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*The Handbook of Bird Photography by Markus Varesvuo, Jari Peltomäki, and Bence Máté*

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## BOOK REVIEW

**The Handbook of Bird Photography.** Markus Varesvuo, Jari Peltomäki, and Bence Máté. 2013. Rocky Nook, Santa Barbara, CA. \$33.93, paperback; 368 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1937538101.

Photography books written by renowned photographers are becoming more common (see Clark 2012), and the timing couldn't be better. High-quality cameras are more affordable nowadays, and various phototechnologies are advancing each year, from camera features to photo-processing software. *The Handbook of Bird Photography* is a well written and beautifully presented book, with stunning photos on almost every page.

The combined experience and knowledge of the authors provide sound guidance and advice for professionals entering the world of bird photography. The book is divided into 51 parts, each with subsections. Topics cover just about every aspect of bird photography. One such topic is bird ecology and behavior. The photographer must understand what a bird is doing—how it feeds, breeds, and lives—in order to be effective in capturing a great shot. Being at the right place at the right time and anticipating what the bird will do at that place and time are crucial. Although the photo is literally a snapshot into the life of the bird, the photographer must also consider angle, light, background, habitat, season, and time of day. The book covers all of these factors and provides advice on how to make the most of photographic opportunities.

The book also addresses many how-to questions. Does photographing birds mean that you just wander around in a forest and hope for the best? Typically that strategy does not work; the photographer must research and prepare. This preparation may involve building a blind or setting out bait to attract a bird. The book advises caution, however, because interfering with a bird's natural activity may not be ethical or even permitted under local laws. The book encourages beginner photographers to

talk with more experienced professionals but to also consider that some folks won't want to reveal their secrets!

Other topics covered by the book include how to (1) use tripods, (2) crop photos, (3) look for a new and novel angle when photographing birds, (4) know when motion blur is good or bad, (5) use water to your advantage, (6) implement or take advantage of additional light sources, and (7) even photograph birds in lightning storms. Additionally, there are sections on how to sell your photos, enter photo contests, and present your photos to an audience.

Overall, *The Handbook of Bird Photography* is an important stepping-stone for learning how to capture bird images. Birds are constantly moving in a variety of ways—foraging in front of you or roving over thousands of miles during migration. It's not an easy task to create something that no other photographer has done before, and striving to establish a unique style is a major part of a photographer's professional development and maturity. This book is a useful tool for such a journey.

The book concludes with this bit of wisdom:

A good bird image inspires and moves. A brilliant bird image fills you with awe. A camera is not just a technical device to capture something; photographers use their cameras to convey their visions of what they see to their audience. The more a photographer invests in the image, the more powerful its effect on the audience.

Every good image has a story that touches the viewer's imagination. The story is not created by pressing the shutter release, it stems from the photographer's own, individual, and unique vision. (page 354)

### LITERATURE CITED

- CLARK, H.O., JR. 2012. *Captured: Lessons from Behind the Lens of a Legendary Wildlife Photographer* by Moose Peterson. *Western North American Naturalist* 72:125–126.

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