



WINTER WILDLIFE:

The Photography of Ann Brokelman



◀ Red Fox

Ann Brokelman notes “I have been so lucky to have amazing fox shots all over Ontario. I love to watch foxes in snow as you get to then take photos of the footprints he leaves. In a parking lot down by the water this fox casually strolled past me without a care in the world. I followed his tracks all the way to a hole in a fence.”

Ann Brokelman takes great photographs of an amazing variety of animals in the wild. Here are some questions and answers about how she does it.

Most people never get to see so many wild animals. How do you get such photos of them?

I am a dedicated watcher of wildlife and birds. I love being out in the woods or in my car driving and looking for animals. Most of my photography is done in the car. If you turn off the engine and just watch you will see the behaviour of the animal

and hopefully get some great shots. I have a Canon 400mm lens and it takes great photos without disturbing the wildlife. It takes time and patience to find these beautiful creatures. Animals are there but many people are not looking for them. I watch and look for odd shapes or something moving in the bush. You need to do your research and learn when the animals are out and about.

Are you a professional photographer?

I take photos for the love of it. I teach photography to youth, adults, seniors and adults with

special needs. I teach privately and people can buy prints.

What is it like to photograph wild animals in winter?

Cold and totally amazing! You can track animals by their unique footprints. Snow creates a mood and is a huge photography challenge. I especially love it when the snow is falling.

What volunteer work do you do with animal rescue groups?

I am a volunteer member of the rescue and release team for

Toronto Wildlife Centre. I also donate all photos taken on their behalf for them to use in any way they like.

I help with driving injured animals to The Owl Foundation in Vineland, and releasing owls back into the wild. This is a very special hospital.

I am on the advisory board of Coyote Watch Canada. I am saddened by the way coyotes, wolves and bears are treated. Working with Lesley Sampson who works hard to educate people on the coyote, is making a huge difference in people's perspective of coyotes.



▲ **White-tailed Deer**

Most photographs of deer show the side of the animal or its rump as it leaps away. This unusual photograph is of a White-Tailed Deer eating what looks like Highbush Cranberries. Ann says “While on a drive on a back road just east of my house I saw a movement in the berry tree. I really thought it would be a bird but to my surprise it was a deer. I was the only one on the road so I turned off my car and sat there for half an hour watching the deer. By the end of the watch there were over six deer in the field. This photo is not cropped.”



▲ **Opossum**

Ann explains “Up to last year I had never seen an opossum in the wild. I have seen them at Toronto Wildlife Centre, injured and also with frostbite. On a back road to nowhere I saw something from the corner of my eye. I did a double take as it was an opossum. The sun was shining but there was lots of snow on the ground. He had just come down the tree and was looking around. Soon after he disappeared in the woods. To this date I have not seen another one.”



▲ **Northern Hawk Owl**

Northern Hawk Owl, classified as scarce. For Ann, “The most amazing owl I have ever seen was at Grimsby on a back road. I went there and was lucky enough to see a Northern Hawk Owl. The owl was flying from tree to tree when he suddenly swooped down and got a vole. He mantled the vole and was looking around to make sure no one was coming close. One of the best birding days of my life.”

Ann explains that mantling is a bird’s “hunching or arching shoulders and spreading wings over a recent kill to conceal it from other birds and predators who would be potential thieves. In this posture, the wings are mostly spread and drooped to the ground, exposing the bird’s upper back, also called the mantle, which gives the action its name. The head is usually bent down to feed, and the tail is often spread to provide additional cover and counterbalance. Many birds of prey practise mantling after a kill.”



▲ **Star-nosed mole**

“While watching a Red-tailed Hawk in a tree I noticed something moving on the snow,” Ann says. “It was the strangest thing I have ever seen. Once I got home I looked at the photos to realize it had a star-looking mouth. Sure enough it was a Star-nosed Vole, and a favourite meal of a Red-tailed Hawk. This one safely made its way across the ice and back deep in the snow.”



▲ **Skunk**

Ann notes “Last winter while looking for coyotes on a back road I came across the skunk. I wanted to watch it to make sure it was ok. The snow was not deep but it was warm out. We figured it got hungry and decided to go for a stroll in the cornfield looking for food.”





▲ Ruffed Grouse

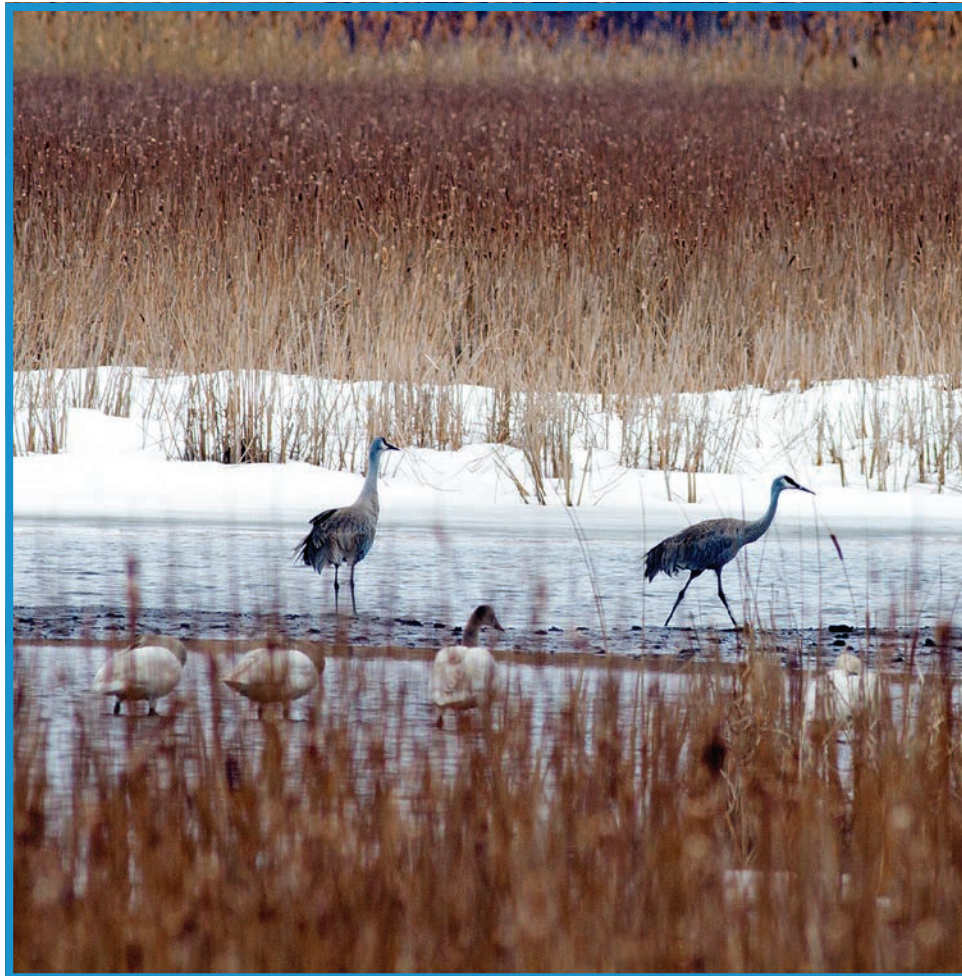
Ann was mystified by this. “I was up by Sudbury in a small town called Noelville,” she explains. “While wandering on foot following ravens up a quiet road my friend noticed this amazing sculpture on the snow. We took many photos and sent them to friends to see what it was. Being owl crazy we hoped it was an owl but the next morning we walked down the road again and there perched on the tree were two Ruffed Grouse. Some suggestions that came back to us were grouse and pheasants.”

◀ Coyote

“I love coyotes,” says Ann. “I love watching them and learning about their behaviour. I respect the coyote. I am very proud to be a member of the advisory team for Coyote Watch Canada. With most photos I take they are on a back road in the middle of nowhere. I was with another nature lover when she spotted this beauty in the open fields. We watched him for a matter of minutes but he spotted us immediately and took off. Every brief encounter with a coyote is very special. Coyote Watch Canada is a federal, not-for-profit, community-based wildlife organization, which advocates positive wildlife experiences through education, research, mediation, intervention and conflict resolution.” Ann provided the photographs of coyotes for a feature in *Niagara Escarpment Views* in Winter 2014.

► **Mink**

Ann was lucky with this photo: “I love going to the lake to watch the gulls and find a few eagles. I did see a few eagles way out on the ice but my eyes looked to the right and there was a mink wandering on the ice and he came up beside me on the snow. He took a look at me and then ducked into the rocks on the water edge.”





◀ **Sandhill Cranes**

“It is amazing to drive to Long Point during the winter when the Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes arrive,” says Ann. “There are thousands of them in the fields. I love the sound they make and the way they fly.”



Ann Brokelman's photographs of coyotes were published in "Co-existing with Coyotes" in Niagara Escarpment Views, Winter 2014–15. Her website is naturephotosbyann.blogspot.ca. Prints of her photography are available for sale.