Notes for

**A Bird Watcher’s Migration**
(Extensively revised version)

**A slideshow by Joan & Dick Shirley**
/photos, videos, and bird calls set to music/

**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 come close to what more serious birders and bird photographers do every year. We were 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 Dick’s health. Our show was finally put together in 2015, then completely redone in 2021.

We never use cloning when competing our images; but this is a slideshow, and we used limited cloning here and there as we wished, plus lots of editing in the creative section. Though most of our images are from 2012 and 2016-17, we did not hesitate to throw in good photos from other years, including Joan’s work in 2021.

Joan and I are members of the Stony Brook Camera Club (SBCC) of Norfolk, MA, and former long-term members of the PSA. We have been birders for over 40 years, and bird photographers for over 21 years. Though far from famous, we have won awards and/or 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 straightforward. We use Canon 7D Mark II cameras with their wonderful lens-multiplier of 1.6; a Canon 100-400mm IS II L-Series lens 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; a remote switch is very helpful. By the way, “big-glass” bird photography is somewhat expensive, even before travel.

Typical camera settings for us: ISO 800, 1/2500 second exposure time (or faster), and exposure compensation as needed (which is often). We speed up the exposure when we can, increase the ISO when we must. So long as there us sufficient light, the shutter speed cannot be too fast.
We work on high-end, desktop computers assembled by Falcon Northwest, running Windows.

For software we:

- Manage our images using Breeze Browser Pro
- Process images with Adobe Photoshop CS6 and/or Photoshop Elements
- Process our videos with Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 and/or Premiere Elements
- Extensively edit music and bird calls with Audacity
- Put our slideshows together with Pro Show Producer (program no longer supported)
- Make heavy use of Topaz software for both photos and videos.

In fact, Topaz Video Enhance AI is the only software we have found that lets us easily process our video clips the way we wish, and Topaz Studio 2 AI Clear provides the best sharpening we have used to date.

Credits –

Photos & Videos
Video of Lawrence’s Warbler courtesy of JimZipp.com/www.wildbirdvideo.com
Photo of Hooded Warbler courtesy of Jim Burns

All other photos and videos by
Joan & Richard Shirley

Haiku
Richard & Joan Shirley
Geraldine Hartman, for inspiration from Haiku Reflections & Haiku Reflections II (available via Amazon)
Various other locations on the internet for inspiration

Music
Bedrock Cathedral, by Paul Winter & Friends, CD: "The World of Living Music"
Winterbourne, by Various Artists, CD: "Winters Solstice IV"
Ralph's Rhapsody, by Ray Lynch, CD: "The Best of Ray Lynch"
Charley & Jumbo, by Alter EKO, CD:"EKO"
Summer Breeze, by Govi, CD: "Heart of a Gypsy"
Skye Boat Song, by Shelley Phillips & Friends, CD: "The Fairie Round"
Ashokan Farewell, by James Galway & Phil Coulter, CD: "Celtic Legends"
Celestial Soda Pop, by Ray Lynch, CD: "Best of Ray Lynch"
In Harmony, by Govi, CD: "Heart of a Gypsy"
Hallelujah, by Vitamin String Quartet, CD: "Vitamin String Quartet Presents"
Sailing, by EDITUS, CD: "Siempre Vol. II"
Jeanne Sleeping, by Pat McCune, CD: "Earphone Stuff"
Ciao Bella, by Rose, CD: "Rose"
Tomorrow's Child, by Spencer Brewer, CD: "Narada Decade Anniversary Collection"
Some Children See Him, by George Winston, CD: "December"
Christ Child Lullaby, by Barry & Patty Simon, CD: "A Winter's Night"

Bird Song
Field Guide to Bird Songs, Eastern Region, by Donald & Lillian Stokes
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, McCauley Laboratory
Joan and Richard Shirley (Brown Thrasher)

Primary Locations –
We photographed at over 100 locations; the following are our favorites.

1) Our yard in Wrentham, MA, primarily due to lots of opportunity to see the birds.

2) Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, near the center of Sanibel Island, FL. 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 at Ding Darling is poor.

3) The lighthouse at the Southern end of Sanibel Island. 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.

4) 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, and at Fort Matanzas Park in 2011. The 2011 nest was unfortunately inaccessible for photography. Sometimes good, sometimes not.

5) 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 https://www.floridastateparks.org. A year-long pass costs about $90/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.

6) **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, Black- and Yellow-crowned 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 (to enter walk right through the zoo portion to the boardwalk). 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 $120 (regular entry is $27/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). Great 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. **IN NESTING SEASON, THIS IS OUR SECOND-MOST FAVORITE BIRDING SPOT.**

7) **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 Florida Scrub Jays is almost a certainty if you ask a ranger or photographer for guidance. Black Point Wildlife Drive will provide many species, varying with the season. In March and April, we have routinely seen Glossy Ibis.

8) **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 nesting Anhinga, Glossy Ibis, Crested Caracara (intermittent), Limpkin, White Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, American Bittern, Least Bittern (twice), Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Clapper and King rails (once each), Sora (once), and many others. **THIS IS OUR FAVORITE BIRDING SPOT IN FLORIDA.**

9) **Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary**, near Naples, FL, close to Bonita Beach. Their website is [http://corkscrew.audubon.org/](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. Sometimes great, sometimes not.
10) 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 also avoiding the stakes and tape. Check on the web, as Cape Coral boasts monk parakeet colonies.

11) 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, Eastern Meadowlarks and more can be seen here.

12) Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge, 800 Great Creek Road, Oceanville, NJ. They have a great drive from which you should see many birds in season.

13) Magee Marsh, on Lake Erie in Ohio. Recommended one week a year, for warblers. One must research on the internet each year to know when to go, then get a place to stay well ahead of time. During migration the warblers are accessible and fantastic. We photographed well over twenty warbler species on this trip, plus several thrushes and vireos. Magee offers stand-alone cabins and a hotel, but check it out early.

14) Point Pelee, on Lake Erie in Canada. Recommended one week a year, for warblers. One must research on the internet each year to know when to go, then get a place to stay well ahead of time. During migration the warblers are accessible and fantastic. We photographed well over twenty warbler species on this trip, plus several thrushes and vireos.

List of 250 Species in the Show
(English common names)

American Bittern
American Coot
American Crow
American Goldfinch
American Kestrel
American Oystercatcher
American Redstart
American Robin
American Tree Sparrow
American Wigeon
American Woodcock
Anhinga
Arctic Tern
Atlantic Puffin
Bald Eagle
Baltimore Oriole
Barn Swallow
Barred Owl
Bay-breasted Warbler
Belted Kingfisher
Black Duck
Black Guillemot
Black Scoter
Black Skimmer
Black Vulture
Black-and-White Warbler
Black-Backed Woodpecker
Black-bellied Plover
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck
Blackburnian Warbler
Black-Capped Chickadee
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Black-legged Kittiwake
Black-necked Stilt
Blackpoll Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blue Jay
Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher
Blue-headed Vireo
Blue-winged Teal
Blue-winged Warbler
Boat-tailed Grackle
Bobolink
Bohemian Waxwing
Bonaparte's Gull
Brant
Brown Pelican
Brown Thrasher
Brown-headed Cowbird
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Bufflehead
Burrowing Owl
Canada Goose
Canada Warbler
Cape May Warbler
Carolina Chickadee
Carolina Wren
Cattle Egret
Cedar Waxwing
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Chipping Sparrow
Clapper Rail
Common Eider
Common Goldeneye
Common Grackle
Common Ground Dove
Common Loon
Common Merganser
Common Moorhen
Common Raven
Common Redpoll
Common Tern
Common Yellowthroat
Cooper's Hawk
Crested Caracara
Dark-eyed Junco
Double-crested Cormorant
Downy Woodpecker
Dunlin
Eastern Bluebird
Eastern Kingbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Eastern Phoebe
Eastern Screech Owl
Eastern Towhee
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Eurasian Collared Dove
European Starling
Field Sparrow
Fish Crow
Florida Scrub-Jay
Forster's Tern
Fox Sparrow
Gadwall
Glaucus Gull
Glossy Ibis
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Grasshopper Sparrow
Gray Catbird
Gray Jay
Gray-cheeked Thrush
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
Hooded Warbler
Horned Grebe
House Finch
House Sparrow
House Wren
Indian Peafowl
Indigo Bunting
Killdeer
King Rail
Laughing Gull
Lawrence's Warbler
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
Louisiana Waterthrush
Magnificent Frigatebird
Magnolia Warbler
Mallard
Marbled Godwit
Marsh Wren
Merlin
Monk Parakeet
Mottled Duck
Mourning Dove
Mute Swan
Nashville Warbler
Northern Cardinal
Northern Flicker
Northern Gannet
Northern Harrier
Northern Mockingbird
Northern Parula
Northern Pintail
Northern Shoveler
Northern Waterthrush
Orchard Oriole
Osprey
Ovenbird
Painted Bunting
Palm Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe
Pileated Woodpecker
Pine Grosbeak
Pine Siskin
Pine Warbler
Piping Plover
Prairie Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Purple Finch
Purple Martin
Purple Sandpiper
Razorbill
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Red-breasted Merganser
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Reddish Egret
Red-eyed Vireo
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Red-Winged Blackbird
Ring-Billed Gull
Ring-Necked Duck
Ring-necked Pheasant
Rock Dove
Roseate Spoonbill
Royal Tern
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Ruddy Duck
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Sandhill Crane
Sandwich Tern
Savannah Sparrow
Scarlet Tanager
Semipalmated Plover
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Short-billed Dowitcher
Short-eared Owl
Snow Goose
Snowy Egret
Snowy Owl
Snowy Plover
Song Sparrow
Sora
Spotted Sandpiper
Surf Scoter
Swainson's Thrush
Swallow-tailed Kite
Swamp Sparrow
Tennessee Warbler
Tree Swallow
Tricolored Heron
Trumpeter Swan
Tufted Titmouse
Tundra Swan
Turkey Vulture
Veery
Warbling Vireo
Western Sandpiper
White Ibis
White Pelican
White-breasted Nuthatch
White-crowned Sparrow
White-Eyed Vireo
White-Throated Sparrow
White-Winged Crossbill
White-winged Dove
White-winged Scoter
Wild Turkey
Willet
Wilson's Snipe
Wilson's Warbler
Winter Wren
Wood Duck
Wood Stork
Wood Thrush
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler

The following 9 birds did not make the show due to poor photo quality:

Barrow's Goldeneye
Gray Kingbird
Mandarin Duck
Mourning Warbler
Peregrine Falcon
Redhead
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Saltmarsh Sparrow
Worm-eating Warbler