

My preferred gear for bird photography is a Nikon D500 which I generally use with a Nikkor 500mm VR f4 lens combined with a 1.4x teleconverter so I can stay at a comfortable distance from my subject, the safety and well being of my subjects is always placed before my photos. The D500 focuses very quickly combined with the 500mm VR f4 lens. My alternate camera body is a Nikon D810 which I enjoy because I can switch from full frame (FX) to cropped (DX) quickly.

I usually shoot from inside a vehicle that I use as a mobile blind and place a modified pool noodle over the window for stability as well as to protect my gear and the window of my vehicle. I use a Gitzo carbon fiber tripod with a Jobu Black Widow Gimbal head attached when photographing birds from a standing position.

The rig I'd recommend to a total beginner to bird photography is an entry level DSLR combined with a quality 400mm or longer zoom lens is great for beginning bird photographers because the reach of 400mm or more is adequate enough to be able to obtain frame filling images of birds.

Three tips for better bird photos:

- 1 • Practice, practice, and practice some more until you learn the settings of your camera so well that you could change them in your sleep. Then practice some more. Being able to change your ISO, exposure, shutter speed, aperture, and focus points on the fly is critical because birds don't normally stay still for very long and you wouldn't want to miss "the" shot while fiddling around with your camera's settings.
- 2 • Study the behavior of your avian

subjects because the birds can clue you in on their next actions; for instance, raptors will often defecate prior to lifting off, some shorebirds will jump up after bathing or that certain bird species have a preferred perch that they will use often, knowing the behaviors of birds can lead to great action images.

- 3 • Pay attention to the fore and background when taking photos of birds, too many distracting elements in either can be distracting and take away from the overall visual appeal of an image.

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