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White Pelican takes flight in Everglades waters.

Bird photographers have the patience to sit behind a tree blind for hours with his photographs. waiting for the bird to appear. To the contrary, when I see a bird, I raise my camera to shoot and I get a photo of a bird flying away.

One winter, when the guide to tour the Florida Keys Backcountry on his flats boat. The guide was skilled in finding birds, the only problem, the 500 horsepower announcement of our arrival, caused the birds to fly, which then resulted in a high speed pursuit from my perch in front of the center console, firing 10 continuous frames per second with my camera. A guide's reputation is only as good as the fish they catch, or in this case, birds that are sighted. We return his house. to the dock with bird images captured, albeit flying away. Looking back at the experience, it is quite disturbing, for me to have disrupted the birds for the sake of a photo. The only consolation is, unlike James Audubon's artwork, I didn't have to kill the bird, in order to paint it.

During July 2020, we're just emerging from Covid lockdown, and I get a call asking for help. My caller states he's undergoing cancer treatments and needs to focus on his camera to relieve some of

tive. He wants to make a journal, and illustrate it

At our first meeting, I thought I was there to solve some technical problem with the computer and the camera. By the third session with Joe the C.E.O. (I always birds are plentiful, I hired a promised to keep his identity confidential), I realized I was his teacher, and guiding light in this journey, which had no certain end

Joe was used to worldwide hunting excursions, and had impressive shots from those trips. But now with cancer, his travel was limited to what he could capture in his backyard. Fortunately for Joe, his backyard bordered on a wildlife refuge, where he was documenting the American Crocodile in the mangrove lined creek behind

Joe thinks the photos are not turning out so well. On first inspection, let's say his photos were extremely artsy. There was a little motion blur, camera blur, and a few photo filters added for good measure. Joe thought perhaps it's his camera. I viewed it as the challenges of low light photography, and just trying to make something good out of what he's captured.

I shared with him my recent experience involving my health, and how it affected my confidence and lanai, in a small pool of water balance. I learned by attaching a mono-pod to my camera, my pictures would remain clear and in focus. I lent him my so called "photographer's cane", thinking perhaps his cancer treatments had affected his good, it is quiet, the birds are steadiness.

Immediately his photos improved. He went on to photograph with extreme competency an amazing array of species from his lanai, including Bald Eagle, Osprey, Crocodile, Heron, Egret, Red Shouldered Hawk, Red Cardinal, and Iguana. The images were compiled into a coffee table book, prefaced with Joe's words, and then he put the camera away. Yes, away. Project complete. On time and a little over budget.

Fast forward to Spring 2021, not too far from Joe's next to a bridge, I encountered a diverse group of wading birds, just hanging out. A rare sight, I had to give it a shot, so I set up my tripod and Hasselblad medium format camera. So far so unfazed by my presence



his pain, and to feel produc- Breakfast Club - Sepia-tinted photograph of shoreline and wading birds congregating in a North Key Largo pond.

"Birds In Our Midst" CONTINUED: Article and photos by Carol Ellis



Red Shouldered Hawk, a year round resident, overseeing from a native hardwood tree. Its main conservation threat is deforestation

behind the cover of a green

buttonwood branch. The

resulting sepia tinted pho-

tograph I call the "Break-

fast Club" and features our

winter wading and shoreline

bird visitors including Rose-

ate Spoonbill, Wood Stork,

Little Blue Heron, Green

Heron, Tricolored Heron,

Snowy Egret, White Ibis,

Seeing these birds

congregating within a resi-

dential community was a

2020, scientists captured

ten adult Roseate Spoon-

ing devices so they could

learn about their nesting

and foraging habits.

bills nesting in Florida Bay

and attached cellular track-

They've found the birds are

using more ponds inside bay

keys than the mangrove

wetlands on the mainland

that they historically pre-

ferred. Audubon incorpo-

rates trail cameras to

truly candid images of

every movement these

see more birds in the

future.

birds make. I cannot wait

to learn more and hopefully

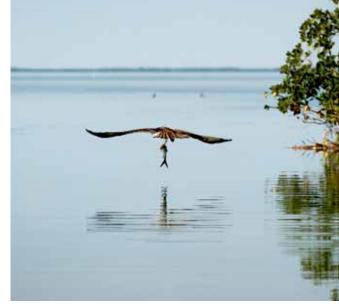
monitor nesting success.

The photos taken by the

cameras are able to capture

special experience. In

and Great White Heron.



Osprey with Ladyfish catch in flight.

life and Key Largo for 37 years.

She has a degree in Journalism from the University of Florida and is the resident photographer/artist at Ocean Reef Club.

CAROL ELLIS has lived in

South Florida her entire

Joe passed this year. I miss him, however his

memory lives on, whenever I sight birds in our midst.

Visit Our Sanctuary

FLORIDA KEYS WILD BIRD CENTER

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The Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of native and migratory wild birds that have been harmed or displaced; providing or locating a humane shelter for those birds that cannot be released; and educating the public towards the importance of coexistence with all wild bird species.

LAURA QUINN WILD BIRD SANCTUARY

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