

March 15, 2016

Notes for

## **A Bird Watcher's Migration**

A slideshow by Joan & Dick Shirley

### **Comments –**

In 2012 Joan and I saw over 200 species of birds on the East Coast, travelling from Newfoundland to Florida. Although we set personal records, we did not even come close to what more serious birders and bird photographers do every year. We have been limited by needing to get close enough in good lighting conditions to photograph the birds, by our natures (enough bird photography is enough bird photography), and by my health in 2013 and '14. Our show was finally put together in 2015, updated in 2016. We never use cloning when competing our images; but this is a slideshow, and we used limited cloning here and there, plus lots of cloning in the creative section. Though most of our images are from 2012, we did not hesitate to throw in good photos from other years.

Joan and I are members of the Stony Brook Camera Club of Wrentham, MA, and of the Photographic Society of America. We have been birders for over 35 years, and bird photographers for over 15 years. Though far from famous, we have won awards and admission to shows in both local and international competition. For us bird photography is simply a wonderful hobby through which we view and share a portion of God's beauty in Nature.

### **Our Equipment and Software –**

For bird photography our equipment is simple, if expensive. We use Canon 7D cameras (now 7D Mark II) with their wonderful lens-multiplier of 1.6; a Canon 100-400mm IS L-Series lens (now IS II) for handheld photography; and a Canon 400mm f/2.8 IS or 500mm f/4 IS lens for use on a tripod. We often use 1.4 tele-converters, occasionally a Better Beamer on our flash to extend its reach, and tripods whenever it is convenient. For tripod work, a remote switch is very helpful.

Typical camera settings for us: ISO 800, 1/2500 second exposure time, and exposure compensation as needed (which is often). If we get higher than f/6 or so, we speed up the exposure.

For software, we work on Windows-based computers. We manage our images using Breeze Browser Pro, process them with Adobe Photoshop CS6, process our videos with Adobe Premiere Pro CS5, edit music and bird calls with Blaze Media Pro, and put our slideshows together with Pro Show Producer.

### **Credits –**

### **All Photos & Videos**

Joan & Richard Shirley

## **Haiku**

Richard & Joan Shirley

Geraldine Hartman, for inspiration from *Haiku Reflections & Haiku Reflections II* (available via Amazon)

Various locations on the internet for inspiration

## **Music**

*Bedrock Cathedral*, by Paul Winter & Friends; CD – *The World of Living Music*

*Winterbourne*, by Various Artists; CD – *Winter Solstice IV*

*Ralph's Rhapsody*, by Ray Lynch; CD – *The Best of Ray Lynch*

*Skye Boat Song*, by Shelly Phillips & Friends; CD – *The Fairie Round*

*Summer Breeze*, by Govi; CD – *Heart of a Gypsy*

*Call of the Forest*, by Patty Simon; CD – *Starry Night Solstice*

*Hallelujah*, by the Vitamin String Quartet; CD – *Vitamin String Quartet Presents*

*Sailing*, by EDITUS; CD – *Siempre Vol. II*

*Ciao Bella*, by Rose, on the CD *Rose*

*Wonderland*, by Spencer Brewer; CD – *Narada Decade Anniversary Collection*

*Tomorrow's Child*, by Spencer Brewer; CD – *Narada Decade Anniversary Collection*

*Christ Child Lullaby*, by Barry & Patty Simon; CD – *Starry Night Solstice*

## **Bird Song**

*Field Guide to Bird Songs*, Eastern Region, by Donald & Lillian Stokes

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, McCauley Laboratory

Joan and Richard Shirley

## **Primary Locations –**

We photographed at over 100 locations; these are our favorites.

1) **Our yard** in Wrentham, MA. Rating is 7.

2) On Sanibel Island, FL:

A) **Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge**, near the center of Sanibel Island. Rating is 8. The Ding Darling website states the best birding is December through March, but we have had excellent photographic opportunities in April and May. If you hit it right (in terms of time, low tide, food supply and wind) the bird photography is nothing less than fantastic. We have seen (among others) black necked stilts, white ibis, white pelicans, red shouldered hawks, yellow and black crowned night herons, snowy egrets, great egrets, great blue herons, little blue herons, tricolored herons, roseate spoonbills, double crested cormorants, anhinga, various ducks, pied billed grebes, shore birds, and on and on. But, at other times, the birding is poor.

B) **The lighthouse at the Southern end of Sanibel Island**. Rating is 10.

The Sanibel lighthouse area boasts an active osprey nest best photographed in March through early May. We have also photographed spring warblers here, and love photographing wading birds to the right of the fishing pier as they are bathed in late afternoon sunlight while they fish.

3) **Fort Matanzas and Washington Oaks Parks south of St. Augustine.** We were lucky to find an active great horned owl nest at each of these sites in 2010, although just at Fort Matanzas Park in 2011. The 2011 nest was unfortunately inaccessible for photography. Rating for both is 4 unless the owls are available, then it is 8.

4) **Anastasia Beach State Park**, located off of Route A1A not far from the St. Augustine Lighthouse and the Alligator Farm: 1340-A State Road A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080. Go to the website at <http://www.floridastateparks.org/anastasia/default.cfm>. A year-long pass to ALL Florida State Parks costs about \$125/family (includes everyone in your car, family or not). This park, reminiscent of Cape Cod (except for having different species of birds), is beautiful year round: we have encountered beauty and birds on every visit. Rating is 9.

5) **St. Augustine Alligator Farm**, 999 Anastasia Blvd., St. Augustine, FL, 32080. Wild birds freely come to roost over the alligators, thus protecting their nests from ground predators. Nesting birds include wood storks, roseate spoonbills, great egrets, snowy egrets, cattle egrets, night herons, tricolored herons, collared doves and others (almost guaranteed in April to mid-May), all an easy photograph from the boardwalk while wandering through the rookery. It is a great opportunity for flight shots. Best time to visit for nesting birds is early April to mid-May. An annual photo pass provides year-long entry for about \$90 (regular entry is \$20/day), as well as the ability to enter the park an hour early (and stay an hour late) during March through May. Go to the website for lots of information at [www.alligatorfarm.us](http://www.alligatorfarm.us). Rating is 10 during nesting season. Secret tip: just for the fun of it, stay until pitch dark one night (long after photography is possible); you will have the thrill of seeing many hundreds of birds fly in for the night.

6) **Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge**, on Merritt Island, FL. Directions: from I-95, take Exit 220 (Titusville, State Road 406 Exit). Drive east on SR-406, also known as Garden Street. Continue east on Garden Street for 4 miles and travel over the Max Brewer Causeway Bridge. The Refuge begins at the east side of the causeway. DO NOT take the bridge across to the NASA center, as there is no access to the wildlife refuge from there. Spotting scrub jays is almost a certainty if you ask for guidance. Black Point Wildlife Drive will provide many species, varying with the season. In March and April we have routinely seen glossy ibis. Rating is 7, but 10 for the scrub jays.

7) **Viera Wetlands** is south of Merritt Island. Take exit 191 from Route 95, head west on Wickham Road, then go to the end until you encounter a waste water treatment plant on your left. Go in following the signs for the wetlands. We have only gone in the February through April timeframe, but have seen great birds and had great photo opportunities. Birds we have seen include glossy ibis, crested caracara (intermittent), limpkin, white ibis, sandhill cranes, American bittern, least bittern (twice), blue winged teal, ring necked ducks, anhinga, pied billed grebe, clapper and king rails (once each), sora (once), and many others. Rating is 10. **THIS IS OUR FAVORITE BIRDING SPOT IN NORTHERN FLORIDA.**

8) **Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary**, near Naples, FL, close to Bonita Beach. Their website is <http://corkscrew.audubon.org/>. The address is 375 Sanctuary Road West, Naples, FL, 34120, about 15 miles east of exit 111 from I-75. In April we photographed painted buntings (readily),

ovenbirds, shiny cowbirds, and swallow tail kites, plus others. Rating is 10 for the painted buntings, otherwise 7.

9) **Cape Coral, FL** (near the library), for nesting burrowing owls in March through May, and for Monk Parakeets. Essentially go to the library and look for tape on stakes set up to protect the owls. Early morning and late afternoon are best for photography (as always). You will have to get down low to get good shots, thus avoiding the stakes and tape. Check on the web, as Cape Coral boasts monk parakeet colonies (one at Pelican Ball Field, 4128 Pelican Blvd, one at Cape Coral Yacht Club). Rating is 10, but only for the birds mentioned.

10) The **Venice Rookery** and **Venice Dump**, both in Venice Florida. The rookery is on Route 41 behind the Municipal Court House. The dump is reached as follows: Take exit 195 from I-75, go East after exit, at small strip mall about 1/8 mile down the road turn left on Knights Trail Road, go to end and register at the welcome center. Eagles, sandhill cranes, wood storks, meadowlarks and more can be seen here. Rating is 6 for the rookery, 8 for the dump.

Our **2012 Fall Migration Vacation** included the following additional locations (and many others) from north to south:

- 1) **Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge**, 800 Great Creek Road, **Oceanville, NJ**
- 2) **Avalon Seawatch**, 501 Beach Avenue, **Cape May, NJ**
- 3) **Kiptopeke State Park**, 3540 Kiptopeke Drive, **Cape Charles, VA**
- 4) **Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge**, 32205 Seaside Road, **Cape Charles, VA**
- 5) **Savannah National Wildlife Refuge**, U.S. HWY 17 (six miles north of Savannah, GA)
- 6) **Harris Neck National Wildlife Drive**, 5000 Wildlife Drive N.E., **Townsend, GA**

## List of Species in the Show

(English common names)

American Tree Sparrow  
American Avocet  
American Bittern  
American Coot  
American Crow  
American Goldfinch  
American Kestrel  
American Oystercatcher  
American Redstart  
American Robin  
American Widgeon  
Anhinga  
Arctic Tern  
Atlantic Puffin  
Bald Eagle  
Barn Swallow  
Barred Owl  
Barrows Goldeneye  
Belted Kingfisher  
Black and White Warbler  
Black Backed Woodpecker  
Black Bellied Plover  
Black Bellied Whistling Duck  
Black Capped Chickadee  
Black Crowned Night Heron  
Black Duck  
Black Guillemot  
Black Legged Kittiwake  
Black Necked Stilt  
Black Scoter  
Black Skimmer  
Black Vulture  
Blue Gray Gnatcatcher  
Blue Jay  
Blue Winged Teal  
Boat Tailed Grackle  
Bobolink  
Bohemian Waxing  
Bonaparte's Gull  
Brant  
Brown Headed Cowbird  
Brown Headed Nuthatch  
Brown Pelican  
Brown Thrasher  
Bufflehead  
Burrowing Owl  
Canada Goose  
Carolina Chickadee  
Carolina Wren  
Cattle Egret  
Cedar Waxwing  
Chipping Sparrow  
Clapper Rail  
Common Eider  
Common Goldeneye  
Common Grackle  
Common Ground Dove  
Common Loon  
Common Merganser  
Common Moorhen  
Common Murre  
Common Raven  
Common Redpoll  
Common Snipe  
Common Tern  
Common Yellowthroat  
Coopers Hawk  
Crested Caracara  
Dark Eyed Junco  
Double Crested Cormorant  
Downy Woodpecker  
Dunlin  
Eastern Bluebird  
Eastern Kingbird  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Eastern Phoebe  
Eastern Towhee  
Eastern Wood Pewee  
Eurasian Collared Dove  
European Starling  
Fish Crow  
Forster's Tern  
Fox Sparrow  
Gadwall  
Glaucous Gull  
Glossy Ibis  
Gray Catbird

Gray Jay  
Gray Kingbird  
Great Black Backed Gull  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Crested Flycatcher  
Great Egret  
Great Horned Owl  
Greater Scaup  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Green Heron  
Green Winged Teal  
Harlequin Duck  
Hermit Thrush  
Herring Gull  
Hooded Merganser  
Horned Lark  
House Finch  
House Sparrow  
House Wren  
Indigo Bunting  
Killdeer  
King Rail  
Laughing Gull  
Least Bittern  
Least Sandpiper  
Least Tern  
Lesser Black Backed Gull  
Lesser Scaup  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
Limpkin  
Lincoln's Sparrow  
Little Blue Heron  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Long Billed Curlew  
Long Billed Dowitcher  
Long Tailed Duck  
Magnificent Frigatebird  
Magnolia Warbler  
Mallard  
Marbled Godwit  
Merlin  
Mockingbird  
Monk Parakeet  
Mottled Duck  
Mourning Dove  
Mute Swan

Nashville Warbler  
Northern Cardinal  
Northern Flicker  
Northern Gannet  
Northern Harrier  
Northern Oriole  
Northern Parula  
Northern Pintail  
Northern Shoveler  
Orchard Oriole  
Osprey  
Ovenbird  
Painted Bunting  
Palm Warbler  
Peregrine Falcon  
Pied Billed Grebe  
Pileated Woodpecker  
Pine Grosbeak  
Pine Siskin  
Pine Warbler  
Piping Plover  
Prairie Warbler  
Purple Finch  
Purple Martin  
Purple Sandpiper  
Razorbill  
Red Bellied Woodpecker  
Red Breasted Merganser  
Red Breasted Nuthatch  
Red Headed Woodpecker  
Red Necked Grebe  
Red Shouldered Hawk  
Red Tailed Hawk  
Red Winged Blackbird  
Reddish Egret  
Redhead  
Ring Billed Gull  
Ring Necked Duck  
Ring Necked Pheasant  
Rock Dove  
Roseate Spoonbill  
Royal Tern  
Ruby Crowned Kinglet  
Ruby Throated Hummingbird  
Ruddy Duck  
Ruddy Turnstone

Sanderling  
Sandhill Crane  
Sandwich Tern  
Savannah Sparrow  
Scarlet Tanager  
Scrub Jay  
Semipalmated Plover  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Sharp Shinned Hawk  
Short Eared Owl  
Snail Kite  
Snow Goose  
Snowy Egret  
Snowy Owl  
Snowy Plover  
Song Sparrow  
Sora  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Surf Scoter  
Swallow Tailed Kite  
Swamp Sparrow  
Tree Swallow  
Tricolored Heron  
Tufted Titmouse  
Tundra Swan  
Turkey Vulture  
Warbling Vireo  
Western Sandpiper  
White Breasted Nuthatch  
White Eyed Vireo  
White Ibis  
White Pelican  
White Throated Sparrow  
White Winged Crossbill  
White Winged Dove  
Wild Turkey  
Willet  
Wood Duck  
Wood Stork  
Yellow Crowned Night Heron  
Yellow Headed Blackbird  
Yellow Rumped Warbler  
Yellow Throated Warbler  
Yellow Warbler