

Windows on Our World ... Through the Lenses of Snowbirds

List of Locations, Birds, and Music

Our “Blurb”

Joan and Richard Shirley present *Windows on Our World, Through the Lenses of Snowbirds*, forty-five minutes of photographs and video clips set to music. Though primarily featuring bird photography, the show includes children, local sites, sand dunes, beaches, and some of the very funky people of downtown St. Augustine, FL. Both Joan and Richard are members of the Stony Brook Camera Club, and of the Photographic Society of America; both have had acceptances and won prizes in international photographic competitions.

Locations

The vast majority of the photographs in the slide show were taken at one of the following locations. We have rated each for bird photography from 1 (poor) to 10 (great), or unrated if no birds are available at that location.

1) Our yard in Wrentham, MA.

2) Above St. Augustine with Old City Helicopters, LLC, at 904-824-5506. It is expensive, but provides customized, no-door, aerial photography.

3) On Sanibel Island, FL:

A) **Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge**, near the center of Sanibel Island. Rating is 10.

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

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.

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) Various locations around and near **downtown St. Augustine, FL**. These include St. George Street, the carousel, the Fountain of Youth (great photographs of peacocks but the fountain

itself is little more than a trickle), the St. Augustine lighthouse, Fort Castillo (a National Parks Pass works here), the Farmers' Market, and the Bridge of Lions.

5) Two State parks south of St. Augustine, **Fort Matanzas** and **Washington Oaks Park**. 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.

6) **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 \$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 10.

7) **St. Augustine Alligator Farm**, 999 Anastasia Blvd., St. Augustine, FDL, 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 late 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 \$80 (regular entry is \$20/day), as well as the ability to enter the park an hour early during March through May. Go to the website for lots of information at www.alligatorfarm.us. Rating is 10.

8) **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 from the Scrub Jay Trail. 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.

9) **Viera Wetlands** is south of Merritt Island. Take exit 191 from Route 95, head west on Wickham Road, then go to the end where you will encounter a waste water treatment plant on your left. GO IN THROUGH THE WATER TREATMENT PLANT GATES, take an immediate right, and then follow 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 (once), blue winged teal, ring necked ducks, anhinga, pied billed grebe, and many others. Rating is 10.

10) **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.

11) **Marco Island** and **Cape Coral, FL** (near the library), for nesting burrowing owls in March through May. Essentially go to the center of either of these small towns 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. Rating is 10 only for the burrowing owls.

12) 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.

Music Credits

Introduction and Ending:

The Snowman's Music Box Dance, by George Winston; from the CD *Forest*.

Sanibel:

Secret Garden, by Kostia; from the CD *Forever Wild (1 of 2)*.

Corkscrew Sanctuary and Cape Coral:

In Harmony, by Govi; from the CD *Heart of a Gypsy*.

Carousel:

After the Ball, by a Wurlitzer 146-A Band Organ; from the CD *Good Old U.S.A. Carousel Music*.

Fountain of Youth, Shrine, and Fort Castillo:

Santa Fe, by Ottmar Liebert; from the CD *Nouveau Flamenco*.

Downtown:

Downtown, by David Gillis; mp3 download from Amazon.

Anastasia Park:

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

Hallelujah, by Vitamin String Quartet; from the CD *Strung Out Volume 8*.

Alligator Farm:

Earth Beat, by Kevin Gerzewitz; from the CD *Morning on the River*.

Seranata A La Luna, by Kevin Gerzewitz; from the CD *Morning on the River*.

Surfing:

Song of the Ocean, by North Sound Artists; from the CD *Best of North Sound*.

Surfin' USA, by the Beach Boys; from the CD *Surfin' USA*.

Viera and Merritt Island:

Driving, by Will Ackerman; from the CD *Sound of Wind Driven Rain*.

Forts Matanzas and Mose:

Barcelona Nights, by Ottmar Liebert; from the CD *Nouveau Flamenco*.

Bridge of Lions and Lighthouse:

Times of Change, by Michael Whalen; from the CD *Forever Wild*

List of Wild Birds in Show

1. Anhinga
 2. Bittern, American
 3. Bunting, Painted
 4. Caracara, Crested
 5. Cardinal, Northern
 6. Coot, American
 7. Cormorant, Double Crested
 8. Cowbird, Shiny
 9. Crane, Sandhill
 10. Dove, Eurasian Collared
 11. Duck, Ring Necked
 12. Eagle, Bald
 13. Egret, Cattle
 14. Egret, Great
 15. Egret, Reddish
 16. Egret, Snowy
 17. Frigatebird, Magnificent
 18. Goldfinch
 19. Grackle, Boat Tailed
 20. Grebe, Pied Billed
 21. Grosbeak, Pine
 22. Gull Laughing
 23. Gull, Ring Billed
 24. Hawk, Red Shouldered
 25. Heron, Great Blue
 26. Heron, Green
 27. Heron, Little Blue
 28. Heron, Little Blue (white morph)
 29. Heron, Tricolored
 30. Ibis, Glossy
 31. Ibis, White
 32. Jay, Blue
 33. Jay, Scrub
 34. Junco, Dark Eyed
 35. Kite, Swallow Tailed
 36. Limpkin
 37. Northern Mockingbird
 38. Moorhen, Common
 39. Night Heron, Yellow Crowned
 40. Osprey
 41. Ovenbird
 42. Owl, Burrowing
 43. Owl, Great Horned
 44. Oystercatcher, American
 45. Parula, Northern
 46. Pelican, Brown
 47. Pelican, White
 48. Phoebe, Eastern
 49. Plover, Semipalmated
 50. Plover, Snowy
 51. Rail, Clapper
 52. Redpoll, Common
 53. Sanderling
 54. Sandpiper, Semipalmated
 55. Scaup, Greater
 56. Scaup, Lesser
 57. Shrike, Loggerhead
 58. Skimmer, Black
 59. Spoonbill, Roseate
 60. Stilt, Black Necked
 61. Stork, Wood
 62. Teal, Blue Winged
 63. Tern, Caspian
 64. Tern, Common
 65. Tern, Forster's
 66. Tern, Royal
 67. Tern, Sandwich
 68. Towhee, Eastern
 69. Turnstone, Ruddy
 70. Vulture, Black
 71. Warbler, Palm
 72. Warbler, Prairie
 73. Warbler, Yellow Throated
 74. Willet
 75. Woodpecker, Downy
 76. Woodpecker, Pileated
 77. Woodpecker, Red Bellied
 78. Wren, Carolina
- We think we have listed them all.

Comments

Thank you to those who have attended our show. We enjoy sharing our love of all types of photography, with an emphasis on birds. To see more of our work check out www.rshirley.com. You may also obtain a copy of these notes on our website.

In *Windows on Our World, Through the Lenses of Snowbirds*, we wanted to share our delight in the benefits of having a vacation home in St. Augustine Florida. St. Augustine is the oldest city in the USA; it has many interesting sites, fun shops, great restaurants, and more than its share of quirky people. St. Augustine is within a day-trip of several hot birding sites, and an overnight trip of many more. The St. Augustine Alligator Farm and Anastasia Beach Park are actually within the city. St. Augustine is a bird photographer's dream come true.

To photograph birds, one must know them; not just their identification, but also their behavior and likely locations. Birds are small, usually shy around people, and often fast-moving, making them difficult to photograph. We and many people in our camera club love the challenge.

Joan and I have been birders for over 30 years. We bird with eye and ear, and with binoculars, telescope, and camera. We enjoy the challenge of spotting and identifying birds, and have done so in the eastern US, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Belize.

We enjoy sharing all our bird photos, but because at heart we are birders there are a few bird photos we are particularly proud of. The nesting snowy plover is an endangered species. The scrub jays are also an endangered species, and are found only in Florida. The clapper rail is a difficult bird to see, much less photograph.

Our photographic skills have developed over eleven years through lectures, books, friends, competition, and experience. We have, finally, become good enough photographers to more consistently photograph birds on the wing. For Joan and me, our primary equipment includes Canon 7Ds on tripods, remote switches, and an assortment of lenses. We use our Canon 7Ds for both stills and high-resolution videos. Our favorite lenses are all Canon: 28-135mm IS, 100-400mm IS, and either the 400mm f/2.8 IS or the 500mm f/4 IS. We often use extenders and sometimes use flash (with better beamers).

Special thanks, always, to the Stony Brook Camera Club members (www.stonybrookcc.com) for teaching us so much about photography. The club provides a special environment where learning at all levels is supported and encouraged.