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## Bird photography tips and tricks

But it has to be understood that they are merely guidelines, at most. Most birds seem to have a circle of comfort. Another critical one is exposure compensation, something we might end up forgetting most of the time. Read On How to Master Migrant Warbler Photography How to Master Migrant Warbler Photography Warblers aren't the most cooperative subjects, but they are one of the most beautiful and addictive. Instead, spending more time with one subject will yield better photographs than trying to click every bird that flies around you. If you see a bird in a particular perch, chances are you might see it in the same perch again later. Spend Some time with the Subject Don't be in a hurry-burry mode when you do bird photography. 33. Most of these photographs are likely to be just record shots which would not be interesting for most viewers. It was perched against a grey, overcast sky without any details. 15. I have been photographing birds for more than 15 plus years. Try to Photograph at Eye Level Bird images do not look that good if you try to photograph them from a high or low vantage point unless you are going for some creative bird photography. 12. For example, take a look at the little egret picture below:Little Egret | NIKON D750 @ 340mm, ISO 125, 1/250, /5.6The bird was properly lit and perched on a mangrove. It will help you capture better bird images. Stop moving. Then there is nothing more you can ask for. Eye-level shots also throw out the best possible bokeh. It is simply about improving your chances of capturing difficult shots that would be almost impossible with more basic equipment. Use Auto ISOWith birds, we are always in a rush. Thus, the portrait shot will look more pleasing to the viewer. But the same settings could be catastrophic for a dark bird a few feet away. Use Photography Bird Hides If Possible Another good idea is to use photography bird hides for photographing birds. But if it does, you will end up with one picture that will make the whole thing worthwhile.Gray Heron Hunting | NIKON D750 @ 500mm, ISO 400, 1/1600, /5.6White throated laughing thrush with kill | NIKON D750 @ 500mm, ISO 2000, 1/500, /5.6Break StereotypesA photograph that surprises people will pull in a lot of attention. But a photograph is much beyond just the subject. Most of us are aware of rules like the rule of thirds, the golden triangle, and so on. Photographing silhouettes can be a little tough if you are a beginner. By gear, I also don't mean just camera and lens. Most of us would have heard a thousand times - "It is always the person standing behind the camera that matters." I don't mind the saying that buying the most expensive gear out there will straight away yield you the best pictures. You set the maximum ISO value which your camera will use, and then you manually set the "ISO Sensitivity" value that the camera will not go below. I personally am happy if I get one usable photograph in one field day. Taking a look at the shot to check the exposure, focus and composition is all fine, and it can help you avoid making an error in your camera settings. It will take off. 5. But, in all honesty, I have never felt as satisfied as I am now with the D750. In this case, I was close to the subject, my settings were good, and everything was ok with the picture, except the leg at the bottom is out of focus:NIKON D7000 @ 500mm, ISO 100, 1/1250, /5.6This one issue makes the picture unusable even though everything else is how I want. Another reason to avoid a corner-to-corner subject has to do with lens. I have seen quite a few photographers leave on a bird photography trip the moment they have their holidays approved - only to realize that the most interesting birding season has already passed in that location. 13. Some are shy. You can chimp the rest of the images. Even a lot of pro-grade lenses have some loss of sharpness in the extreme corners. When you photograph birds, your end goal is to capture an aesthetically pleasing image. I initially had the camera on group-area autofocus. Below is a picture of a humble Indian pond heron, which is a very common bird in India, but the light and the frame were too good to miss.Indian Pond Heron | NIKON D750 @ 500mm, ISO 140, 1/1000, /5.6On top of that, there is only one way to master photography: Practice! Photographing common birds is a great way to practice, which one day will help us out tremendously when we are photographing rare birds.Get Close to Your SubjectBird photography is, in part, about getting the textual details. It makes the photos look more dramatic, which in turn carries the emotion of the light. To get perfectly composed bird images, you need to crop the image, 90 percent of the time. The camera acquired focus on the high contrast forehead, leaving me with blurry eyes. How to Take the Best Duck Photos Avian photographers are often attracted to ducks because of their striking plumage. It does not mean that you need to invest in expensive camera gear. For example, with my D7000, I seldom push the ISO beyond 1000. Perched birds can often be taken at 1/400, birds moving on a branch often need 1/800, while birds in flight might need something as fast as 1/2500. However, one of the most frequent mistakes I've seen beginners make is using too fast a shutter speed. I have used the D7000, D7100 and the D7200 extensively and even used the D500 to a good extent. A bad picture is as good as not having the picture. By comparison, a stereotypical photograph does not attract that much attention. If I have seen a typical composition quite a few times before, no matter how appealing it is, it would not invoke much interest in me. But on top of that, the Manfrotto 055 tripod with a Benro gimbal head and a cheap wired shutter release allowed me to get the shot at a shutter speed of 1/25 second.Gray backed woodpecker | NIKON D750 @ 500mm, ISO 3200, 1/25, /5.6Investing in gear is not about owning the latest and greatest or guaranteeing successful photos. But the rewards are unique photographs. It will help you capture bird images that are pleasing to the viewers. Others are a remote-triggered shot where the camera was mounted close to a possible perch. Personally, for remote photo triggering, I use my camera's built-in WiFi and connect to Nikon's app. Once you see that the bird is stressed, you have probably entered its circle of comfort. It will help to ensure the bird is not disturbed. 10. Semi-pro lenses suffer even more. Get the Eyes Sharp Like any living subject, you need to get the eyes of birds to tack sharp in the image. You need to ensure that the background is free from distractions. Try to find some good bird subjects during the golden hour. You can refer to this article to know more about the best bird photography poses. But don't get disheartened, try again. Seven Spring Hotspots for Warbler Photography Seven Spring Hotspots for Warbler Photography Migrant traps aren't just a boon to birds—they put photographers in a sweet spot too. If it happens to be water it is even less desirable as the reflections from the surface make it way too distracting. 11. If your subject gets comfortable with you around, your chances of getting a head-on shot maximize. This knowledge comes in handy when photographing such birds. 4. I was pretty close to the bird when I shot this photograph:Scarus Crane courtship dance | NIKON D7000 @ 500mm, ISO 1000, 1/4000, /5.6Inside the confines of the sanctuary, the cranes do not care much about humans. Try to Get the Sun Behind You For bird photography, you will be mostly dependent on natural sunlight. Take an example of the Scarus crane below, which I photographed in the Bharatpur bird sanctuary. But noise reduction has its own problems, like loss of details, so it is best to keep at a minimum.Wait for the ActionA close-up profile shot of a perched bird with all the textual details can sometimes make a good picture. But, in reality, the quality of my pictures increases exponentially when I do not have to crop my images to 30%, 50%, or almost 100%.It is true that modern cameras like the Nikon D850 give us 48MP, and other brands are just as strong in the megapixel war, allowing us to crop quite a lot. There might be patches with good light and the ones with not so good light. It is a good telephoto range for birds. For example, by raising ISO sensitivity from base ISO up to ISO 800 or 1600, the camera will use a faster shutter speed rather than shooting at a lower ISO. You need to know the limitations and strengths of your camera gear and use it accordingly. It will help to photograph natural bird behaviour. If you spot meter directly on your subject, you can be sure that the subject will be exposed properly, regardless of how the remaining image looks. 30. Capturing a courtship dance, a hunting action, a flapping of wings or at least the fine art of preening makes a photograph all the more interesting. This higher rate is very useful to freeze the action shots. 1/250 is about the slowest I will do, and I usually pick 1/500 or even faster depending upon the subject.If your camera has U1 and U2 modes, or similar custom settings, you can save presets both for low light (Manual mode with Auto ISO) and daylight (Aperture Priority mode with Auto ISO) to save time. Use a Remote/WiFi or a Bird HideSome of the best pictures you see in prints and social media are seldom hand-held random ones where the photographer was chasing birds. If you do, be actively keep track of your current settings, especially vital settings like focus and exposure compensation, you aren't going to remember to change them when the scene changes. Use the Right Shutter SpeedThe right shutter speed is crucial to get down like lens choice, as there are already endless debates and articles about them if you wish to partake. When you get closer to the birds with your camera, you will be able to capture more feather details of the birds in the image. There is a chance that it might not, and you may have to walk away empty handed. The bigger the subject in the frame, the more it will grab attention. But negative space is also useful; it helps pull the observer's eye into the picture. Those times, I just kept my camera aside, admired the scene, and walked away. 9. Beyond that, issues like haze come into play, which affect the overall contrast and colors to a noticeable extent. Capture in RAW format I recommend capturing the bird image in RAW format instead of JPEG. The golden rays of soft diffused light from the Sun falling on the bird can help to create some wonderful frames. Don't Go for Frequent Gear Upgrades I strongly recommend not going for frequent camera gear upgrades. Capture Some Habitat Frames Do not always go for bird portraits with nice and clean backgrounds. Most of the time with bird photography, we are forced to shoot at higher ISOs. It literally means more noise. Especially, if you get your lens to the eye level of your subject or a bit lower and get your subject to look into the lens. ... The light will fall on the eyes perfectly at certain angles depending on the birds positioning from the light. From my experience, all birds will not allow you to approach them. So, it may fly away when you try to take a photograph. The background was a lot darker than the subject. Once they are comfortable, you can approach them slowly. For fast-moving birds, you need to use shutter speeds of 1/1600 and above. You don't want to crop your photo too much. Add that to autofocus accuracy concerns - the tracking system working best with more central AF points - and it can be a recipe for imperfect sharpness if you place your subject too far off-center.Of course, it's always a balance. And so on.Whatever the action may be, anticipate it and be persistent until it happens. But in many cases it makes it boring, as there is no activity going on.This is another reason why it is not a good idea hopping from one bird to another after bagging their profile picture. If you see two birds in close proximity there is a chance of a fight. So, be ready with the right camera settings for photographing birds. Eye-level shots mean that the background is farther away by comparison, making it more likely to look interesting and less distracting. Egyptian Vulture | NIKON D750 @ 500mm, ISO 1100, 1/4000, /8.0NIKON D750 @ 500mm, ISO 100, 1/4000, /5.6Don't Crop Too MuchLet's admit it. But it all boils down to how much we chimp. If you see the bird take a deep breath, it often means it is going to take off. Sometimes, it can even result in a blown-out background when you try to expose for the bird. This is where most photographers say, "Reach is almost everything in bird photography." It is true to a certain extent. Use Blur to Paint With Birds—And Other Creative Avian Photography Strategies Tips for Taking Great Bird Photos From the Comfort of Your Car Six Tips for Photographing Birds from Boats Five Hotspots for Photographing Bald Eagles The Dos and Don'ts of Editing Bird Photos How to Take the Best Duck Photos Dancing Beak to Beak: Tips for Photographing Avian Courtship Here's How to Prepare for a Bird Photography Trip How to Compose the Perfect Bird Photo How to Use Lighting and Angles to Take Better Bird Photos North Carolina's Cape Fear River Is a 'Forever Camera!' Hotspot—What Does That Mean for Its Birds and People? You will get the best possible lighting during this time of the day. There will be places in your area that birds visit frequently. Sometimes, the bird will even come close to you. The beautiful birds did not ask us to click a picture of them in the first place. I get the 700mm focal length by adding a 1.4x teleconverter on my Canon 500mm F/4 L ISII USM Lens. If you are interested to photograph the best images of all these birds, it is essential to have a good understanding of the bird's behaviour. Ashleigh Scully, 16, captured this shot of a curious young screech owl while doing her homework at the kitchen table. At the same time, if you are one, there's a good chance you're also the bird. In bird watching, a "record shot" is merely a picture of a rare bird, and it most of the time serves as a proof that you have seen such a bird. But if you're in the habit of reviewing every photo after you just took it, that is too much. I would much rather be close to my subject on a full-frame camera than farther away on a crop-sensor camera with the same composition.Lastly, there is one more issue with over-cropping. (This issue is again one more reason for tip #2.)For example, you might have set your camera to photograph a bright bird with a dark background, and the image looks good except that it was for the previous photo, it is easy to over- or under-expose a set of photos. 18. Also, they may fly away if they sense some danger. You can even limit the highest ISO value to a certain value that does not produce too much noise in the image. The "minimum shutter speed" value is the one you need to be careful with, since the camera will stay at that value most of the time. Crawling freaks out your subjects way less than walking at full height. The normal shutter noise can disturb the birds. Birds perch on trees, rocks, and ground. This is because, when it comes to bird photography, if we do not understand our subject's temperament we will end up with no subject at all.Of course, this holds true for any wildlife, but it means all the more when it comes to birds. Canon Photographer Greg Sullivan shares his pro tips on photographing birds in action, with recommended cameras, lenses, settings and techniques. Yet as hard as it is to conduct health studies on humans, it's even harder with wild animals. This is one more reason why subject knowledge becomes a must. If they are not sharp, the whole image will look uninteresting. Chimping after the scene is gone borders on pointless, while chimping during the height of the action is simply a bad idea. Try to capture some habitat frames also. Sometimes, you may need to fine-tune the white balance, contrast, sharpness, or other aspects of an image. You will get different types of natural light when you photograph birds at different places at different times of the day. Sometimes, it attracts more attention than simply filling your frame with the subject from corner to corner. On top of that, if you leave a bit of extra space around your subject, you can improve your chances of getting the shot even if your subject is moving erratically. Instead, by turning down your shutter speed when you don't need it, you'll ensure that you always use as much light as you can. "Record Shots" Are Seldom Good PhotographsBird watching is very different from bird photography. Try to Photograph at Golden Hour Golden hour is the best hour to photograph wild birds. There is a bit of an art to finding which times are safe to chimp and will give you useful information for the next photo - but if you aren't sure, keep your peeping to a minimum. Have Enough Negative SpaceIt is true that most of us seek to fill as much space as possible with our subject. The pixel pitch (no. Some raptors peep before takeoff. Get out in the field with your camera, and use these bird photography tips to capture some wonderful bird images. Nowadays, there are AI-based denoising programs that are capable of removing high noise with a couple of clicks. Otherwise, they will fly away. None of them will never make it to any exhibiting platform.Many times, I have seen a lot of photographers spot a bird, take a few photographs and move to the next spot. Similarly, there might be patches with distracting background. And over the course of a trip, I'd much rather take a dozen great photos than a hundred solid ones.Choice is a spoiler. Here's how to... It includes the story that is being told, the light that adds emotion, the background that adds to the aesthetics and many more. You can actually anticipate an action. Mating calls have a great chance of being followed by a courtship ritual. And your photos will easily be overexposed if you aren't paying attention, or you fire a burst of shots across changing light conditions.For that reason, Aperture Priority mode with Auto ISO is also useful. Cropping becomes almost inevitable with bird photography. Secondly, even at ISO 3200, the D750 gave me a pretty usable picture. A Curious Owl Peeks Out of Its Nest Box. In the farms, farmers are always vigilant of their crops guarding them from birds.Some birds are seen only during certain hours of the day, like the Himalayan Monal. Nasim & Elizabeth already have great articles on the most common tips. After spotting the bird, try to spend some time with it. 22. The only downside of these lenses is that they are a little heavy when compared to the zoom ones. One main component of any image is the background. The selection of shutter speed is fully dependent on the bird type. It will help you capture some natural behaviour of the bird. This retouching is essential to enhance the beauty of the image. To be fast with the camera, you need to know the exact location of all the necessary buttons. 16. If you chimp too much, you can miss an amazing scene in front of you.I admit it, I am a chimp. 32. It is one reason why I am not too keen on getting into the 10 FPS zone. 7. I spot metered for the whites in the bird, ignoring the background, which was obviously underexposed. If you find frogs on one particular perch, it means that's a favorite. Get to Eye LevelThis could be a cliché, but an article on bird photography is incomplete without it. So, if your purpose is to capture the highest quality bird photos rather than a plain documentary record of what you saw, you will need to put in some extra effort.Don't Ignore Common SubjectsAlong the same lines as the previous tip - All of us love to come back with brilliant photographs of rare birds and animals. But it takes some practice to get to that point, especially in terms of learning your subject's behavior so you can approach close enough. The reason why most photographers go for crop bodies when it comes to birding is, in part, the crop factor. Even I had this fear during my initial days. With my D750, I push it to 3200. The best bird photographs are mostly eye-level shots. I use a focal length range of 300mm to 700mm for photographing birds. The noise in the image should be such that you can remove it using any denoising software without losing details. As always with nature photography, in spite of all the planning, nothing is fully in our control. You need to act fast. But when presented with an opportunity, do not miss it. But, the same individuals fly off to nearby farmlands where they start to get very shy. There are different options available. Use Prime Lens for Better Image Quality I strongly recommend using prime telephoto lenses for photographing birds if you have the budget. Amid mounting global health concerns about PFAS, communities living along the waterway must grapple with how contamination is affecting life on the river. If there is no catch light in the eyes, the image will look unpleasant. These Scrappy Photos Capture the Action-Packaged World Beneath a Bird Feeder These Scrappy Photos Capture the Action-Packaged World Beneath a Bird Feeder A photographer pursues common yard wildlife from a different perspective. If you are a newbie, I recommend going to any nearby area for photographing local birds initially. The bird is also more likely to display its natural characters. For example, the behaviour of raptors will be completely different from ducks. For the rest, I go with the Manual mode. Thus, burst mode helps to capture the perfect moment. If you have just started bird photography, you will be really interested to take your bird pictures to the next level. But make sure to pick up the best one that comes within your budget. 31. Pigeons Are Beautiful, so Start Photographing Them Pigeons Are Beautiful, so Start Photographing Them Photographer Andrew Garn shares his tips for capturing these underrated urban stalwarts in all of their indiscent glory. The feed and mood of an image will differ with this lighting only if you complement it with the right exposure. 25. 6. What's more, birds aren't always in the most convenient of locations—out on a lake, high up in a tree, across a field. Once you capture a series of action shots, you can select one or two best images from them. But pro gear does make certain things a lot easier.If gear really did not matter, no professional photographer would invest in something like a Nikon D850 or an 800mm /5.6 lens. It will be there for around one hour before sunset and one hour after sunrise. It helped me make it a high-contrast, low-key image.On the other extreme, take a look at the Imperial eagle picture below. Always try to get focus on the bird's eyes. Along the same lines, a lot of birds are migratory, sometimes traveling far and wide enough to traverse the earth. If the Sun is on the opposite side, it will cast unnecessary shadows on the subject. If you forget to do this, you risk having more noise in your bird photographs than is necessary. Don't Be Afraid to Shoot at High ISOs I know many photographers, especially beginners who are afraid to shoot at High ISO values. RAW allows you to edit the image in a better way without losing much details. It has happened to me. Try to capture the image when there is light in the eyes. Always remember your previous photo or the previous setting.Take a look at the two pictures below. So, upgrading your camera gear will not help you in such a situation. 20. It will be tough to set all the exposure settings manually in the camera. So the basic idea is to set the maximum ISO as the one you feel is acceptable, and then put it to auto ISO. Too many cameras, too many photographers, and too many photographs.I am certain that no one can come out with 1000 outstanding pictures from a 10 day trip. Birds will not come and pose for you. Background Matters If you photograph a bird with a background, it will look uninteresting. Whenever you're getting alerted or looking to shoot these tips and how-to's. Try photographing the same scene with different exposure settings. Whether you're an experienced avian photographer or a... Easy bird photography tips for beginners! Learn gear basics, camera settings, and how to capture stunning bird shots responsibly. Also, if I cannot produce one good picture out of 10, I am certainly not going to produce one good picture out of 100.50, the bottom line should always be quality over quantity. Photograph Silhouettes You can also try photographing interesting bird silhouettes. So be sure to use a lens with a close enough focusing distance if you follow this method.Jungle Babbler | NIKON D750 @ 60mm, ISO 640, 1/1600, /5.6Use Full-Frame CamerasThis again would contradict common belief. Other birds display vibrant colors during breeding but are not as colorful at other times of the year.So, you should be aware of the time of year if you are planning a bird photography trip. of pixels per sq. But at the same time, you must ensure not to disturb them. Best Shooting Mode I use Aperture priority mode for 80 percent of my bird shots. In fact, reach is one of the primary reasons why camera makers like Nikon have pro bodies like the D500.I have used cropped bodies for a long time since the days of D40. Capture some pictures after every few steps. You can get these prime lenses from popular brands like Sony, Nikon, and Canon. But if your subject is a tiny dot before cropping, you will end up with a low-quality image most of the time even if the image is acceptably sharp.I have found that, regardless of what megapixel camera you use, if you crop a picture more than 50% you are compromising heavily on its quality. It will help you capture the best bird images. Move around to see if you get a better angle or a less distracting background. We could use noise reduction algorithms in post-processing. Thus, the bird will stand out in the frame. 17. Quick thrills are fun but they do not sustain a hobby in the long run. There are times where I have had a rare subject but I ended up with horrible light. Master Bird Photography through Practice It requires some practice to master the art of bird photography. 26. For selective focusing, you need to choose the maximum possible aperture and try to get close to the bird. It can also help me take better photographs of birds in the field. By cropping the image too much, we are magnifying the noise. When you do it, the bird will become comfortable with your presence. Once you cross a certain distance, the bird will not allow you to get any closer. 500mm and 600mm primes are the two best focal length options when it comes to bird photography. From my experience, the best vantage point for photographing birds is eye level view. A piece of work that involves originality - in composition or otherwise - is one that will have the widest reach.Ultramarine Flycatcher | NIKON D750 @ 500mm, ISO 2000, 1/800, /5.6Female Khalee! Pheasant | NIKON D750 @ 500mm, ISO 2000, 1/2000, /5.6Gear Does MatterAt first look, this title must sound contradictory. 3. Try to Photograph Best Bird Poses Many forget the fact that the image can look different with different bird poses. Thanks to Mom, a Photographer Finally Gets His Dream Shot Thanks to Mom, a Photographer Finally Gets His Dream Shot Here, Peter Mather shares the story behind this long-sought image of a Bald Eagle and two eaglets.

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