



WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

A Huge Part of My Life

BY JENNIFER HOWARD



This photo was shot as the sun was setting. I was sitting in my car thinking time to go, when this beautiful Snowy Owl, who was sitting on a pole, flew. As these birds depend on hunting to survive I do as little as possible to disturb them. What makes this shot special is how the setting sun caught her underneath when she flew. I have learned how to read these birds and suspected she was about to fly. I had my camera ready, so I zoomed in on constant shoot. My patience paid off.

In winter photography can be cold. Dress warmly and keep your camera warm. You can use a lens warmer for that, or Hot Paws. Or just tuck it in your coat. Winter photography can have a lot to offer: owls, deer, coyotes, fox, the tiniest snowflake, hoar frost on roadside grasses. The sun glistening on fresh-fallen snow. A snowfall itself. Or the magic of bird prints in the snow from a bird who has caught something. Christmas lights covered with snow after a storm. Snow devils out on the lakes, blowing up and twirling. It's a great time to catch animals and birds. The big thing is open your eyes and be patient. And, of course with a lot of my shots it is just pure and simple luck. Being in the right place at the right time and making sure you have your camera ready to roll. Animals and birds don't wait. A lot of my photos I got from just sitting under a tree, or at the edge of the water. So dress warmly, layer, and get out there. And take a nice thermos of hot chocolate to go. Because winter photography can be truly magical.



◀ Photographing beavers is one of my favourite pastimes. They are amazing animals and incredible parents. Super architects and managers of wetland areas. This beaver had come out to explore on a mild February day. Love the contrast of him against the snow.



▲ This beautiful Longtail Duck is a male. He was close to shore and the sun caught him beautifully in the fairly calm water. Again patience, being quiet and still and using a telephoto lens, usually gets you that special photo.



▲ I was photographing this adult Bald Eagle by the water when these three crows came in. Ironically the eagle was not the least bit bothered and the crows did not seem too concerned either. It was an overcast day in early winter. I can't say that I have ever seen this since, where everyone got along in such close quarters. The composition of this photo with the branches and the contrast of the birds makes this shot special to me.

► While I was strolling by the water's edge, this beautiful Mink appeared, a lovely surprise. Keeping your eyes open may find you some great shots, even in winter.





I love this photo of the Herring Gull looking into the water. It's soft and has a hint of reflection. It appeared he didn't even know I was there. Taken with a 150 to 500 mm lens from the shore.



When photographing wildlife, you must respect their space. No photo is worth stressing them and making them miss a meal. When photographing this eagle, I tried to stay out of sight. As this eagle came in from the lake to a tree nearby, I didn't even see it had a fish. I took the shot and then after it landed noticed it had a fish. Sometimes you get things you don't see until later, which is exciting.



▲ There is nothing like a pair of Red Foxes in the snow. These two greeted each other as I stood by my car on the road nearby. Unfortunately, they were used to people. Please never feed wildlife, but keep them safe and wild. They are so healthy with their big bushy tails and make a beautiful contrast against the snow.



When these eagles, one adult and the other immature, started doing dives and aerial acrobatics, it was spectacular. It's all part of growing up in a Bald Eagle family. Again, I was quiet and used a telephoto lens. I love how the natural light caught these two.



▲ Taking a walk, I felt something looking at me. It was a beautiful Great Horned Owl with big yellow eyes peering at me through the branches high up in the tree. I zoomed out and put my camera in manual focus. The one eye is perfect, clear and it stands out. A perfectly natural shot.



You never know what you may see on a winter's walk. A walk in the woods led me to these three: a male Pileated Woodpecker, a male Hairy Woodpecker and a female Downy Woodpecker: three species together in close quarters on the same tree, one that looked like many woodpeckers had tasted. Both seemed to be waiting to get the Pileated's spot when he left.



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► Sometimes Mother Nature throws something really special our way. Again on a walk, I came across this gorgeous blond squirrel. Winter walking can be very special indeed. The color of this little squirrel was just beautiful.



◀ Opossums have been successful in surviving here in our winters. They are susceptible to frostbite in their ears and tails but seem to be doing okay. I noticed this one while driving along a back road. Of course, I had to get a photo of it and make sure it was okay. He was, so I left him to continue his journey as I did mine.



◀ Not what you usually see in the heart of winter, this American Robin had luckily found some sumac to feast on. He was not looking any worse for wear. It was quite the find as I was out for an afternoon drive. Wildlife are incredible at how they can learn to adapt. I love this as a robin in winter is not the norm and he looks nice and healthy.



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I am a professional photographer and have used my talents to help identify species at risk to protect them and their habitat and to identify different birds and animals in biological surveys. I have been published in various magazines and won two education conservation awards for the educational values of my photos. My work is available for sale and can be seen at natureworksphotography.blogspot.com. Contact me about what you are looking for. I also sell very popular 4x6 photo cards, singly or in a package.

I just wrote a children's book on Ontario turtles, called *A Shell's Life*, that is being published by Toronto Zoo's Adopt a Pond program.

I also volunteer for Procyon Wildlife Centre in Beeton, which takes in orphaned, injured and sick animals. I am their official photographer for their web and Facebook pages, and write a monthly article for their newsletter. I do photo fundraisers, photos of families and pets with Santa, Easter Bunny and last year we added a fall theme, which are all fun ways to help raise money for animal care. **NEV**