Nature Photography

On the Road
in
Washington and Oregon



Alan and Elaine Wilson

Nature Photography

Washington
and
Oregon



A Blurb BookWright Publication

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AMERICAN GOLDFINCH – ADOPTED AS WASHINGTON'S BIRD SYMBOL IN 1951

Preface

Although Washington and Oregon share a common coastline and several rugged mountain ranges that are riddled with spectacular natural settings, we were surprised to find few productive locations for bird and wildlife photography. Notwithstanding, those we did come across were incredibly prolific to say the least. In fact, some were hardly known even to seasoned nature photographers.

The Cascade Range, extending north-south, divides Oregon into distinct eastern and western regions, each containing a diversity of landforms. At the state's western edge, the Coast Range, a relatively low mountain system, rises from the beaches, bays, and rugged headlands of the Pacific coast. Between the Coast and Cascade ranges lie fertile valleys that form Oregon's heartland. The two-thirds of the state lying east of the Cascade Range consists generally of arid plateaus cut by river canyons, with rolling hills in the north central portion giving way to the Blue Mountains in the northeast. The Great Basin in the southeast is characterized by fault-block ridges, weathered buttes, and remnants of large prehistoric lakes. You would think with this diverse topography that tremendous bird and wildlife photography would abound. However, the best we could find were confined to two relatively small regions in central and southeast Oregon, the former being the high desert terrain near Fort Rock and the latter at Burns, including the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

We found Washington mirrored our Oregon experience. Along the Pacific Ocean the Coast Range extends northward from Oregon and California. This chain forms two groups, the Olympic Mountains in the northwest and the Willapa Hills in the southwest. East of the Cascade Range is a plateau underlain by ancient basalt lava flows. From our perspective, much like Oregon, productive bird and wildlife photography in Washington is confined to three regions, principally the shoreline bounded by the Hood Canal and Puget Sound in the west and the fertile eastern farmland between Othello and Palouse.

This book contains images from five diverse but relatively small locations in Oregon and Washington: Fort Rock, Burns, Othello, Palouse and the coastline surrounding Westport. In our opinion, these represent the best that we feel Oregon and Washington have to offer. However, they are prolific venues and great fun to visit.

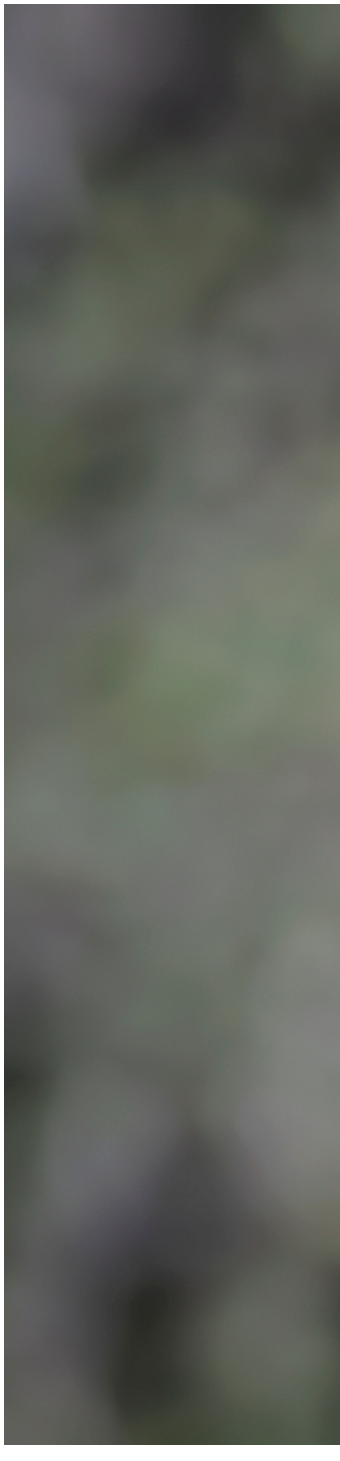
Alan D. and Elaine R. Wilson
Vernon, British Columbia

Central Oregon

On the outskirts of Fort Rock, the "guzzlers" at Cabin Lake was absolutely the most prolific site we have visited in terms of species variety. Here we experienced “set-piece” perch photography virtually unencumbered by having to wait long periods for birds to arrive and produce tremendous profiles. They seem to visit constantly, providing non-stop action. The location is next to an abandoned Forest Service camp in the Deschutes National Forest. The “guzzlers” refer to cement water cisterns placed in front of two wooden blind structures. There is no lake as the terrain is high desert and very dry, with the remnants of a volcanic caldera at Fort Rock.

We built two or three perches next to each water cistern, one or two for smaller birds (typically the size of Cassin's Finch, Western Tanager, Mountain Bluebird, Red Crossbill or Yellow-Rumped Warbler) and a higher perch placed back to accommodate larger visitors (most often Pinyon Jay and Clark's Nutcracker). When smaller birds such as Pygmy Nuthatch or Mountain Chickadee showed up, it was relatively easy to change to a longer lens. Before arriving, we always select a variety of perch material compatible with the local terrain and, of course, bring some basic tools to assist with setup. We also used several colourful pieces of volcanic rock baited with black oils to entice Least Chipmunks and Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrels to stop by and pose while stuffing their cheeks.
The major site attraction for birds, of course, was water. Because this area is home to several species of Woodpecker (Hairy, Lewis's and White-Headed), we drilled holes in some of our perches to be baited with nuts, meal worms or suet as an added incentive for them to visit the water attraction more regularly.

The nearby Summer Lake Wildlife Area also provided opportunities to enhance production from this area. An abandoned barn on the refuge property was a favourite fledging site for Great Horned Owls that nest in the nearby willows. Although the refuge looked bleak, we found breeding American Avocets and Cliff Swallows in abundance. Foster’s Terns also provided great flight opportunities.
We've visited both locations three times and photographed twenty-four species in one four-day period alone!



WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



NORTHERN SHRIKE
Summer Lake Wildlife Refuge,
Oregon





CASSIN'S FINCH (FEMALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock,
Oregon



MALE RED CROSSBILL
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



RED CROSSBILLS
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon





MOURNING DOVES
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



CASSIN'S FINCH (MALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



NORTHERN FLICKER (FEMALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL

Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon

NORTHERN FLICKER (MALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon





CASSIN'S FINCH (MALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



AMERICAN ROBIN
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon

CHIPPING SPARROW
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon





RED CROSSBILL (FEMALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



LEAST CHIPMUNK
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



GREAT HORNED OWL (FLEDGLING)
Abandoned Barn, Summer Lake Wildlife Refuge, Oregon



GREAT HORNED OWL (FLEDGLING)
Summer Lake Wildlife Refuge, Oregon





WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER (Left)
BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (Center)
LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (Right)

Cabin Lake "Guzzler's" near Fort Rock, Oregon







CLARK'S NUTCRACKER
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



WESTERN BLUEBIRD
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon





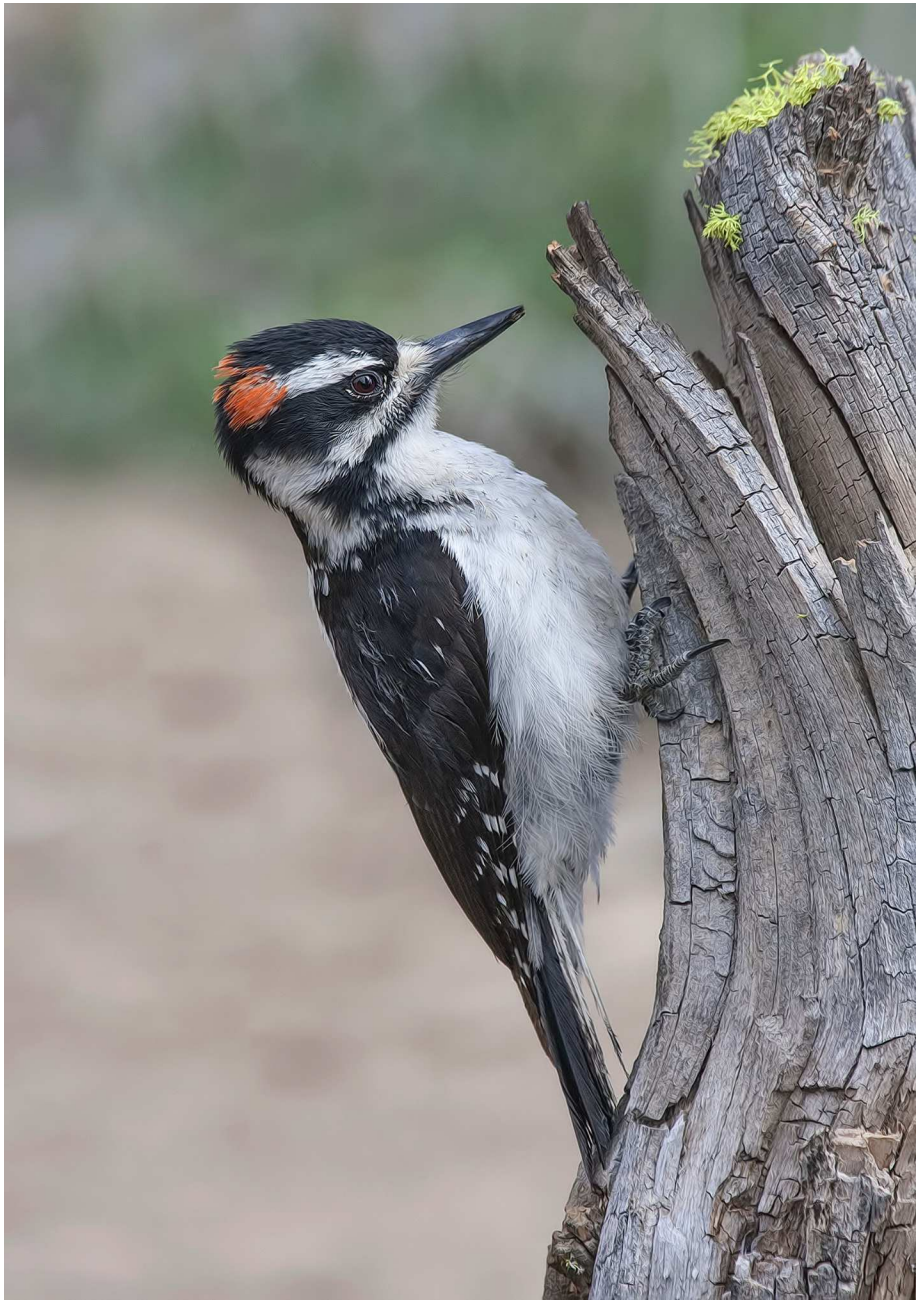
LAZULI BUNTING
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



WESTERN TANAGER (MALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



WESTERN TANAGER (FEMALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



HAIRY WOODPECKER (MALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



CLIFF SWALLOW
Mud Nest at Viewing Blinds, Summer Lake Wildlife Refuge, Oregon



PINYON JAY
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon

STELLAR'S JAY
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon





RED CROSSBILL (MALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon



BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (MALE)
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock, Oregon

CLIFF SWALLOW
Bullgate Dike,
Summer Lake Wildlife Refuge,
Oregon





PYGMY NUTHATCH
Cabin Lake "Guzzlers" near Fort Rock,
Oregon



South Eastern Oregon

The Steens Mountains and Malheur Wetlands are in the southeast corner of Oregon in a geographic region known as the Northern Great Basin. This immense Refuge encompasses wetlands, riparian areas, meadows and uplands that traverse the length of the Blitzen Valley. Three migration routes converge on this area, making it one of the most important feeding and resting locations on the Pacific Flyway. Due to its size, we took advantage of a self-guided auto tour as the best way to scope out the area and become familiar with the species on hand as well as the light and habitat constraints we would face. We did do some prior research and had some target species and specific locations in mind. Our quest was to capture Belding Ground Squirrels at the Refuge Headquarters, Franklin's Gulls on Wright's Pond, White-Faced Ibis in the ponds or fields along the Central Patrol Route and with luck, Bobolink and Wilson's Phalarope roadside in the habitat bordering the flooded fields near Diamond. We were told that a good location for Common Nighthawks was the north side of Benson Pond where they roost on willow snags in the morning and early afternoon. Although we enjoyed our visit, it was an immense refuge to traverse and only productive for a relatively few species. It's an area that must be worked to ferret out the good opportunities. Quite frankly, we found driving the farm roads next to the flooded fields in Burns and Diamond to be great fun and far more productive than the refuge. The variegated late spring greens and yellows made exceptional backdrops and it was easy to find Yellow-Headed Blackbirds, Western Meadowlarks and Wilson's Snipes.

In early June, we took a side trip through the Catlow Valley to Fields and visited the "Oasis," a copse of willows just off the road in the center of town where a nesting pair of Great Horned Owls were known to reside. Slightly farther south on the northwest Nevada border we drove through the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge. Although this was primarily a haven for Pronghorn, we encountered several small herds of Feral Burro's just west of Denio Junction. We soon discovered they had a nasty disposition and it was best to use a long lens at a safe distance as the senior members were prone to exhibit noisy threat displays if we approached too close. Nonetheless, the experience provided an exciting end to what was an interesting area to visit.

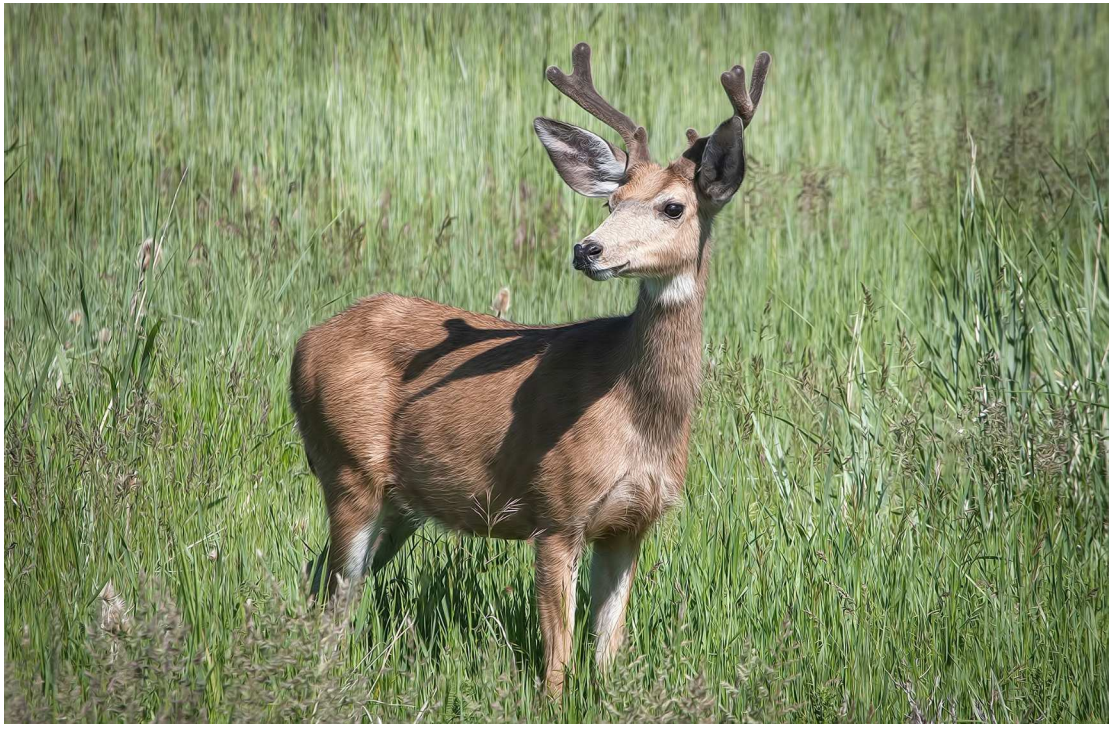
MALE BOBOLINK near Diamond, Oregon



GREATER SANDHILL CRANE
Green House Lane near Burns, Oregon



WILSON'S SNIPE
Highway 205 near Burns,
Oregon



MULE DEER BUCK
Paisley,
Oregon

FRANKLIN'S GULL
Wright's Pond,
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge,
Oregon



WESTERN GREBE
Pond on the Central Patrol Route,
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge,
Narrows, Oregon





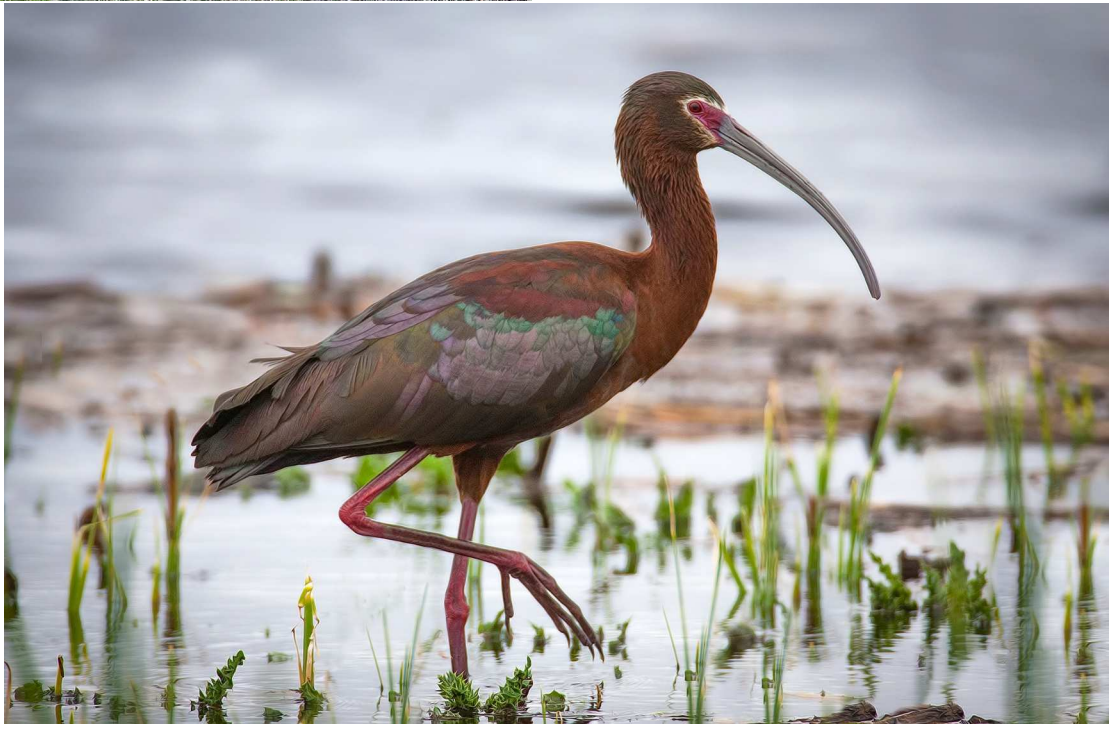
RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

Pond on the Central Patrol Route, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Narrows, Oregon



FERAL BURROS
Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge,
Denio Junction, Nevada

WHITE-FACED IBIS
Wright's Pond,
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge,
Narrows, Oregon



BARN SWALLOW
Benson Pond,
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge,
Narrows, Oregon





FERAL BURRO
Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge,
Denio Junction, Nevada



BELDING'S GROUND SQUIRREL
Refuge Headquarters,
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge,
Narrows, Oregon



MULE DEER
Diamond, Oregon



BLACK-NECKED STILT
Green House Lane near Burns, Oregon



YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (MALE) near Diamond, Oregon



COMMON NIGHTHAWK
Benson Pond,
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge,
Narrows, Oregon



KILLDEER CHICK
Narrows, Oregon



BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT
Central Patrol Route, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge,
Narrows, Oregon



BLACK-NECKED STILT
Pond on the Central Patrol Route, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge,
Narrows, Oregon

Columbia River Gorge

Oregon is known for many iconic landscapes, most notably Crater Lake National Park and the Lava Lands of the Newberry National Volcanic Monument. Notwithstanding, one of the most underrated photographic attractions is waterfalls, especially those in the Columbia River Gorge. This National Scenic Area houses better than seventy-five waterfalls and fast flowing creeks in a literal rainforest where ferns and moss supplement the vibrant greens from trees as they leaf out in early spring. The locations here are for the most part readily accessible either roadside or on well-maintained trails. We found the hiking exceptional with the proviso that many of the best falls were well above road level where the switch backs and rocky terrain were literal “lung burners” for photographers our age. It goes without saying that we required frequent rest stops given the equipment we had to tote up the slopes. Although the assent on these hikes was steep, it was well worth the effort.

As we progressed past the Gorge area the locations we visited were basically “drive-ups” and allowed us the opportunity to see much of Oregon first hand. Our planning research relied heavily on a survey of northwest waterfall locations in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. It’s a great resource that includes not only location descriptions but also directions and photography tips. We tended to favor iconic locations for our first visit and weren’t deterred by having to hike to reach several remote sites on our list. We focused on Oregon as the waterfall concentration and photogenic locations helped to minimize driving distance and time. We selected roughly twenty-five locations that looked promising and targeted the middle of May when the weather was forecast to provide high overcast conditions. This we hoped would assist with producing exposures that incorporated longer shutter speeds, creating a “silky” mood to the water movement at some of the more sheltered locations. We were not disappointed but did encounter some moderate wind and driving rain that made photography at several sites problematic as the mist from the falls created an instant coating on our lens.

Nonetheless, we had an exciting and rewarding trip and vowed to return as there were many great locations we were unable to reach that grabbed our attention and would be high on the list for our next visit.



FAIRY FALLS
Columbia River Gorge near Troutdale, Oregon

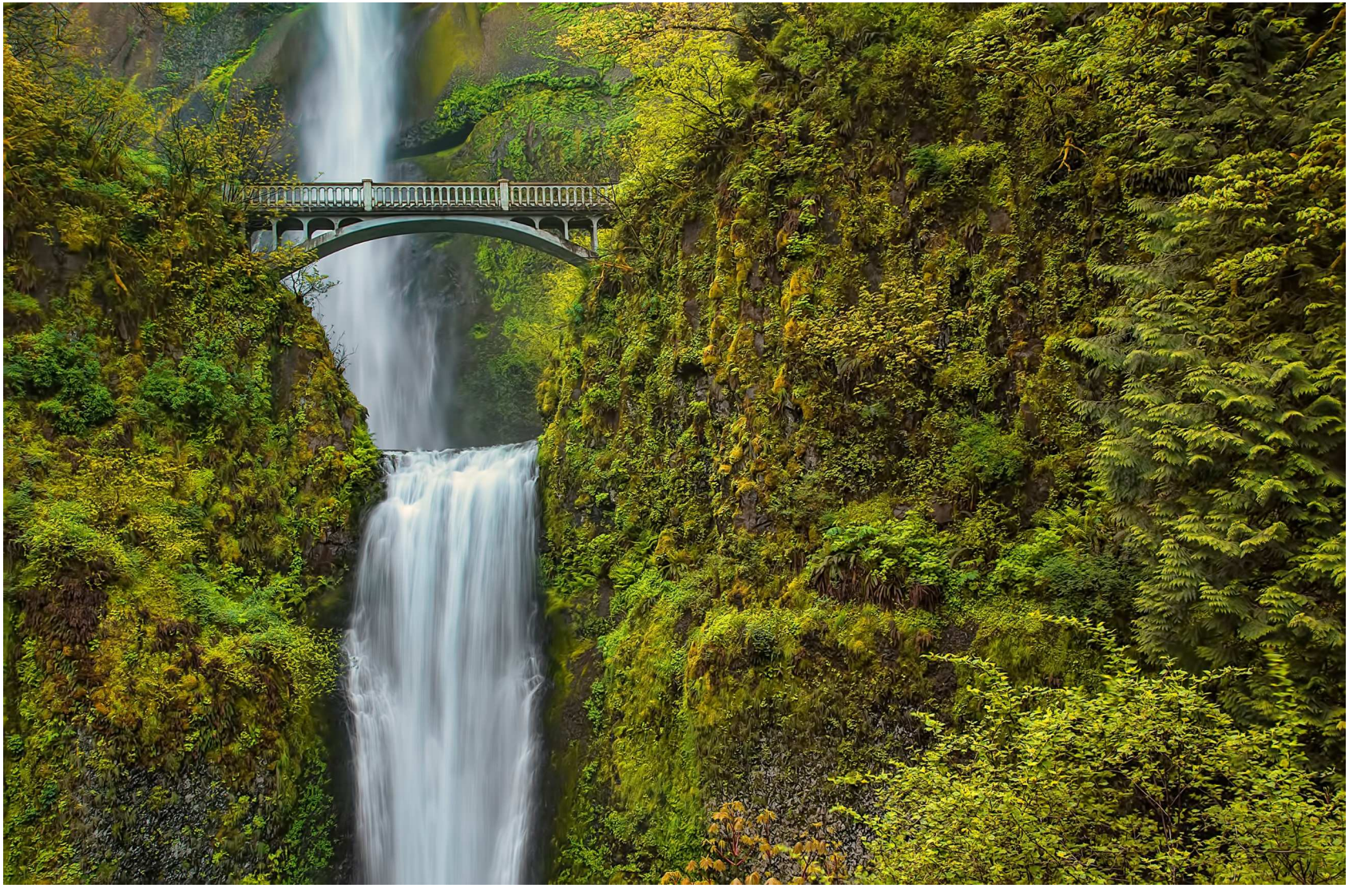




MULTNOMAH FALLS
Columbia River Gorge near Troutdale, Oregon



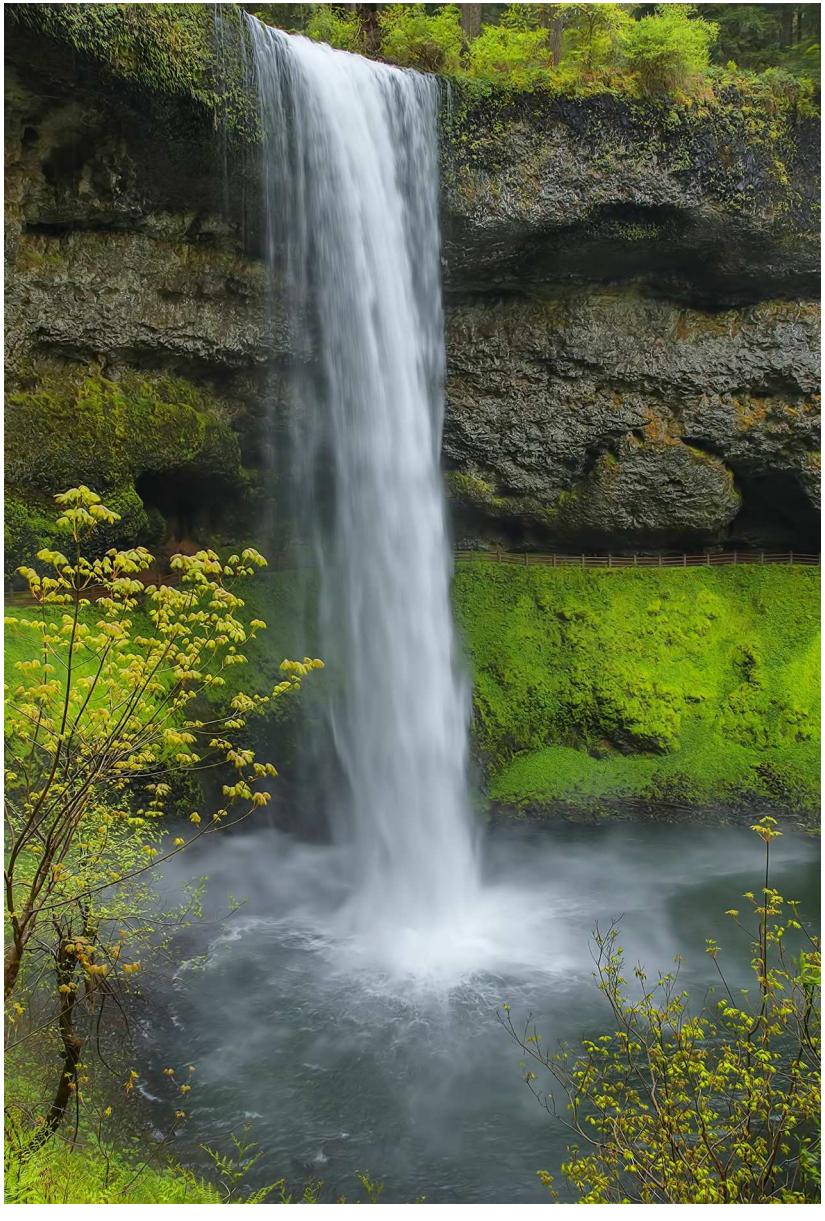
WAHKEENA CREEK
Columbia River Gorge near Troutdale, Oregon



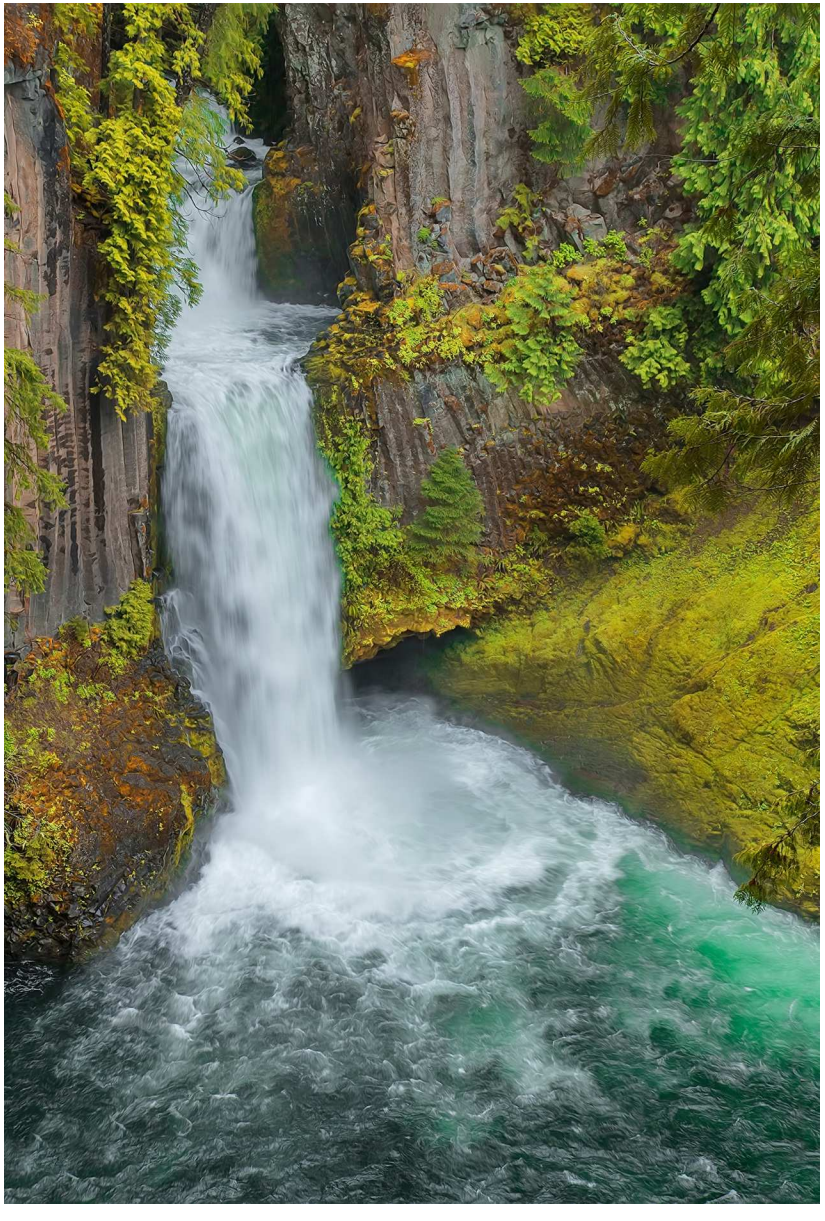
MULTNOMAH FALLS
Columbia River Gorge near Troutdale, Oregon



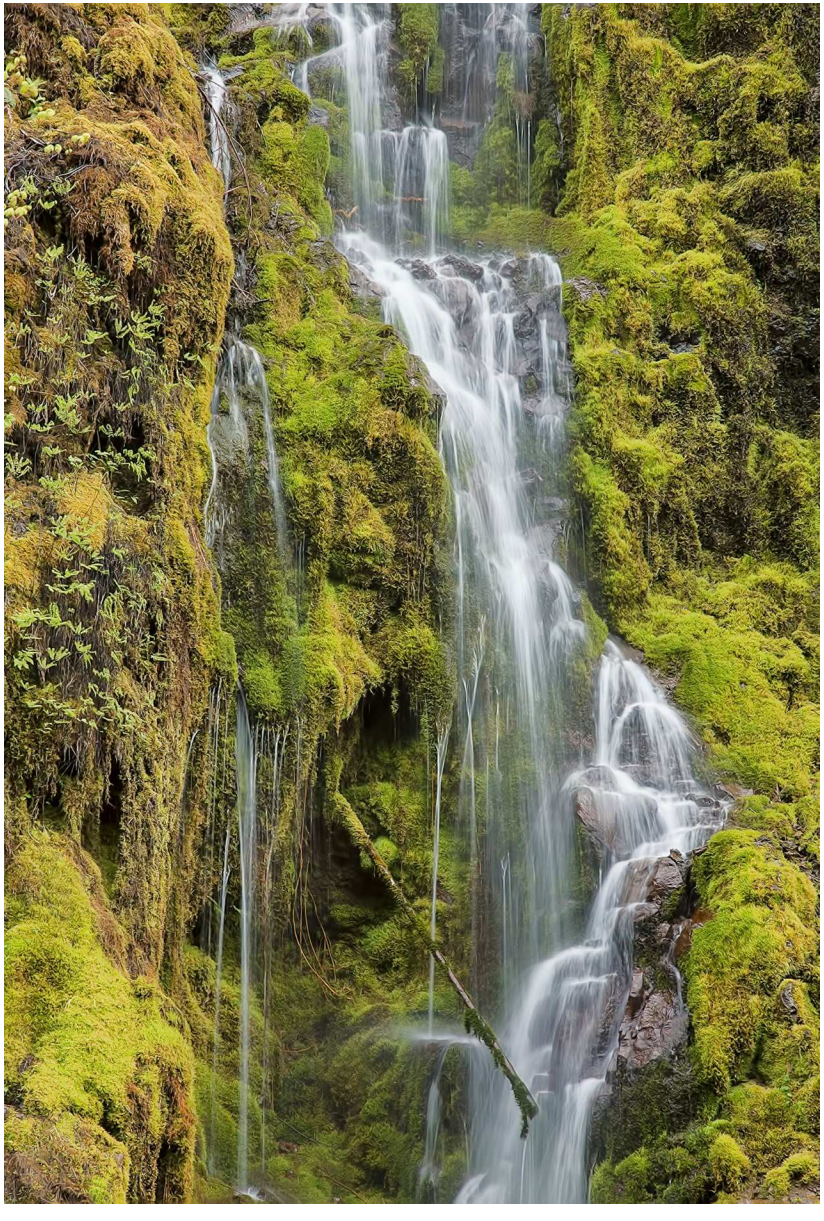
SAHALIE FALLS near Belknap Springs, Oregon



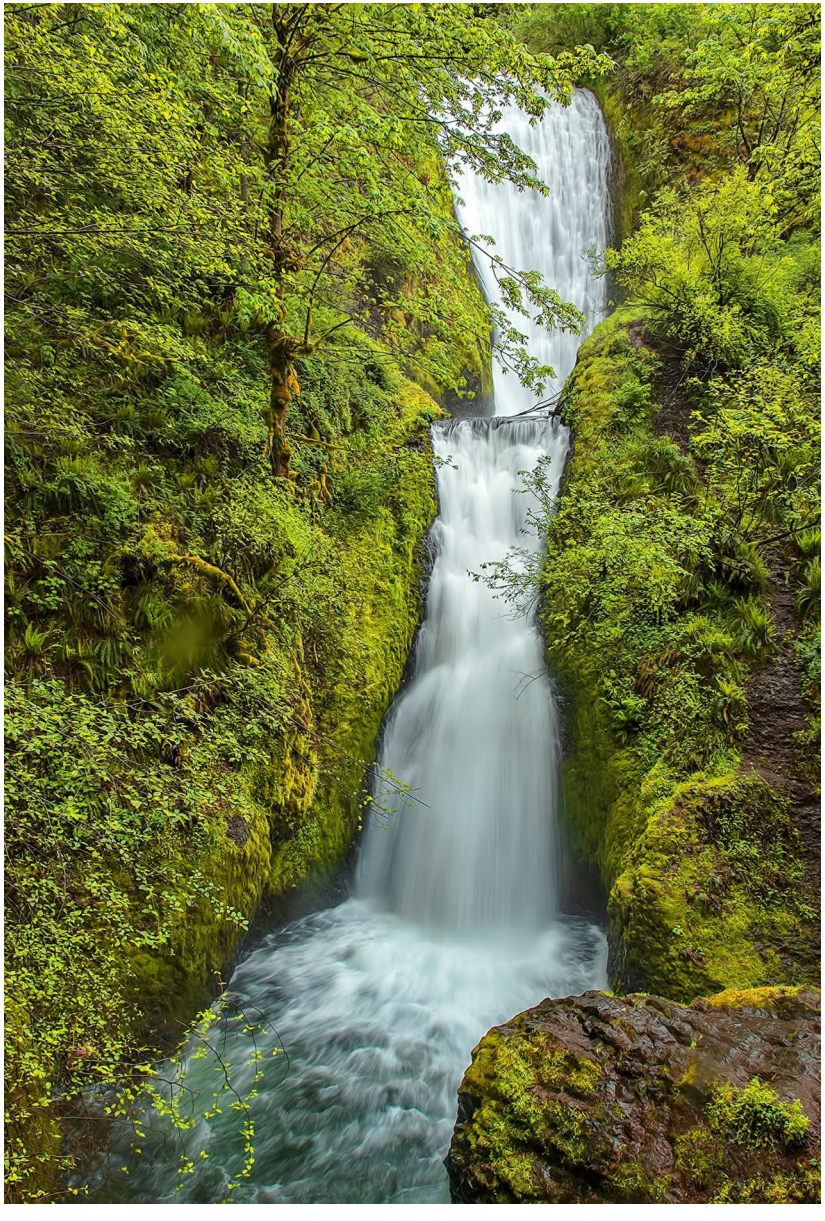
SOUTH FALLS
Silver Falls State Park near Silverton, Oregon



TOKETEE FALLS
near Roseburg, Oregon



MOSS FALLS
Highway 126 near Belknap, Oregon



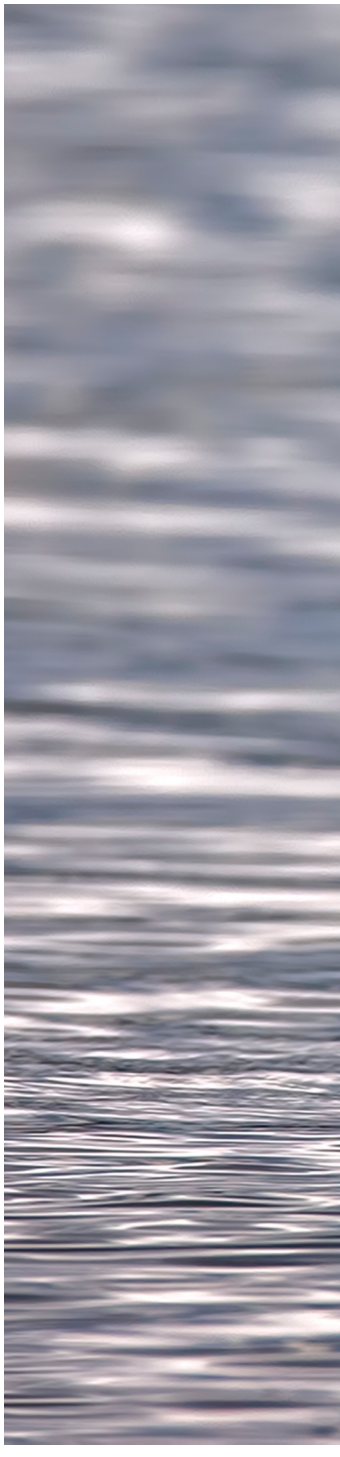
BRIDAL VEIL FALLS
Columbia River Gorge near Troutdale, Oregon

South Western Washington

Washington was also conundrum to us. Despite its proximity to British Columbia, we had never visited the state and had no idea what locations might be productive. After some preliminary research, we decided on a May tour with the idea of focusing initially on shorebirds, then progressing slowly inland to what appeared to be a series of readily accessible and interesting National Wildlife Refuges. Our objective was strictly exploratory with the intention of returning once we got the lay of the land. Any exciting photography along the way would be a welcome plus.

We began our trip on the Olympic Peninsula in an area bounded by the Hood Canal and Puget Sound, visiting locations from Bainbridge Island north to Port Gamble. This proved to be a disappointing start as the foreshore was primarily privately owned and not readily accessible. Moreover, we found few locations where public access was available. The National Wildlife Refuges we visited also proved disappointing. We finally settled into two good locations for Great Blue Herons, both east of Silverdale, the first at Big Beef Creek and second along the oyster beach and cove at Seabeck Landing.

We also encountered little shorebird activity when we visited Wallapa Bay at Tokeland Harbour, Grays Harbour National Wildlife Refuge near Hoquiam, Bottle State Park just outside Westport and Damon Point State Park near Ocean Shores. This is not to say we didn't see any birds, just that some of the species we encountered were not in the numbers we were expecting and those we did find were very difficult to approach. This we attributed to either being too late for any migrant traffic or the visible lack of any kelp and other natural vegetation that usually harbours feed. We did in fact encounter small flocks of Black-Bellied Plovers, Semipalmated Plovers, Whimbrels, Red Knots, Sanderlings and Marbled Godwits. We finally conceded that we were a bit late for this area as most literature and local birders indicated late April to early May is usually the peak of the migration. This left us photographing the crumbs! Notwithstanding, there were two bright spots. We found Pacific Brown Pelicans at the Grays Harbor Marina in Westport on the wooden breakwater. Here we enjoyed good flight opportunities in the early afternoon. Conditions were



GREAT BLUE HERON
Seabeck Landing, Bainbridge Island, Washington



fairly good as the light was soft and there was a moderate wind from the north that slowed their approach to the wooden seawall, a favourite roosting place. From Westport south, we drove for miles along the sandy beach and used our truck as a blind. Here we had no trouble positioning for several large flocks of Brown Pelicans, Western Sandpipers and Caspian Terns that we encountered between Midway and Grayland Beach.

We now headed inland through central Washington to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge near Woodland just north of Portland. This again proved disappointing based on our timing as winter and spring appears to be best for photography. Although this was a haven for Cinnamon Teal, we saw little else and had difficulty positioning given the dense habitat. As luck would have it, we came across a Coyote hunting roadside who was not only undeterred by our presence but also managed to ferret out and devour several mice for our photographic pleasure!

PIGEON GUILLEMOT
Salsbury Point County Park, Port Gamble, Washington





GRAYLAG (BARNYARD) GOOSE
Fort Flagler State Park near Port Townsend, Washington



CINNAMON TEAL (FEMALE)
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge,
Woodland, Washington



CINNAMON TEAL (MALE)
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge,
Woodland, Washington



COYOTE
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge,
Woodland, Washington



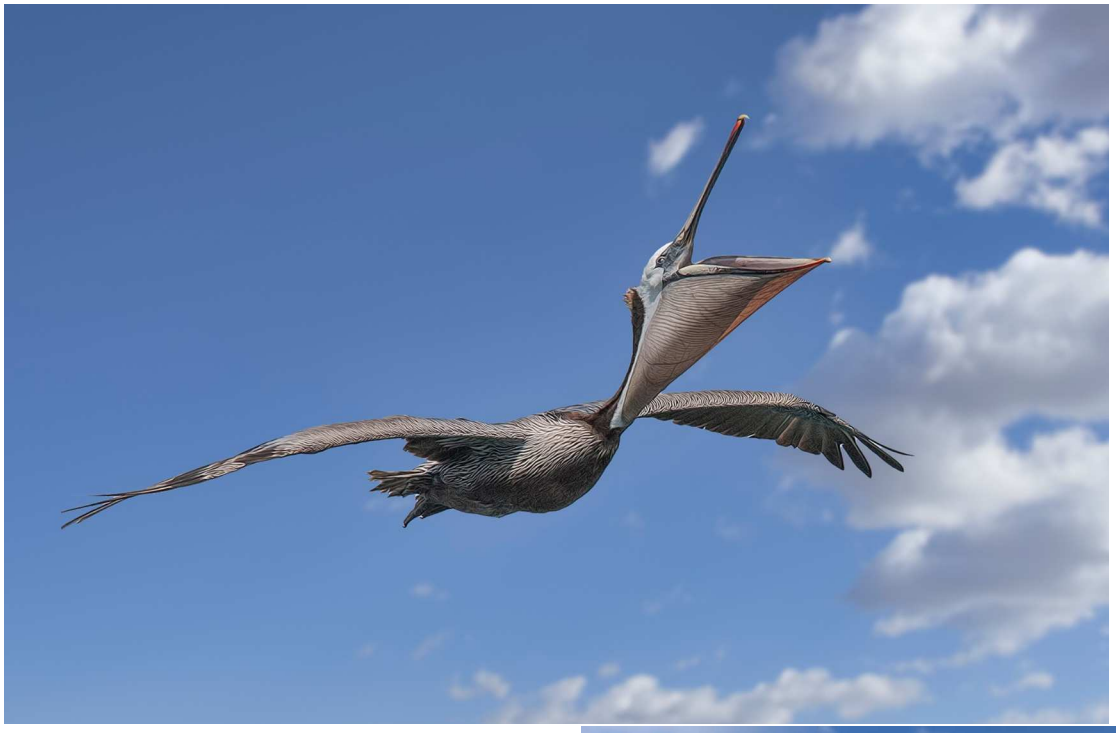
BLACK-TAILED DEER
Westport, Washington

BLACK-TAILED DEER
Westport, Washington





COYOTE
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge,
Woodland, Washington



PACIFIC BROWN PELICAN
Marina Float 21, Westport,
Washington



PACIFIC BROWN PELICAN
Marina Float 21, Westport,
Washington



GREAT BLUE HERON
Seabeck Landing, Bainbridge Island, Washington

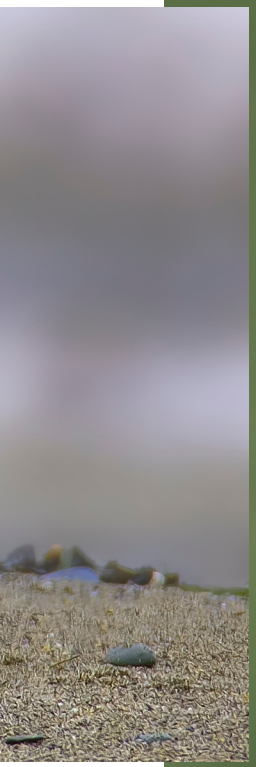


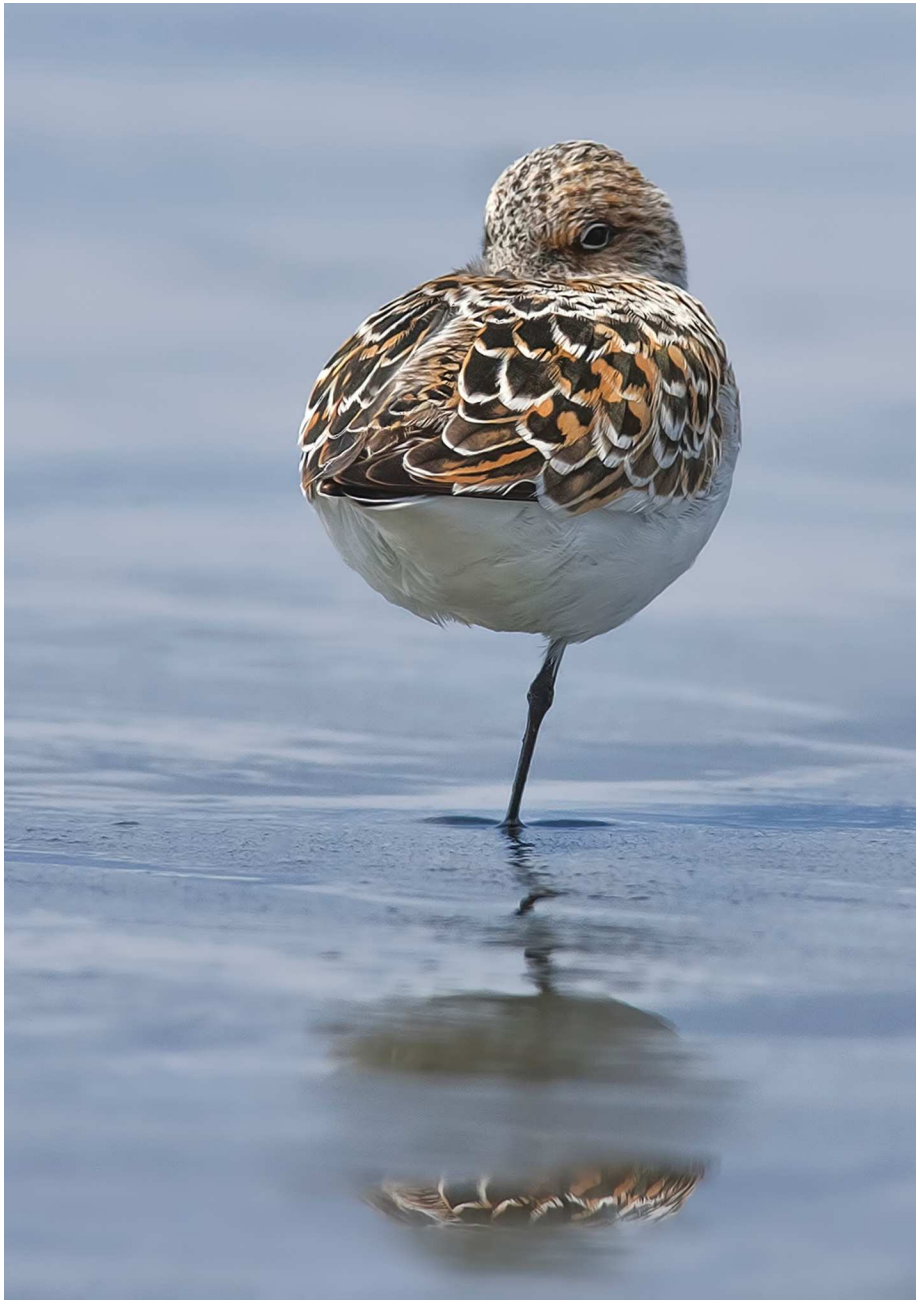


PACIFIC BROWN PELICAN (Left)
Midway Beach near Westport, Washington

WHIMBREL (Center)
Damon Point State Park near Ocean Shores, Washington

COMMON RAVEN (Right)
Port Angeles, Washington





WESTERN SANDPIPER
Grayland Beach near Westport, Washington

LONG-BILLED CURLEW
Toppenish, Washington





WESTERN GULL
Seabeck Landing, Bainbridge Island, Washington

WESTERN SANDPIPER
Grayland Beach near Westport, Washington





South Eastern Washington

The farmland surrounding Othello turned out to be a haven for Burrowing Owls. Not only were they present in large numbers but also the Visitors Center produced a map of known nesting sites. We were amazed at the accuracy and spent many hours photographing adults at eye level on perches we placed next to their nesting sites. We were also treated to new born as they emerged from their tunnels to look around and wait for the parents to provide a meal.

Another good location in this area proved to be Milepost 30 just west of Othello on Highway 26. Here we found American Avocets and Black-Necked Stilts to be quite compliant. We'd also added Palouse Falls State Park just south of Washtucna to our agenda. Besides the falls, this was a great location to capture Yellow-Bellied Marmots as they basked in the sun near the cliff edge. The fence posts and lichen covered rocks that line the last mile of roadside before the park entrance were an excellent place to find Horned Larks.

As we began to meander our way home through Eastern Washington, our journey took us through the Yakima Valley where we visited Fort Simcoe State Park, a good location for Lewis's Woodpeckers and Townsend "Piute" Ground Squirrels.

As it turned out, Othello was a rare find and certainly produced some excellent images of Burrowing Owls with young both feeding and displaying family antics in natural settings.



YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOTS
Palouse Falls near Washtucna, Washington





BURROWING OWLS (FLEDGLINGS)
South Lemaster Road near Othello, Washington





BURROWING OWL (FLEDGLING)
South Lemaster Road near Othello,
Washington



BURROWING OWLS
South Lemaster Road near Othello, Washington





BURROWING OWL (FLEDGLING)
South Lemaster Road near Othello, Washington

BURROWING OWL (FLEDGLING)
South Lemaster Road near Othello,
Washington





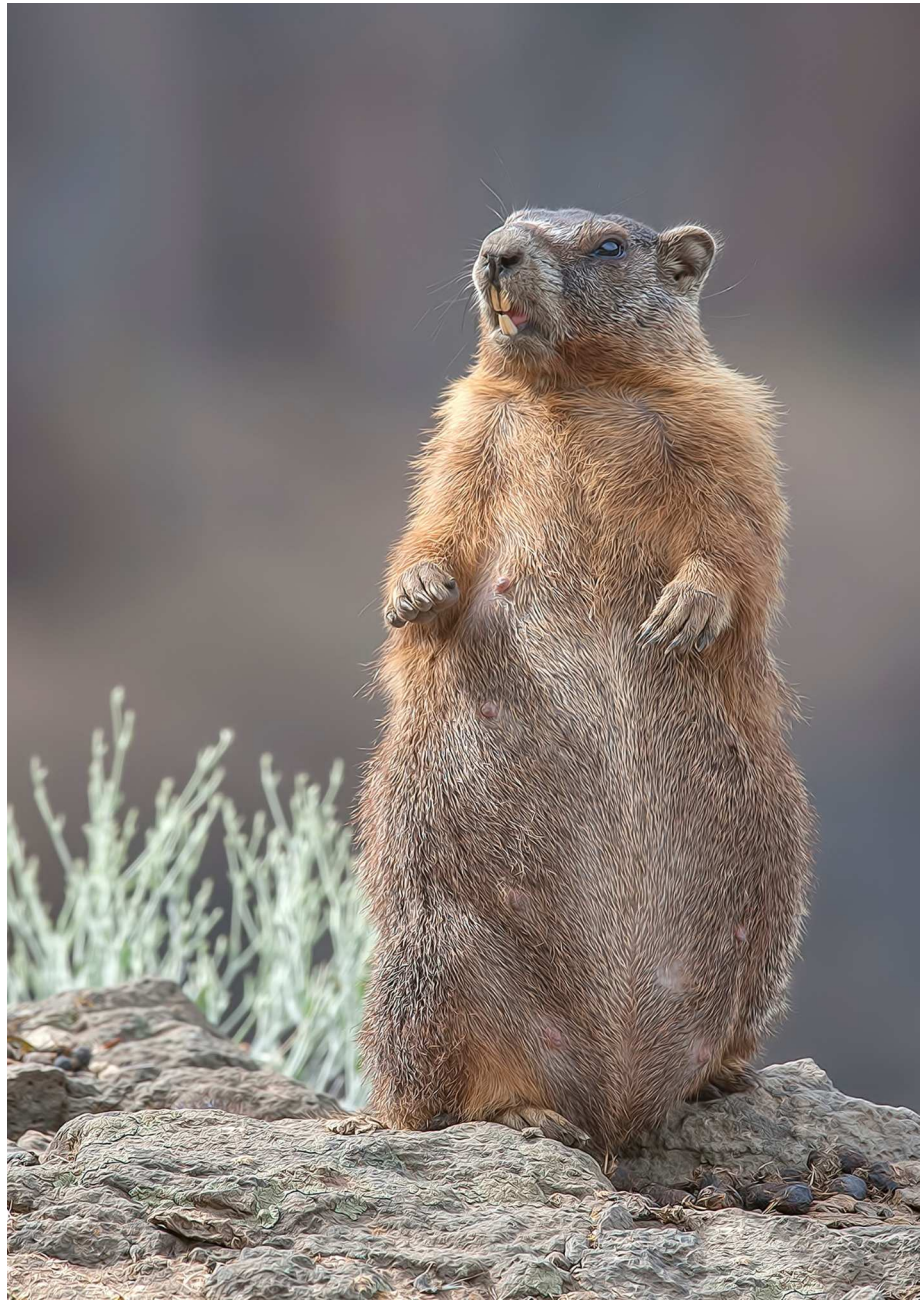
HORNED LARK
Palouse Falls near Washtucna,
Washington



YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT
Palouse Falls near Washtucna,
Washington

TOWNSEND'S "PIUTE" GROUND SQUIRREL
Fort Simcoe State Park,
Toppenish, Washington





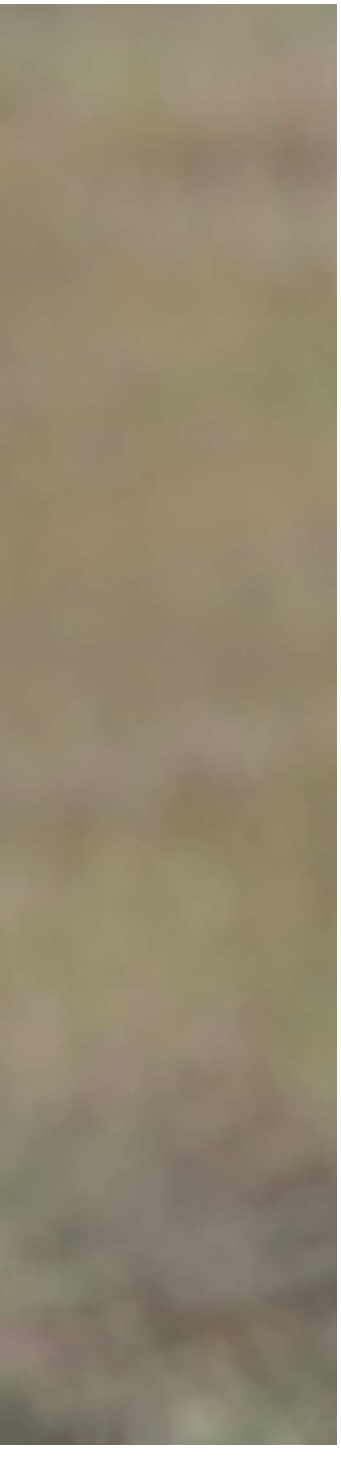
YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT
Palouse Falls near Washtucna, Washington





AMERICAN AVOCET
Milepost 30 near Othello, Washington





San Juan Island

Every area we have visited seems to contain a location gem that somehow manages to escape our research. Washington State was no exception. San Juan Island is the second largest and most populous of the San Juan archipelago lying between the mainland and Vancouver Island. Here we discovered a little-known area on the southern tip that turned out to be an intimate and exciting experience photographing red fox and their offspring.

The dens are on an open prairie grassland adjacent to what can only be described as the largest rabbit warren we have ever encountered. For several decades in the middle of the twentieth century, San Juan Island was virtually overrun with rabbits. A population of several thousand domestic European rabbits released in 1934 from a failed breeding operation grew by 1971 to an estimated 1 million. This is on an island that has an area of only 55-square-miles!

The exact history of the red fox on San Juan Island is rather murky. They are a non-native lowland species that were likely introduced to control the rabbit population. Red foxes produce large litters of up to ten kits. This obviously creates a large demand for a reliable food source. For decades, island residents and visitors have fed the foxes which has made them less fearful and more tolerant of human traffic. As a result, den areas are now posted with a recommended minimum 75-foot buffer from humans to keep the foxes wild.

Although disease and hunting has reduced the rabbit population considerably, the foxes we encountered were well fed and supplement their diet with voles that coexist in the same area. We visited in the middle of May when the kits were roughly six weeks old. Eagles had reduced the spring litter to four at each of the two sites we frequented. Both were being fed by two females. Photographing them required long waits and family activities don't last long. The patient viewer can see kits play, nurse, or fight for a rabbit kill brought by an adult fox. It's an insane viewing experience as the rabbits live either alongside or, incredibly, within the fox den area. It's a great location and one that produces an experience that would otherwise be virtually impossible to photograph in the wild.

RED FOX (VIXEN)
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington



RED FOX KITS AT PLAY
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington



RED FOX (DARK MORPH VIXEN NURSING KITS)
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington



RED FOX KITS AT PLAY
Pickett's Lane at South Beach,
San Juan Island, Washington

RED FOX KIT WITH RABBIT
Pickett's Lane at South Beach,
San Juan Island, Washington





RED FOX (VIXEN)
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington





RED FOX (DARK MORPH VIXEN AND KIT WITH RABBITS)
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington



RED FOX (VIXEN NURSING KITS)
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington



EUROPEAN RABBIT
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington



RED FOX (DARK MORPH VIXEN WITH RABBIT)
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington





RED FOX KITS AT PLAY
Pickett's Lane at South Beach,
San Juan Island, Washington



RED FOX (VIXEN NURSING KITS)
Pickett's Lane at South Beach, San Juan Island, Washington

Palouse Farmland

The Palouse is a spectacular agricultural area in northeast Washington near the Idaho border. It is best known for its "loess" hills. These fertile and vast rolling fields produce winter wheat and specialty crops such as lentils, peas and barley, housing some of the most productive dry land contour farms in North America. The centerpiece is Steptoe Butte where outstanding roadside vantage points provide a three hundred and sixty-degree panorama of the undulating fields. Here early morning and late evening side light creates lingering shadows that accentuate and define the divergent and colourful crops. Sunrise and sunset are must events, especially if clouds are present to filter and deflect the light to create a mood of rural tranquility.

The Palouse can be characterized as retaining an element of "old world" charm where pioneer buildings, barns, churches, grist mills, country schools, farmsteads, and abandoned machinery and vehicles still dot the landscape. However, finding interesting subjects can be a daunting task as it's easy to get lost in the labyrinth of back country roads. Moreover, dust and private property often combine to make photography a difficult task. Fortunately, we came across a series of maps that segmented Whitman County into six areas detailing the road name and rough location of barns, lone trees, viewpoints, abandoned houses, granaries, windmills and abandoned machinery or vehicles that might be of interest to photographers. Marrying this guide with our list of must attractions left us with a detailed and manageable approach to photographing the Palouse. It was now a simple matter of visiting the small towns and driving the back roads to see how we could position to photograph interesting subjects from the locations we had managed to isolate. As it's within a day's drive of our home, we decided to photograph roadside attractions in the middle of June and focus on the harvest in late July and early August.

It's an unbelievable experience to photograph the Palouse. We're not sure anyone can do it justice. In our opinion, it ranks well within the confines of Yellowstone, the Grand Tetons, Yosemite and the Grand Canyon as a premier North American photography destination.



LOESS HILLS from Steptoe Butte near Colfax, Washington





SKEEN SCHOOL
Fulgate Road near Palouse, Washington



BANNER ROAD near Albion, Washington

PARVIN ROAD
Colfax, Washington



HITCHINGS ROAD
Sunset, Washington





SKEEN SCHOOL JUNKYARD
Fulgate Road near Palouse, Washington



MCNEILLY ROAD near Diamond, Washington



HIGHWAY 27
Farmington, Washington



SHAHAN ROAD
Oakesdale, Washington



SOUTH JOHNSON ROAD near Hatton, Washington



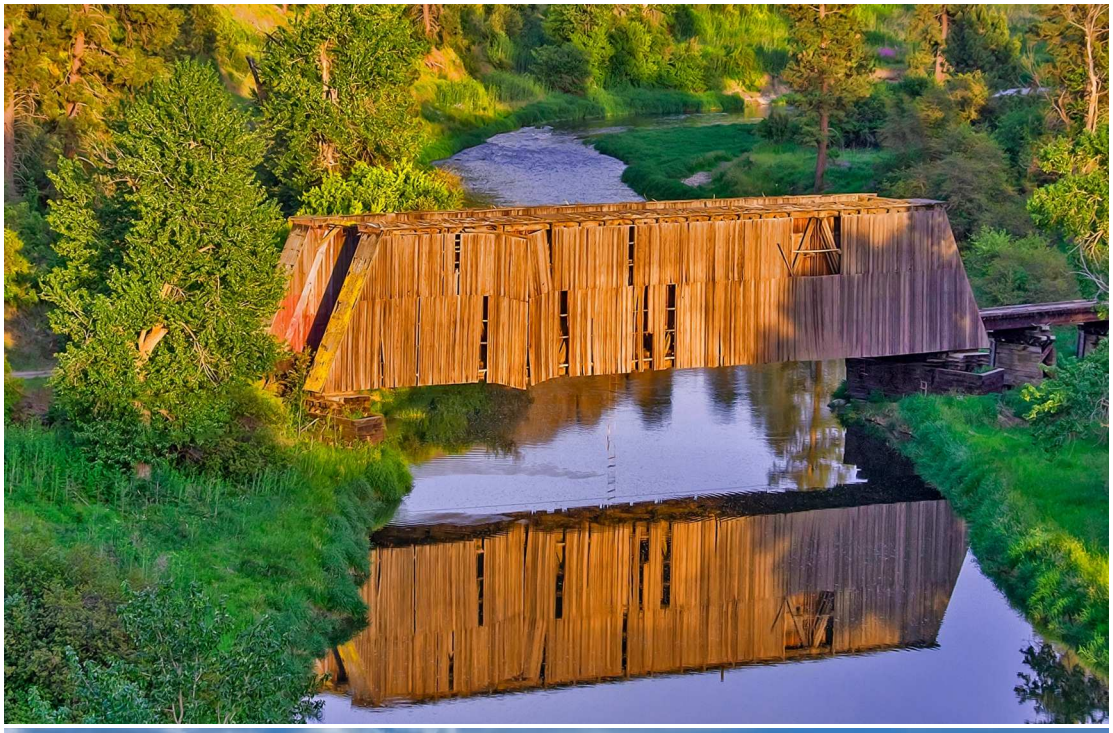
HEIDENREICH 1919 GOTHIC BARN SR272 near Colfax, Washington

SOUTH JOHNSON ROAD
Hatton, Washington





DAHMEN "WHEEL" FENCE
Uniontown, Washington



MANNING COVERED BRIDGE
Colfax, Washington



POTTER ROAD
Palouse, Washington



SEVERS ROAD near Almota, Washington



TATE CUTOFF ROAD near Albion, Washington



BRAYTON ROAD near Pullman, Washington



KENOYER ROAD near Colfax, Washington



SUNSET OVER STEPTOE BUTTE from Hume Road, Washington



LOESS HILLS SUNSET from Steptoe Butte, Washington



SCHOLZ ROAD
Steptoe Butte, Washington



EID ROAD
Moscow, Washington

EID ROAD
Moscow, Washington





MANNING ROAD
Diamond, Washington



HOFFMAN ROAD near Albion, Washington



HOFFMAN ROAD near Albion, Washington



MANNING ROAD near Diamond, Washington



PALOUSE FALLS near Washtucna, Washington

KAISER ROAD
Diamond, Washington



STEINKE
"TWELVE SIDED" BARN
St. John, Washington





ABANDONED HOMESTEAD near Colfax, Washington



PIXEL BENDER OIL PAINTING
COTTONTAIL "POISED TO ESCAPE"

Our Photography Journey...

The adventure began during the latter part of our careers when we started to ponder the question of what to do during our retirement. We had no objective in mind but finally settled on the combination of travel and nature photography as something that might be an interesting pastime. After months of agonizing research, we became early adopters of Canon's transition from film to digital camera bodies. What started as an overwhelming introduction to an emerging and complex technology soon mushroomed into somewhat of an obsession, especially as we progressed from wandering around local habitat searching for compliant subjects to attracting birds to "sets" we designed and photographed from a blind in our back yard. As we became more proficient behind the camera, we decided to focus our attention on travelling to locations in western North America, targeting sites known for outstanding bird, wildlife and natural landscape photography. Although our approach to stalking subjects "in-the-wild" produced some compelling images, we soon learned that most eye-catching exposures are the result of set-piece creations where subject behavior and ambient light are manipulated in a controlled setting. This is most readily achieved when photographing birds. The concept of "Birds as Art" was first introduced by Arthur Morris and subsequently taken to unprecedented heights as an artform by Alan Murphy. Both photographers raised the bar for what eventually became a photographic standard and one we passionately pursued as an adjunct to the traditional approach of simply searching for subjects in their natural habitat.

Not surprisingly, we were soon overcome with the urge to display and share our images. We began by producing web graphics and hosting an educational blog online for beginner photographers. As the sophistication of the digital darkroom evolved, a host of programs began to appear that elevated post-processing techniques to a new and exciting level. This led us to not only improve our web graphics but also to experiment in-house with the production of large prints on specialty media, including textured watercolor paper and canvas. During this time, we became overwhelmed by the emerging world of digital art, a niche genre designed to create stunning special effects from photographs. At the time of publication, our favorites were Pixel Bender, a Photoshop plug-in with an Oil Paint filter and LucisArt, a standalone program that creates incredible watercolor renditions. Both programs became mainstays in our Photoshop workflow.

This book is our self-published attempt to showcase, in print, a selection of photographs from our Washington and Oregon travels.

Washington and Oregon

Nature Photography

Bird, wildlife and natural landscape photography is an enjoyable and absorbing pastime. It's also an immense amount of fun! The advent of the digital camera and image enhancement software has had a significant impact on what was once the domain of professionals and serious amateurs. Today, it’s an accessible and affordable hobby, no matter what your level of entry.

Like most photographers, we were soon overcome with the urge to display and share our images. We began with web graphics of photographs captured at outstanding locations throughout western North America, including: Alaska, Alberta, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Nunavut, Oregon, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, the Yukon and several sites we visited in eastern Canada.

This book contains selected images from our travels throughout Washington and Oregon.





