

Bird Photography Pointers

Equipment:

- Lens Minimum 300mm Preferably a 100-400mm for flying birds.
- Heavy tripod with a gimbal type head for a 500mm+ lens.
- Flash unit with a better beamer attachment.

The Subject:

- Love your subject more than your camera. Get to know bird behavior.
- Get Down and Dirty.



Shoot from the level of your subject when practical.

- Elevate or lower the camera to include or exclude the background horizon. A little bit of his movement goes a long way.
- Know the rules of composition. The rule of thirds, the KISS rule (Keep It Simple Stupid), the Portrait Rule of Thirds (bridge of the nose one third down centered).



This is my own rule that I use for human portraits. It works quite well with animal, and flower subjects.

- The very first rule of composition: There are no rules—they are guidelines. You are an artist—do what you want!
- Read *Milton's Top Ten* list at:
<http://www.miltonheiberg.com/images/04-Phototips-and-Articles/Milton's-Top-Ten-List.pdf>



Flying Bird Tips

- **Flying Bird Settings**

1. **ISO 400** for sunny day, **ISO 800** for cloudy day
2. Set **A** or **Av** for Aperture Priority
3. Set aperture to strive for **1/2000 sec.**—usually wide open
4. When subject is **back lighted**, compensate exposure by 1-1/2 to 2-f/stops
5. Go to **Manual** mode when trees or mountains enter background.
6. Birds with white feathers—Close aperture 1-f/stop

This means sacrificing the dark feathers on a Bald Eagle or Osprey

- **Milton's Wing Law**

If the far wing is in front of the near wing, then the bird is flying into the viewer's attention—GOOD. When the far wing falls behind the near wing, then the bird is leaving the viewer's attention—BORING.

I recently learned that every fighter pilot knows this rule. In the first case the approaching plane is HOT—and we hope it's one of ours. In the second case, it's cold—go back to your cross-word puzzle.

Florida Hot Spots for Bird Photography

These are some of my favorite places and seasons for bird photography. I have found them to be reliable for the most part, and provide good backgrounds and opportunities to get close to your subject, , however bird activity changes by the minute.

- Ding Darling NWR: March–May - migrating passerines, shore birds, wading birds, spoonbills.
- Corkscrew Sanctuary: December–Spring - Cypress forest background for a wide variety of nesting birds.
- Venice Rookery: December–Spring - Nesting Herons and Anhinga. Warning: Some photo contests rule out exotic vegetation. these nests are in Brazilian Pepper trees.
- Fort Desoto: March–April - "The Mulberry Tree" & "The Fountain" for migrating passerines. North Beach area - Wimbral, Curlews, Oystercatchers. Beach and sand dune backgrounds.
- Joe Overstreet Road, Saint Cloud: Eagles, Caracara, Whooping Cranes.
- Oakland Preserve: Hawks, Osprey, Tall tree backgrounds with Spanish Moss.
- Orlando Wetlands Park: February–Spring (Closed Nov. 15–Jan. 31) - Black Bellied Whistling Ducks with gray weathered wood perches. Flocks of Ibis flying across the sunrise most mornings.
- Merritt Island NWR: Winter - Bio Lab Road for Shore birds group flights with Sunrise background, White Pelicans;.& Black Point Drive or East Gator Road for Avocets, Spoonbills.
- Viera Wetlands: Winter - Prolific bird life. Drive through closed weekends.
- Sebastian Inlet: Fishing pier flying Brown Pelicans.
- Green Cay: February–May - Painted Gallinules, Anhinga, Limpkins
- Wakodahatchee Wetlands: If they are not at Green Cay, they'll be at nearby Wakodahatchee.
- Brian Picolo Park, Pembroke Pines: A baseball & soccer fields park with protected Burrowing Owls.
- Everglades NP, Anhinga Trail: February–May - Nesting Anhinga, Cormorants, Painted Gallinules.

All of the above places offer almost any other species found in Florida.