acceptable to have a blurred tail or other parts of the bird, but at least one eye always needs to be in focus and sharp. For birds in flight, focus on the bird's head or chest – whichever provides better contrast for the camera autofocus system.
3. Choose your background carefully to achieve a smooth bokeh. Pictures with objects behind the bird are not as pleasant as pictures with a smooth background.
4. Be patient and wait for the bird to act naturally. Images with a bird sitting on a bench are boring, so try to capture interesting action instead.
5. Use a blind whenever possible. One of the best blinds is your car and you could get pretty close to a bird without scaring it with your vehicle. Birds are generally not scared of cars and you could drive up fairly closely and take some amazing shots. I have taken many beautiful shots of birds directly from my car, without getting out of it. Hunting blinds also work very well if you find the right spot such as a pond or a feeder.
6. Having a camera flash extender such as the "[Better Beamer](#)" is very helpful for fill flash, especially to photograph birds under tree leaves or in darker areas.
7. Shoot lots of images. I typically shoot a single image first, then take a look and make sure that the images are sharp and in focus. If everything looks good, I will shoot the bird in bursts of 5-10 frames at a time. Having a fast camera that can handle 5-6 frames per second is very helpful. I then go through hundreds

or sometimes even thousand of pictures at home and delete the images that I do not want.

8. Try to position yourself with your back towards the sun. Sometimes having the sun to the far left or right is OK, but having it behind you will give you the best light.
9. Shoot either early in the morning or closer to the evening. You will find that early morning or later afternoon provides the best opportunities, because the birds are hungry and are looking for food. I personally prefer to shoot early in the morning – that's when the birds are most active.
10. Try not to take pictures of birds in flight during a cloudy day. Photographs of birds with white or gray backgrounds don't look as good and are hard to deal with during post-processing.

Technique to approach shy birds: by Nasim Mansurov

1. DO NOT wear clothes with bright colors and try to blend in with the environment as much as possible. Although some photographers prefer wearing camouflage, I personally wear gray or light blue shirts with blue jeans, which work great.
2. If you are hiking and have been walking fast and all of a sudden you spot a bird that you want to photograph, slow down. Don't change your walking speed right away – slow down marginally, so that the bird does not detect sudden changes in your behavior.
3. Do NOT make sudden moves. If you need to raise your camera and take a picture, do it very slowly.
4. Turn off your cell phone or put it on silent mode. It really sucks when you are close to a bird and your phone starts ringing...
5. Once you see a bird, do NOT walk straight towards the bird, but rather walk **slowly** in zigzags. Sometimes walking in zig-zags is not very practical, especially if you have already scared the bird by your presence. The key is to walk slowly (sometimes 1-2 feet per minute or slower), no matter how you are approaching the bird.

- Also, instead of walking from heel to toe, try the other way around, keeping your weight on your back foot as you walk.
6. Try not to walk if the bird is looking at you. The best time to approach is when the bird is looking away or is busy doing something.
 7. Keep your noise to a minimum. Noise is hard to control if you are walking through bushes or if you have to step on fall leaves that create a cracking sound, so watch what you are stepping on and do it very slowly to diminish the noise.
 8. See if the bird is already scared – if it is staring at you and stopped doing whatever it was doing before, it means that the bird is on alert and might fly away any time. You can also tell if the bird is scared if the bird is raising its tail and pooping (especially raptors).
 9. Do NOT stare at the bird while approaching it. Animals in general perceive direct eye contact as a threat and they will flee at their first opportunity.
 10. Your camera shutter will most likely scare the bird you are approaching. Therefore, I recommend shooting the bird as you approach from the distance, so that the bird gets used to the shutter clicking noise.

How to Shoot Birds in Flight Handheld by Jim Neiger

Part #1

I am a full time professional bird photographer. I specialize in birds in flight. I make most of my living conducting workshops where I teach other photographers how to photograph birds in flight. One of the keys to successfully photographing birds in flight is to be able to make consistently correct exposures. There are usually no second chances, so getting exposure correct is critical.

Manual Exposure Mode:

The first thing to learn is to use manual exposure mode. Manual exposure mode is virtually a requirement when photographing birds in flight. The reason for this is the likelihood of changing backgrounds. If you use any of the automatic exposure modes, the camera will decide an exposure for you. When a bird flies across changing backgrounds, the camera may calculate a different exposure for each frame depending on the backgrounds. If the bird is in the same light all during the flight, then we want the one correct exposure for the bird, not a bunch of different exposures all but one of which will be wrong. The only way to achieve this is to use manual exposure mode.

Substitute metering method:

To arrive at a correct exposure I use a method I developed that I refer to as substitute metering. By substitute metering I mean using something other than the subject to meter on. I don't usually meter on the subject bird because the subject bird is often not present at the time I am determining the exposure. Instead, I use a constant in the environment. Something that is almost always readily available. In Florida I use bright green vegetation that is almost always present. When I was in Alaska in winter, I used snow. The important thing is that it is readily available and something you are familiar with. The first step is to fill the frame with the constant in the same light that you anticipate your subject being in. I usually choose constant that is in direct light. (In the direction my shadow is pointing) Then I adjust my settings so that the meter scale reads zero while filling the frame with the constant. I use full frame EV metering so that my reading is not thrown off too much by small areas of shadow or bright highlight within the constant. It's too easy to hit a dark or bright spot with spot metering, so I don't use it.

Step 2: is to compare the constant to the subject. This is a two part process. The first part is common sense. Determine if the subject is darker or lighter than the constant. This tells you if you need to increase or decrease your exposure. If the subject is darker, you need to increase exposure. If the subject is brighter, then you need to decrease exposure. The second part is to determine how much to increase or decrease exposure. This part is based on experience. If you do not have a relevant experience to call on, then you must guess. After you guess and make an exposure you can evaluate how you have done and then adjust if needed. This is how you build experiences to draw on in the future. Try to remember your experiences. This is sort of like keeping a database in your head. After doing this for a while, you will have enough experience to know how much to increase or decrease your exposure in pretty much any situation. One thing to consider is the intensity of the light and its effect on exposure. For example: If you use a middle tone green vegetation as a constant and you want to photograph a white Great Egret, common sense tells us that we need to decrease our exposure to avoid blowing out the white egret. We need to draw on experience to determine how much to decrease exposure. If it's just after sunrise and the light is very soft, the amount to decrease exposure may be only 1/3 of a stop. If we photograph the same bird at high noon, the amount we need to decrease exposure by will likely be as much as 2 stops. You can see from the example how much the intensity of the light can affect compensation amounts. Once you have built a solid database of experiences in your head and you have become consistent in getting correct exposures, you can easily do things like adjust exposure quickly on the fly when the subject or light changes. This can be done by counting clicks on the adjustment wheels and without repeating the metering process.

In part 2: I will talk about camera settings that are optimal for photographing birds in flight. Please feel free to ask questions or comment on my ideas.

Part#2

The camera settings below are designed specifically for bird photography using long lenses (400mm or more) and hand held technique. The settings were designed to allow all types of bird photography without sacrificing anything and without having to change settings other than exposure while in the field. This means I can always be ready for any situation without having to waste time adjusting camera settings. These settings are for a Canon 1D Mark IV, but there are equivalent settings in most camera bodies.

Camera Settings:

1. Manual exposure mode. This is almost a requirement for BIF when you have changing backgrounds. There are many other reasons as well. See Part 1 of the tutorial.
2. AI Servo AF - To allow AF tracking of moving subjects.
3. High speed continuous drive. This allows me to shoot in controlled bursts to capture the peak action shots.
4. Center AF point only for BIF against very busy and or close varied backgrounds. Center AF point plus surrounding AF point expansion for BIF against distant varied backgrounds or BIF against smooth sky or water backgrounds. When a variety of backgrounds are possible, I use center AF point only.
5. Tracking sensitivity set to SLOW. This should be used with bump focus technique. I will discuss this in part 3 of this tutorial.

6. * button set to AF Lock. I use this when shooting still subjects. It allows me to remain in AI Servo AF and center AF point, but still be able to compose images of still subjects in camera. This way I am always ready for action without compromising my ability to compose images of perched birds. I use the shutter button to focus
7. Contrast set to -2 - this only affects the jpeg used in the camera display. It does not affect the RAW file. This allows you to expose to the right a little tighter. It doesn't affect the RAW file, but does affect the decisions we make about exposure that are based on the LCD image, histogram, and flashing highlight alerts.

Lens Settings:

1. Lens focus limiter switch set to the longest near focus distance. This helps speed up AF in many situations.
2. IS ON - Mode 2

Part #3

Here is what I teach people in my workshops to do to develop a skill that I call Initial Acquisition Skill. By Initial Acquisition Skill I mean putting the bif in the center of the view finder and then focusing on it for the first time.

First of all look at the subject. There is a straight line of sight between your eye and the subject. While you are looking at the subject, quickly pop your camera and lens up to your eye in shooting position, and do it so that the imaginary line running from the camera sensor down the

middle of the lens barrel lines up with your line of sight to the subject. Make sure you are looking at the subject when you try this. With practice, you can put the bird right in the middle of the view finder every time. Start practicing with static subjects and work your way up to small fast moving subjects. It is possible to get to the point where you can go from a rest position to focused on a bif almost instantly. It takes lots of practice though and the difficulty increases with focal length. If you pre-focus at a similar distance the camera will focus quicker than if you are pre-focused at a very different distance than the subject.

Part #4

After I initially acquire the flying bird (see tutorial #3), I begin tracking and possibly photographing the bird. While tracking the bird I use a technique I call "bumping the focus".

Bump Focus Technique: To quickly focus or let off and refocus. There are three uses for the bump focus technique:

1. When I am tracking a BIF against a varied background and I miss and focus on the background I will bump the focus to quickly return focus to the bird. Bumping the focus overrides the delay set by the tracking sensitivity custom function. I set tracking sensitivity to slow to get the longest delay possible. This helps when you are focused on the bird and want to avoid focusing on the background, but it hurts when focused on the background and you want to return focus to the bird. Bumping the focus overrides the delay allowing you to use the long delay when it helps and override the delay entirely when it would hurt, thus getting the best of both worlds.

2. This is the most important use of the bump technique. Most photographers will acquire focus on a bif and then try to continuously maintain focus while they are tracking and watching the bif in the viewfinder. They tend to focus continuously waiting for the moment they wish to make a photograph. Often while watching, tracking, and waiting for the moment, the photographer will miss and focus on the

background. This is extremely easy to do when the bif is flying against a varied background. This is the reason it is so much more difficult to photograph BIF against a varied background as opposed to smooth sky bg. When the focus grabs the background, then the photographer needs to re-acquire focus on the bif. This may take too much time causing the photographer to miss the critical moment. I try to avoid this by only focusing on the BIF when I'm sure I'm on target and during the critical moments when I'm actually making images. So, what I will typically do is acquire the bif initially and focus on it. Then I will let off the focus and just watch it in the viewfinder while tracking it visually only. As the distance changes, the BIF will start to go out of focus. When that happens I bring it back in focus by quickly making sure the AF point is on the bird and then I bump the focus to get it in focus again. I do this repeatedly as I'm visually tracking the bird. When the BIF gets to the spot I want to start making pictures, I will focus and shoot all at once. I shoot in short controlled bursts trying to time the critical moments with the best wing positions, etc. Because I have bumped the focus along, the focus is very close to where it needs to be when the moment to make pictures arrives. Then when I focus and trip the shutter it happens very quickly. If I tried to focus constantly while the bif approached I would likely miss, focus on the background, and miss the critical moment. My goal is to keep the bird close to in focus and in the viewfinder without focusing on the background and to do this up until the critical moment arrives. Then I try to maintain the focus while making great pictures. Bumping takes lots of practice, but if you develop this skill, it will make your keeper rate go way up.

3. The third reason to bump the focus is to prefocus. The first task when photographing a BIF is to acquire it in the viewfinder and focus on it. (See tutorial #3) It is beneficial to be able to do this as quickly as possible. When using long focal lengths, the bird may be so out of focus that you can't see it in the viewfinder even if it's there. Then when you do get it in the viewfinder it may take much longer to focus on it if the focus is set to a drastically different distance. To overcome these issues, I will prefocus at the approximate distance that I anticipate for my

subject. Then when the subject arrives, I can find it and focus on it quickly. I prefocus the camera by pointing the camera at something at the desired distance and then I focus on it. Now I'm ready for a BIF at a similar distance. If I need to switch the distance I will simply point the camera at something at the new distance and bump the focus. This will prefocus the camera at the new distance. Photographers that use a tripod will often prefocus manually. Since manual focus is difficult hand held with big glass, I use the bump to prefocus.

Birding and Birder Forums and Websites

Mansurous.com/ho-to-photograph-birds

www.birdphotographers.net

www.birdasart.com

www.naturescapes.net

www.fredmiranda.com

www.mikeatkinson.net

www.digitbirdphotography.com

www.EJPhoto.com

www.clementfrancis.com

www.500px.com

www.avianscapes.com

www.RobertOToolePhotography.com

www.glennbertley.com

www.chrisdobbsphoto.com

www.alanmurphyphotography.com

www.studebakerbirds.com

The final thing I want to talk about is bird composition and creating pictures with different set ups.

The most important thing is to get eye contact with you and the bird and that the birds eyes or eye closet to the camera to be in sharp focus. Using rules of thirds is also very important in placement of the bird to give a pleasing composition.

I also look for a clean background at a distance from the bird to give a soft creamy like bokeh.

In these pictures we found some bluebirds nesting with their young, by giving them a place to land we started feeding them mealworms. After a couple days the birds became comfortable with our presence. We then brought tree boughs, flowers and branches and started setting up our composition.

By placing the mealworms in certain places we were able to control where the bluebirds landed and get our photo. All these compositions are the same bluebird.

The last picture I have here was taken right off of Bekkie's back porch , the hummingbirds were feeding off her feeders so I decided to put some trumpet vine on a stake in between the feeders . We then filled the flower with some nectar and removed the feeders. After a while the hummingbirds investigated the flowers and then started feeding from them. I then was able to get the pleasing photo and composition that you see here.