

The Fourth Salon of Photographs

The first American Birds photography contest did not exactly swamp the office with prints, as we feared, but it did present us with a large and varied selection of black-and-white prints of excellent quality. We did have trouble finding a room at National Audubon Society headquarters large enough to display all the entries at one time, but eventually every print was on display, with no identification as to its origin, so that the judging was completely blind. The judges were members of the staffs of AUDUBON and of American Birds, and with so many prints to choose from, there was a rather wide diversity of opinion among the six judges.

The winning prints, however, were chosen on the basis of a point score ranging from six for a first choice by a judge, to one for an honorable mention. When the winning choices were turned over, it was found that of the eleven prints with the highest cumulative scores, three were by one photographer, and two each by two other photographers! Which must prove something – probably that class will tell.

The first prize winner, however, (see front cover), is a soft, high-key, almost dreamy composition, probably fortuitous, as so many good bird prints are, of Least Sandpipers on a grassy islet. The prize: "Parrots of the World" by Joseph M. Forshaw. Second and third prizes are also books, honorable mentions will receive a year's subscription to American Birds.

This year's salon, unlike previous salons, will not include information on photographic equipment used. The current boycott being advocated by the National Audubon Society and other conservation organizations against products of Japanese or Russian origin, an effort to seek compliance with international whaling agreements by those nations, will be honored here. However, some of the photographs displayed on the following pages were made with equipment from other countries.

The editor often feels, when selecting prints for publication, or in a contest such as this, that there should be some system of handicapping, with such photogenic subjects as shorebirds, owls, herons and swans forced to suffer some arbitrary handicap, while egrets should be banned out of hand. This year's entries were heavy on the photogenic species, as is obvious from the present selection (not handicapped); perhaps some day we will run a contest for the most artistic prints of unphotogenic birds!

Our thanks, however, go to all those who took part in this first venture, even including those who submitted Snowy Egrets.

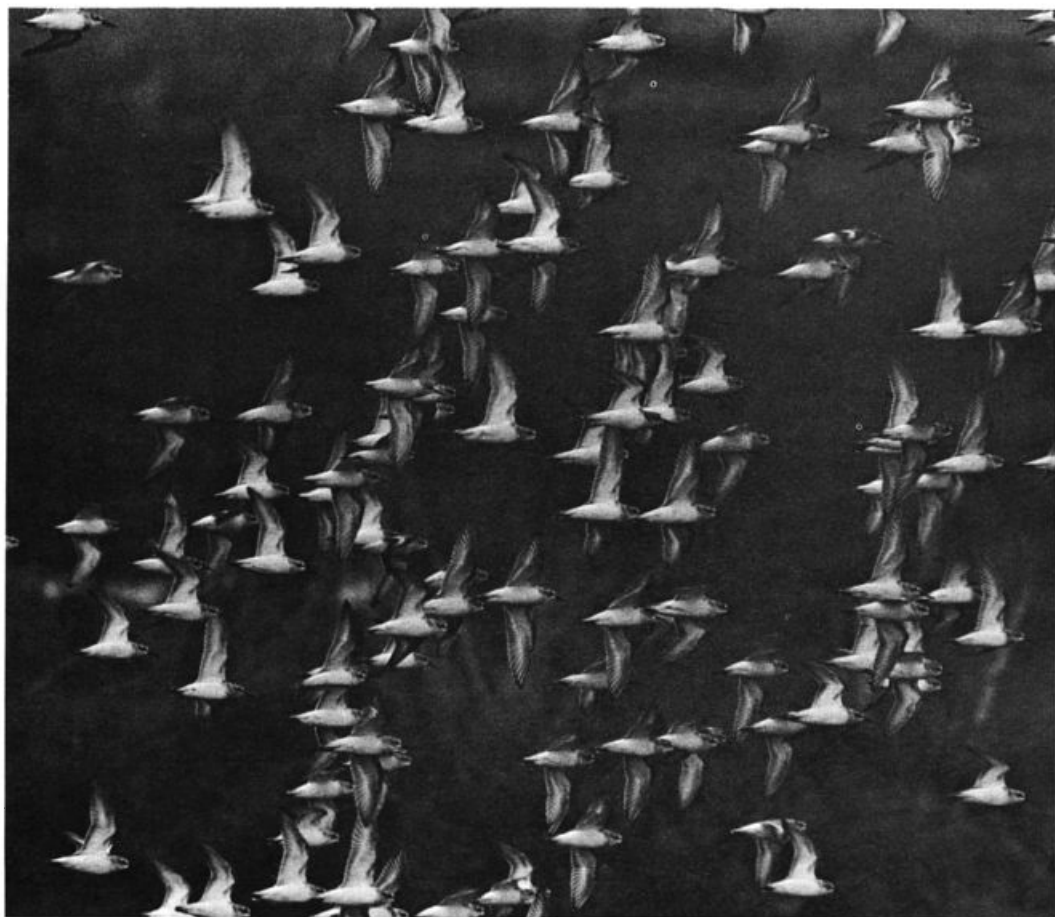
First Prize, and our August cover goes to what may have been our youngest competitor, Mark Champlin, of Syracuse, New York, a landscaping student at the State University of New York at Alfred. The Least Sandpipers were taken in spring migration on a mudflat near a power station on Lake Oswego, New York, which mudflat is now being taken over by another power station. The photograph was taken on a single lens reflex camera with 400 mm telephoto lens, on Tri-X film at f/16 at 1/250 second.



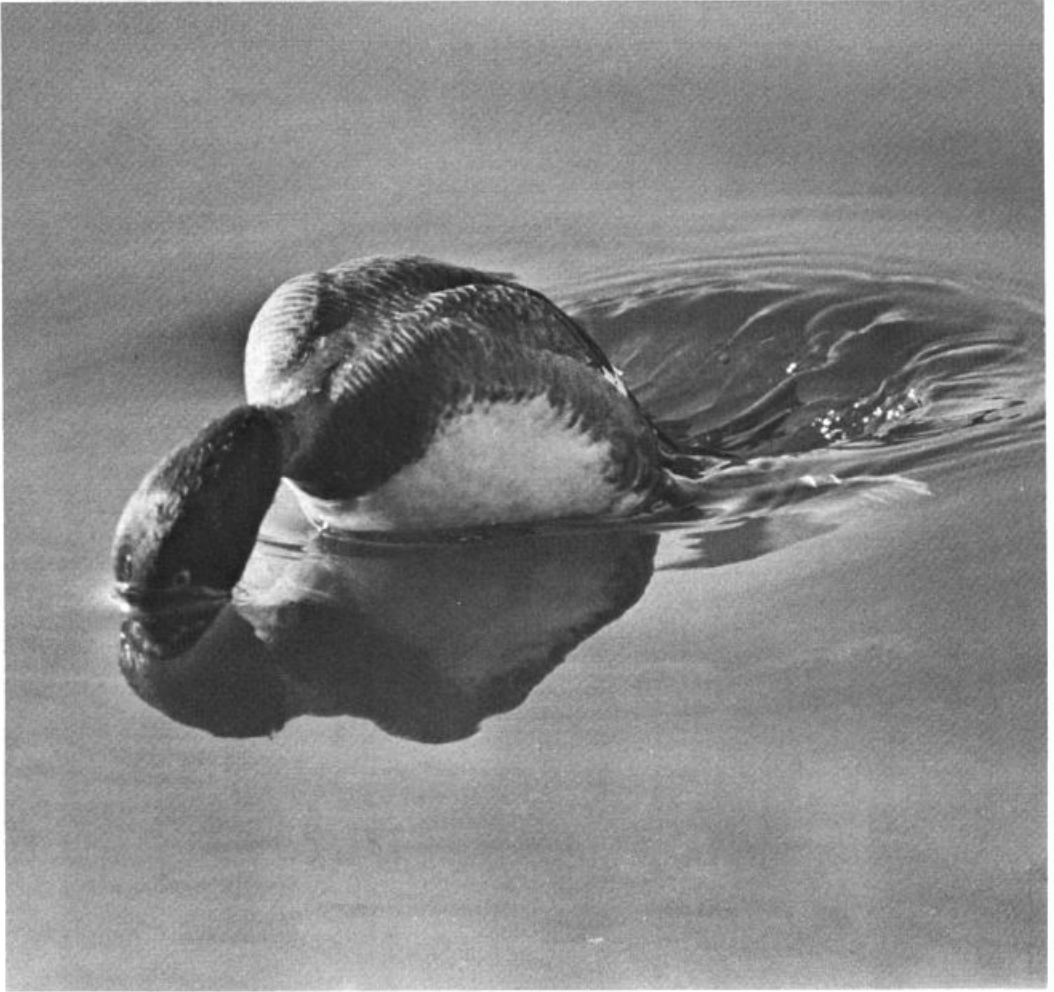
Second Prize, entitled "Photogenesis," was awarded this tension-filled photograph of a stalking Great Egret. It was taken by Henry L. Bunker IV, of Wilmington, Delaware. Mr. Bunker did not submit any background information about himself or the photograph. This print had one first place vote.



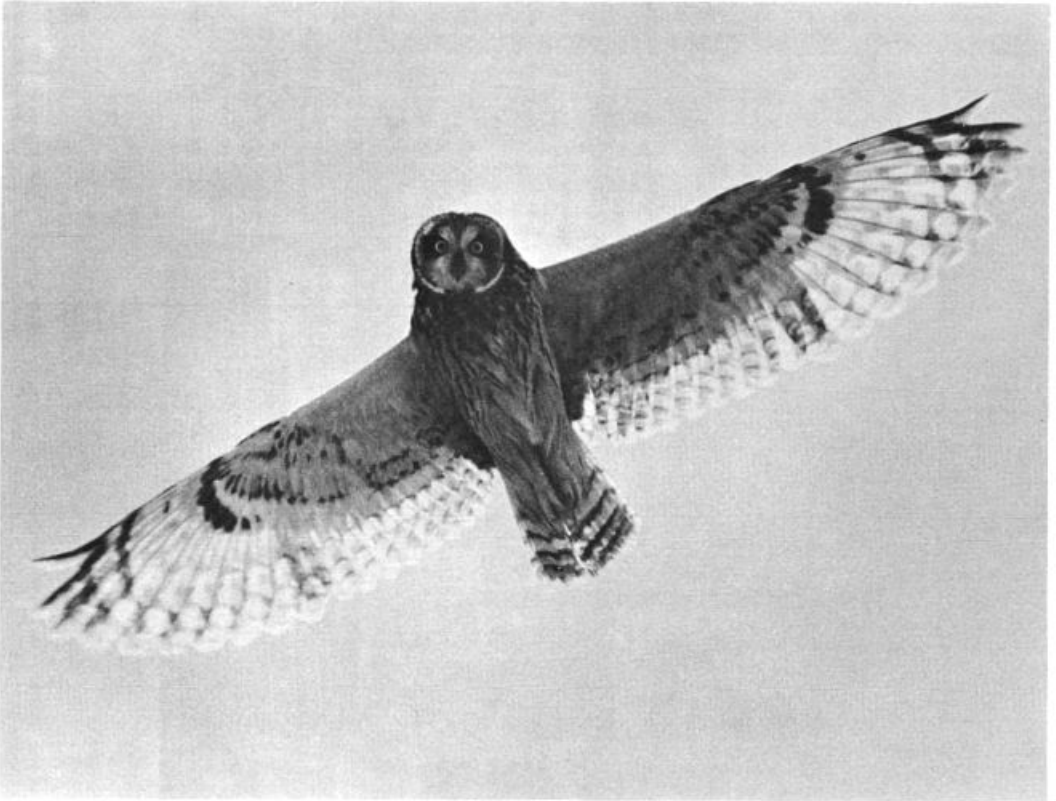
Third Prize, a dramatic diving "count-the-feathers" shot of a Brown Pelican, was taken by Kenneth W Gardiner, of Menlo Park, California. Mr. Gardiner, a Research Engineer, has already appeared in our pages, with a fine print in last year's salon. This print also had one first place vote.



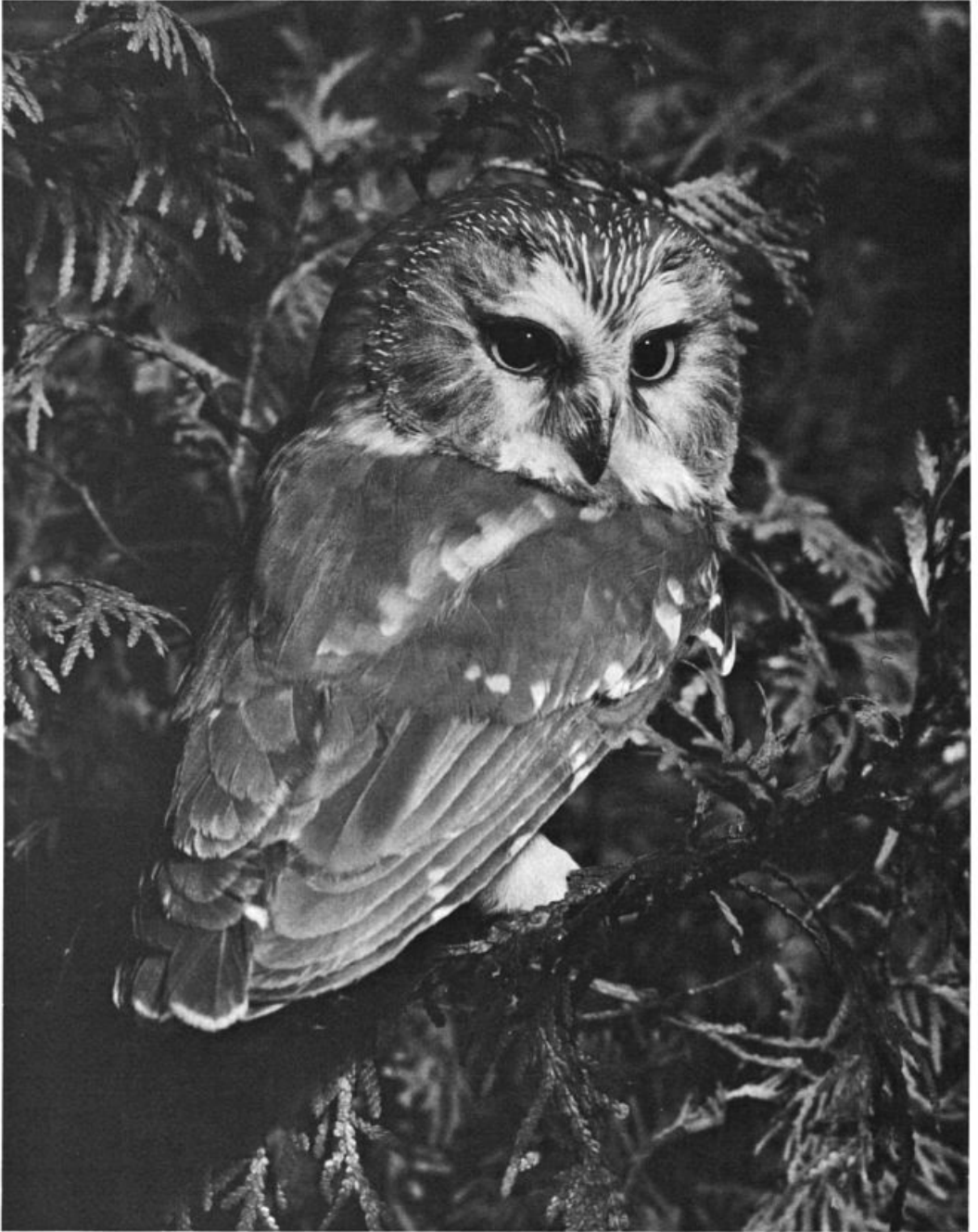
Honorable Mention goes to another Ken Gardiner print, this a fine study of a flock of Western Sandpipers, with a purely fortuitous, but very pleasing composition. As an exercise in estimating numbers, viewers might (without counting) guess how many birds are shown, excluding fragments. Answer on page 860.



Honorable Mention is awarded to this unusual print of a female Common Goldeneye at the very moment of diving, the head dipping, the back arched, the feet kicking downward. It was taken by Bill Parsons, of Oakland, California, at Lake Merritt, shortly after a session with Parsons' dentist, "perhaps the dentist's chair had conditioned my reflexes."



Honorable Mention goes to this elegant portrait of a Saw-whet Owl, by Robert R. Taylor, of Winnipeg, Manitoba. A noted professional photographer who has been widely published and exhibited, he too was a double-selection choice. This was perhaps the best of many owl portraits submitted, but then, owls so very considerably sit still.



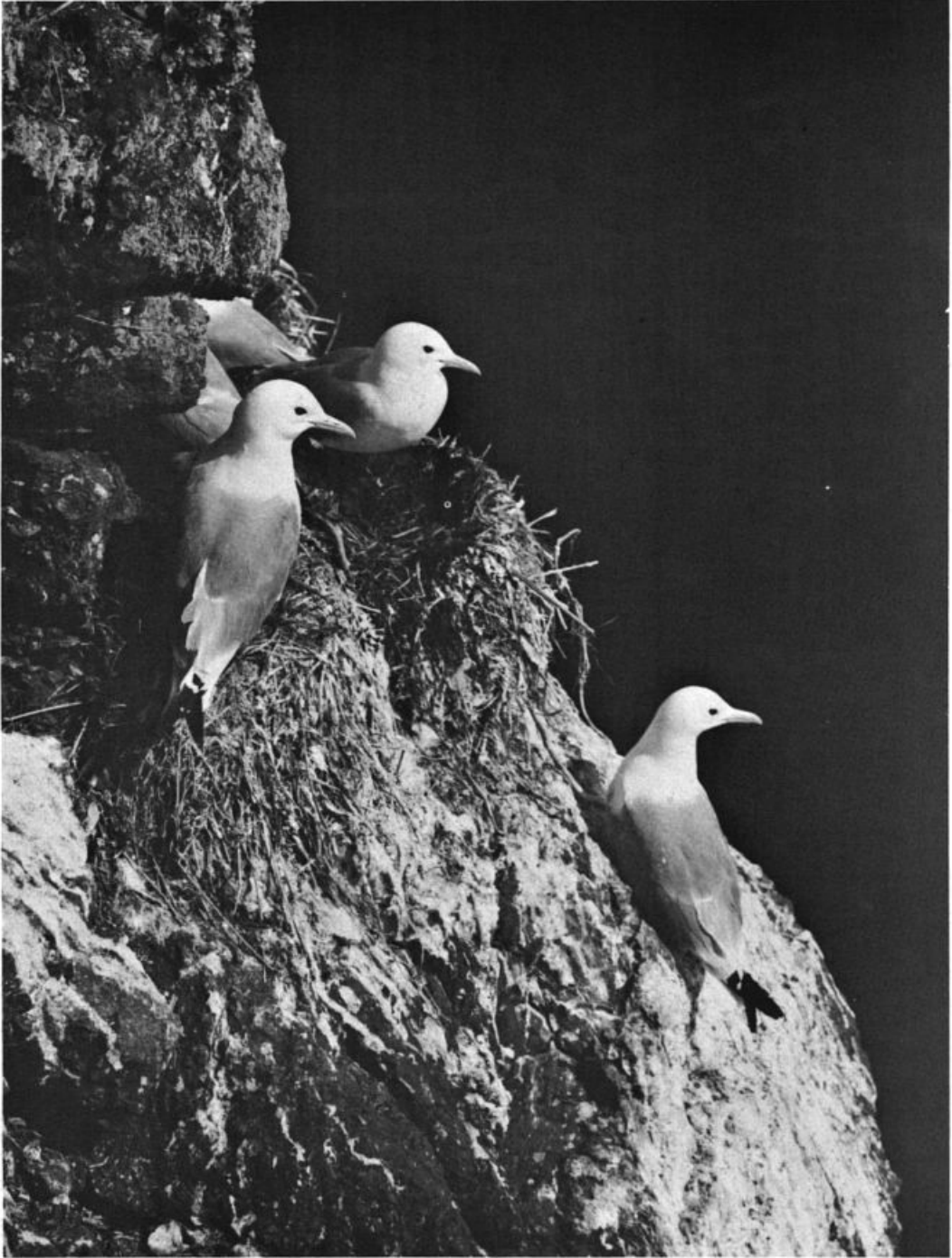
Honorable Mention goes for the third time to Ken Gardiner for this striking, almost luminous, and quite hypnotic Short-eared Owl, which proves that all owl photographs need not be of owls perched. Although we have no information about the print, it must have been taken near the nest.



Honorable Mention for a poetic Great Blue Heron goes to Sidney Bahrt, now of Pembroke, Maine, who has appeared in American Birds (cover, April, 1973; Salon, 197) and is about to publish his first book of bird photography, "A Wilderness of Birds," Doubleday & Co, (indefinite date).



Honorable Mention for a second time goes to Bill Parsons of Oakland, California, whose "Willets" was taken at Tubbs Island, near Vallejo, California. Parsons, a postman when he is not photographing all aspects of nature, credits wife Carol for spotting.



Honorable Mention is awarded this handsome study of Black-legged Kittiwakes at a nest cliff by Jerry Kelly, a biomedical photographer from Fairbanks, Alaska. His wildlife photographs have been published in many nature magazines and in several books. The kittiwakes were photographed on an island in Kachemak Bay, Alaska.



Honorable Mention, perhaps as much for humor as for photography, goes once again to Robert R Taylor, of Winnipeg, whose other owl print is a little more formal. Taylor doesn't tell us whether the owl caught the fish by plunging, tipping up, underwater pursuit (or being hand-fed?), but there is a behavioral note here somewhere.



Honorable Mention to Michael and Lois Schultz of Bremerton Washington and Durham, North Carolina, both professional oboists, for their Long-billed Curlew, taken at Padre Island, Texas. Having begun with color, they have lately moved into black-and-white photograph "as an art form," and enjoy doing all their own darkroom work.