

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

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Photography has been a lifetime hobby and my interest has always been nature subjects. In recent years this interest has focused on birds, particularly birds in flight. In this fascinating endeavor I spend many hours stalking and photographing marsh and shore birds and birds of prey. My usual haunts are the South San Francisco Bay, particularly the area near the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Interpretive Center, and the coastal shore and beach areas of San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Monterey counties.

I do not use blinds but prefer to stalk birds in the open. All my photographs are made with the camera hand-held because the freedom and flexibility achieved by stalking birds in this manner, compared to using a tripod and a blind, afford many more opportunities for interesting in-flight and action shots. All of my pictures are taken with a 35 mm Topcon Super-D camera using motor drive, a 500 mm Auto Topcon lens and Kodak Tri-X black and white film. I feel the motor drive is an essential part of my equipment and that it significantly increases the chances of a good picture on any given encounter.

I prefer to use black and white film for several reasons. Its low cost permits taking the large number of negatives needed to get action shots that are both in focus and of an interesting pose. Though modern color prints are beautiful, they have a short life span if hung on the wall to enjoy, and the time and cost to personally print them is considerably more than for high quality black and white prints. The ease, flexibility and lower cost of black and white printing allows one to make numerous high quality prints of one's best shots for use in exhibitions and for sale at reasonable prices.

My favorite subjects, marsh and shore birds, have very little color and hence are well shown in a black and white medium. Both the lighting conditions and the backgrounds suitable to give good contrast from the bird differ for optimum results when using color or black and white. For many birds, color may be the easier material to work with but for marsh and shore birds and for flight shots, I feel that black and white is more flexible in that I can photograph under a greater variety of conditions.

When one tries to fill the frame with small and medium-sized birds, the resulting image-to-object ratios (magnifications) are in the range of 1/15 to 1/40. This results in a very limited depth of field. When one relates the rate of the bird's motion, human and camera response times, and the depth of field, one finds that a truly in-focus picture is largely a matter of chance. Skill, experience and good luck may help, but a large number of exposures is the only way to get results.

The exposure for all of the accompanying photographs was 1/1000 second at f/11 on Tri-X film.



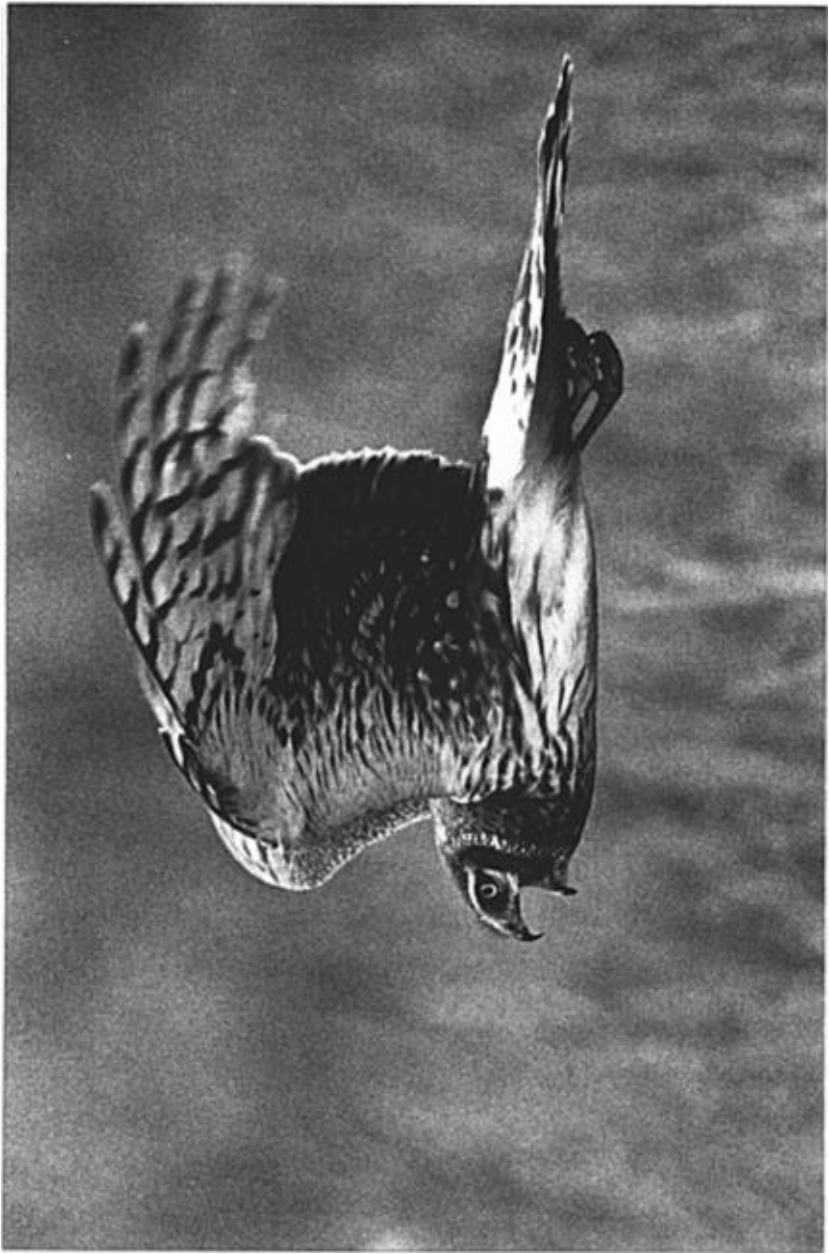
Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*), Palo Alto Baylands, Santa Clara Co., California, spring 1973



Clapper Rail / *Rallus longirostris*, Palo Alto Baylands, Santa Clara Co., California, winter 1974



Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*), Palo Alto Baylands, Santa Clara Co., California, summer 1976.



Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*), Palo Alto Baylands, Santa Clara Co., California, May 1976



Flock of Western Sandpipers (*Calidris mauri*), Palo Alto Baylands, Santa Clara Co., California, fall 1973



Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*), Palo Alto Baylands, Santa Clara Co., California, spring 1977



Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopactes*), Palo Alto Baylands, Santa Clara Co., California, fall 1973



Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Palo Alto Baylands, Santa Clara Co., California, fall 1975



Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), Seacliff State Beach, Santa Cruz Co., California, fall 1973.



Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*), Seaciff State Beach, Santa Cruz Co., California, fall 1973.