

# The Tenth Salon of Photographs

THE TENTH ANNUAL *American Birds* Salon of Photography, in spite of the delayed notice, drew more participants and more entries than any earlier salon. The number of color transparencies submitted totalled 408; color prints an additional 61, and black-and-white submissions 50. No less than 108 individuals participated, and they came from 36 states and 3 provinces. California led the field with 10 entrants, followed by New York with 8, Ontario with 7, and Michigan with 6. There were five entrants each from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Florida.

Judging such a number of truly excellent photographs is no mean task, and as usual, it leaves the judging panel with guilt feelings for those "just as good" entries that could not be published. There will probably be few participants who will not reflect on our selection and declare that theirs were better, and we agree that they may be right. When we have thirty to fifty slides and prints that seem almost equally commendable, only a very narrow margin in the rankings of the panel may make the difference between publication and not. Some agonizing choices, we admit, have been made among equals on the basis of subject matter: we cannot have a salon with all owl winners, or all flying birds, or all birds at the nest, or all shorebirds standing on the mud.

As we have said before, some birds lend themselves to beautiful photographs: herons and owls especially. Geese flying overhead as a subject is perhaps a terrible photographic cliché, but our cover photograph has one unique aspect: the geese are flying against a *rainbow* background, which made it absolutely heavenly.

WHY DO SOME GOOD photographs miss fame and glory? We almost automatically eliminate out-of-focus birds, unless deliberately soft-focus; we also eliminate flight pictures where wings or tails are severed, or where cloud shapes confuse the composition. We eliminate photographs of the "find-the-bird" type, in which small birds are half hidden or lost in foliage. We are not too keen about portraits of birds which have branches or twigs in front of the bird subject, or where the bird is half in sun and half in shadow. In many photographs, backgrounds are important; as this year's selections show, an extraordinarily attractive background—one that has a sense of place and presence—can turn a banal shot into a winner. Backgrounds can also detract: a beautiful gull portrait this year had, behind and to one side, out-of-focus objects (post and buoy) that spoiled it. Some pictures are, often through no fault of the photographer, composed badly; groupings and arrangements of birds and backgrounds that simply are not pleasing. Eyes are important: portraits with "dead" lifeless eyes are frequently losers. Finally, where the picture is a close-up portrait of a bird with no other special pictorial interest, razor sharpness is important, and kodachrome film seems to reproduce with sharpness superior to ektachrome.

IT SHOULD BE pointed out that limitations on the size of our reproductions presents most of our winners in a less than ideal way: many of the photographs in this salon—for example, the tropicbird—would be stunning at full-page size or larger, or when projected on a screen.

Total species submitted—243. The most popular subjects among those submitted were:

Species	Number of entries
Great Blue Heron	9
Snowy Egret	9
Green Heron	8
Willet	7
Black-cr. Night Heron	6
Great Horned Owl	6
Great Gray Owl	6

This year for the first time, we acknowledge outstanding non-winners (finalists) whose entries came so very close that, if we had had unlimited funds, theirs would have been published. Their names, addresses, and subjects are listed on page 831.

To one and all—winners and not-quite winners—we offer our congratulations and thanks for a truly successful salon.

—Robert Arbib

GRAND PRIZE, color. Ron Kimball, of Mountain View California, who won Third Prize last year, delighted the panel with his sublime photograph of "Aleutian" Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis leucopareia*) flaring in front of a rainbow at Los Banos, California, in February, 1979. Granted it is a "lucky" shot, but then the best photographers are somehow ready for lady luck when she appears. The population of this race is now stabilized in California (where they winter), at 1500, a recent increase, although the race is still classified as **Endangered**. Ron, who specializes in photographing big cats, used a Nikon F2 with Nikor 400mm lens and K64 film, exposure not recorded. Originally we planned to frame part of the photograph for front cover only, but it simply demanded the full spread. Note how artistically the geese composed themselves for their picture.



HONORABLE MENTION. Ralph W. Schreiber, of Los Angeles, well known for his (and wife Elizabeth's) studies of the Brown Pelican and other marine birds, caught the Red-tailed Tropicbird over Kure Atoll, the northeasternmost Hawaiian island. The print here gives the merest hint of how striking the photograph might be, blown up to poster size. Taken with a Nikon F, Novoflex 400mm lens, on K-2 film; exposure data unknown.

SECOND PRIZE, color. Lawrence G. "Larry" Balch, of Lincolnwood, Illinois, who is an avid birder but claims to be only a casual photographer, sent us a large and lovely print of the Pink-footed Shearwater he photographed as it glided over a satin sea at Monterey, California, in October 1979. The camera was a Nikkormat, with 300mm lens and Skylight filter. Taken at f/10 at 1/500 sec., on Ektachrome 200.



THIRD PRIZE, color. We were tempted, for a time, to make the house-proud young chickadee our cover winner, but beauty finally won over personality. (And unfortunately, our second previous cover was also a chickadee). But this is still a most appealing picture. Rod Planck, of Spruce, Michigan, took it with his Canon F1, a 300mm lens and electronic flash, at 6 feet. Taken on Kodachrome 25, at  $f/11$  at  $1/60$  second.



HONORABLE MENTION. Dennis L. Weaver, of Escondido, California, discovered the Black-chinned Hummingbird nest while conducting a Breeding Bird Census there in June, 1980. "I had about 20 minutes of decent light per day . . . the nest, an architectural gem, was located in a heavily-shaded canyon and flash was inappropriate (at less than one foot distance)." Camera: Minolta with macro lens, E64 film, at  $1/8$  at  $1/30$  second.



HONORABLE MENTION. Kate Nicholson, a winner last year, proves that quality will tell with this Ruby-crowned Kinglet on Steen's Mountain, Oregon. "The subject was in a small flock of kinglets and solitaires in high desert scrub in the late fall. I moved along with them for most of a morning, as a more-or-less accepted member of the group." Camera: Olympus OM-1, 200mm lens, on Kodachrome film.

HONORABLE MENTION. Joel Citron lives in Wilmington Delaware, but he stopped the Sandwich Tern in flight off the end of the West Jetty at Aransas Pass, Texas, in May 1978. This is his first award and first publication. The splendid portrait was taken with Nikon F2A, Nikkor 500mm lens, on Kodachrome 64. Exposure data: 1/8 at 1/250 second.





HONORABLE MENTION. The Semipalmated Sandpiper on the mudflat is a photograph that depends much on lighting, which turns an ordinary shot into an extraordinary one. Peter Trull, of Northampton, Massachusetts, took the picture with a Canon AT-1, 300mm Tamron lens, on Kodachrome film, at f/16 at 1/250 second. When informed he was a winner, he responded "I'm thrilled to bits!!"

HONORABLE MENTION. "Crane Dance" came in as part of a photo series, and this pose caught our fancy. It is not a new theme (new themes are hard to find), but it is full of action and suspense. Marcella M. Bishop, of Polson, Montana, took it with her Pentax Spotmatic, with Haminex 400mm lens and haze filter, on Kodachrome 400. Taken shortly after sunrise at Gray's Lake N.W.R., Montana, at f/11 at 1/1000 second.





HONORABLE MENTION. John Gerlach lived in Lapeer, Michigan when he photographed the juvenal Saw-whet Owl, but he has now joined our sizeable California contingent of winners. The owl was "free, absolutely fearless—a perfect model." Camera: Canon F-1 with 100mm lens, with two electronic flashes, on Kodachrome 25. Exposure f/13 at 1/60 second.



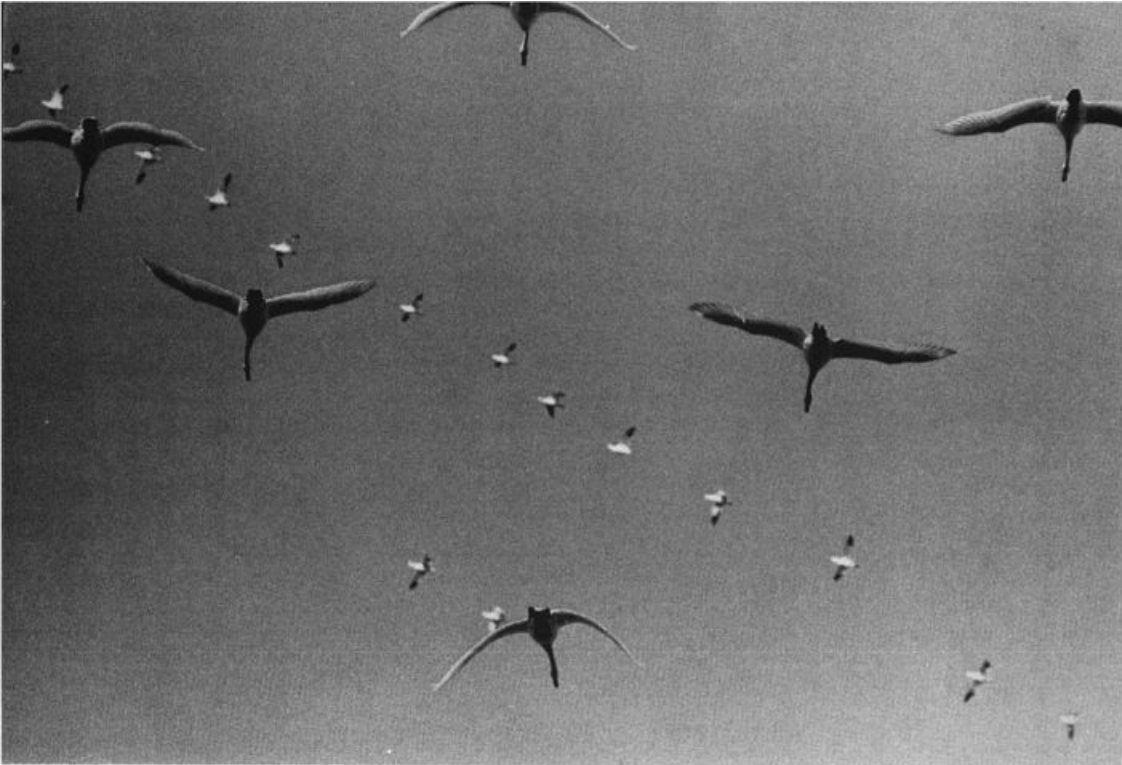
HONORABLE MENTION. Doug Danforth, of Bisbee, Arizona, who won Honorable Mention last year with shorebirds and shadows, repeats with this amusing portrait of the sleeping sentry in the sycamore tree. We handicap owl photographs because owls have so much more charisma than most birds, and because they usually sit still. This Screech was captured for posterity in Guadalupe Canyon, Arizona, with a Pentax Spotmatic camera, 50mm lens with doubler, on Kodachrome film.

HONORABLE MENTION. One of two nest pictures to win mention this year, the Wood Thrushes feeding young were taken in Seymour, Connecticut, by Debbie Devine, who was Debbie Gendron when she submitted her entries. Debbie has illustrated articles and gives slide shows with her new husband Buzz. The photo was taken from a blind 8-9 feet high, with Minolta 101, 400mm lens with extensions, on Kodachrome 64, using strobe lights. Exposure at f/16, at 1/60 second.



HONORABLE MENTION. The aggressive Ruby-crowned Kinglet by Alma Greene, of Oak Creek, Arizona, has the distinction of splendidly showing the never ruby and normally invisible crown. Alma began to photograph birds two years ago, at age 67. The kinglet has been displaying at its reflection in a study window; "patience and prayer" captured the moment. Camera: Leicaflex with 60mm macro lens on Kodacolor II, at f/4 at 1/50 second.



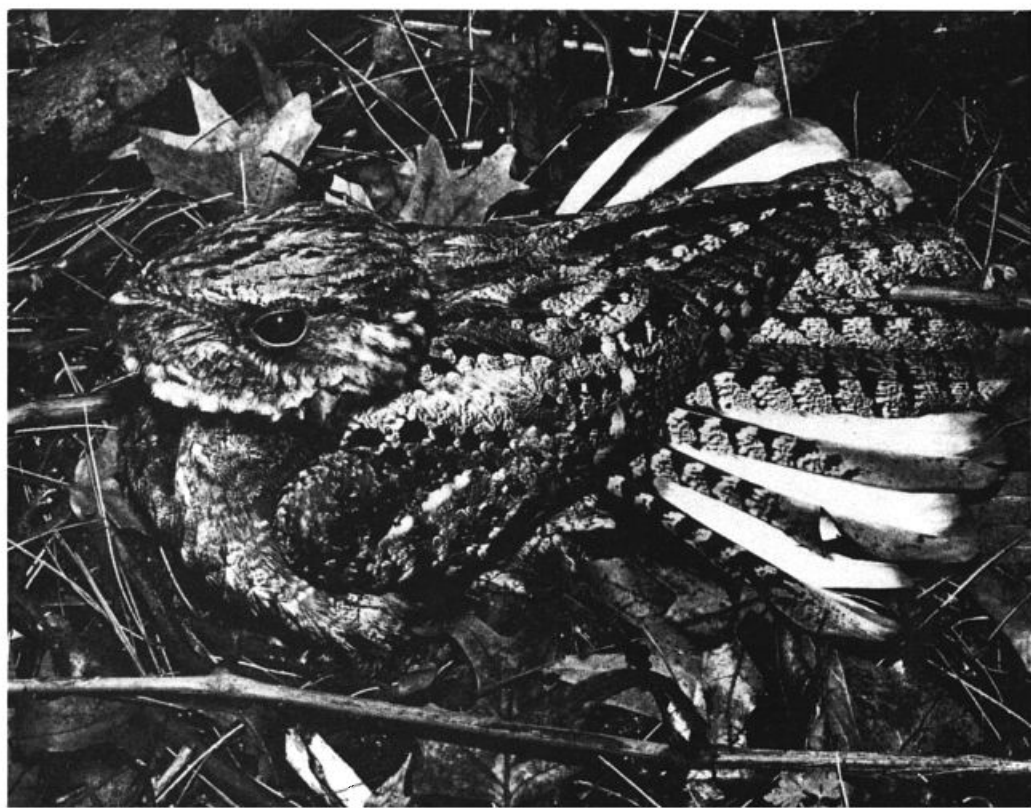


**SECOND PRIZE**  
Aerial traffic at Sacramento N.W.R., California, by Frans Lanting, who wins our "Photographer of-the-Year" nomination: two covers this year and three black and-white winners! Frans notes that the Snow Geese are

hunted, the Whistling Swans are not: ergo, the geese fly higher than the swans. Camera: Nikon, 400mm lens, Pan-X film, shot at f/5.6 at 1/500 second.

### ***The winning black-and-white prints***

**FIRST PRIZE** winner in the black-and-white category this year is Canadian Alan Wormington, who proved his merit when the prints were turned over, by having provided four of the eight finalist entries, including first and third prizes! Alan is a naturalist at Point Pelee Nat'l Park, the famous birding site on Lake Erie, but travels "all over Ontario" to hunt for rarities. He has been photographing birds for only six years, and these are his first award winners. The Chuck-will's-widow on the nest was taken at Point Pelee June 3, 1977, and verified Canada's first confirmed nesting. Camera: Pentax, 55mm lens, on Plus-X film. Exposure data not available.







HONORABLE MENTION. Courtship flight of Pintails, at Gray Lodge W.M.A., California, by Frans Lanting. "A winter's morning. I'm chilled to the bone, standing knee deep in freezing water and courting groups of Pintails are everywhere slashing through the sky like kamikazes." Camera; Nikon, 400mm lens, Tri-X film, at f/8 at 1/1000 second.

THIRD PRIZE also went to Alan Wormington with this tranquil photograph of Blue-winged Teal from his car window. The birds were swimming in a flooded backyard at Long Point, Ontario. Camera: Pentax, 200mm lens with 2X extender, Tri-X film. Exposure data not available.





HONORABLE MENTION. Alan Wormington's third winner—one of the many owls at Amherst Island, Ontario, during the winter of 1980. The Screech Owl was shot with a Pentax MX, 300mm lens, on Plus-X film.

HONORABLE MENTION. Edward B Kirsten, of Nutley, New Jersey, broke up the Wormington-Lanting monopoly in black-and-white winners this year with this elegant portrait of a ♂ Wood Duck. Camera: Minolta XD-11, lens 200mm Pro, film: Tri-X. The exposure was at f/5.6 at 1/250 second.



HONORABLE MENTION. Another Wormington winner, the Spotted Sandpiper was taken at Rockhouse Point, Ontario, in 1976. The same Pentax equipment and film were used as with the Third Prize photo. "Simple shot—nothing remarkable about the experience."



HONORABLE MENTION. Snow, White-fronted, and Cackling geese at Tule Lake N.W.R., California, again by Frans Lanting. "A blizzard of wings that sends shivers up the spine." Same camera data as for the Pintail print.

