

Gerlach Nature Photography
2024 Bird Photography Workshop
at the marvelous Desert Photo Retreat

with John Gerlach and Dixie Calderone

www.gerlachnaturephoto.com

March 24 (Sun) – 30 (Sat), 2024

April 1 (Mon) – April 7 (Sun), 2024

\$3780 includes everything

Only 4 participants



Figure 1 A Northern cardinal searching for food we hid among the flowers..

The Desert Photo Retreat is designed for wildlife photographers. Ron and Janine Niebrugge winter in the beautiful Tortolita Mountains north of Tucson, Arizona.

Ron is a professional nature photographer who built photo blinds on his property that are terrific for bird photography. The amazing birds provide continuous photo opportunities. Everyone shoots thousands of images each day of the many birds and squirrels that continually arrive at the attractive photo setups. All birds are photographed at close range with telephoto lenses in the 400-600mm range.

You will photograph:

Gila woodpecker

Gambel's quail

Gilded flicker

White-crowned sparrow

Mockingbird

House finch

Canyon towhee

Lesser goldfinch

Abert's towhee

Black-throated sparrow

Cactus wren

White-winged dove

Rock wren

Rock Ground Squirrel

Harris's Ground Squirrel

Northern Cardinal

Curved-billed Thrasher

Pyrrhuloxia

Mourning dove

The Desert Retreat is exclusively reserved for our private group for three full days beginning with the afternoon on one day, then two full days of dawn and late afternoon sessions and ending after the morning photo session on the fourth day. The afternoon sessions are at a feeder station and the morning session is at the reflection pool that attracts numerous birds and squirrels.

When not photographing at the Desert Retreat, we will photograph ducks on a pond in Tucson, visit the Sonoran Desert Museum, and shoot giant saguaro landscapes in the foothills. Last year our group photographed American wigeon,

mallard, ring-necked duck, Wood duck, vermilion flycatcher, and black-crowned night herons there.

This is a fantastic bird photography trip that is physically easy. Sit in a shaded blind and wildlife continually come to you – perfect! John and Dixie are busy setting up attractive perches for your photos and changing them at times to provide a variety of colorful settings.

Learn more about the Desert Photo Retreat by visiting Ron and Janine online.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U001XVRd99g>

<https://desert-photo-retreat.com/>



Figure 2 The curved-billed thrasher on a cholla stick.

What you will learn:

Take your bird photography to the next level! John and Dixie are avid bird photographers. In just the past two years, they have shot more than 500,000 bird images from their floating blinds, seed and water features at their home and their

two months in south Texas and southern Arizona teaching bird photo workshops. We are experts at bird photography and will teach you how to consistently shoot outstanding images. We will also shoot some giant saguaro landscapes.

- Learn to focus precisely and instantly
- Learn to shoot perfect exposures easily and quickly
- When to use manual exposure or Auto ISO to achieve excellent exposures
- How to select and attract birds to pleasing perches
- How to select and use long lenses effectively
- Tripods and heads that work best for wildlife
- How to work the natural light for best results
- How to produce strong compositions
- Optimize your camera settings for wildlife photography
- How to photograph the giant saguaro cactus forest

Field Trips

We travel together in our Ford Expedition Max SUV. Each morning field trip begins early (6:15 am) as we plan to be at the Photo Retreat, duck pond, or San Xavier Mission at sunrise when bird activity is high, and the light is superb. We will shoot thousands of images, break for a hearty lunch, and return to the desert retreat in the afternoon to shoot thousands of additional photos.



Figure 3 Gila woodpeckers are abundant at the Desert Retreat. Often a dozen are present simultaneously.

What's Included:

- **Intensive photo instruction** from John and Dixie in the classroom and in the field
- **17 meals** beginning with dinner on the first evening and ending with breakfast on the last morning
- **6 nights lodging** at: Holiday Inn Express
- **All ground** transportation in our Ford Expedition Max. This includes pickup and return to the airport.
- **Teaching slide programs**
- **All Desert Photo Retreat fees** for using their blinds and property
- **Admission to the Sonoran Desert Museum**
- **Answers to all the questions you care to ask!!!!**

Not Included:

- Airfare
- Items of a personal nature, such as alcoholic drinks
- Trip Cancellation Insurance

Lodging:

Holiday Inn Express
 8373 North Cracker Barrel
 Tucson, AZ 85743
 (520) 572-4777

We have a block of rooms reserved for our group. You do not need to contact the hotel unless you wish to extend your stay. We assign you to a room in the block we are holding.

Price:

\$3780 for one participant with a private motel room

If two participants are sharing a room, then the cost for each is \$3380.

Payment:

Full payment for the workshop is due four months before the start of the workshop. Payment can be made by check and made payable to: Gerlach Nature Photography. Mail check to John Gerlach/PO Box 318/Island Park, ID 83429. Call Dixie at (812) 350-0799 to use a credit card (a 3.5% fee is applied to cover the credit card fee cost)

A \$1000 per-person **deposit** holds your space in this workshop.

Refunds and Cancellation Policy

If written Cancellation is Received:

A \$1000 non-refundable deposit is required to enroll in this workshop. The balance of the tuition is due 120 days before departure.

Cancellation fee:

90 days or more before departure: 100% of deposit is forfeited

89 to 61 days before departure: 75% of tuition is forfeited

60 or fewer days before departure: 100% of tuition is forfeited

Gerlach Nature Photography understands that challenges in life may cause you to cancel your trip with us. Broken bones, illness, severe weather, natural disasters, covid concerns, sick pets, family troubles, and many other reasons may cause you to have to change your plans. No matter the reason for your cancellation, we will follow our cancellation policy exactly as written. Now that we are conducting mostly all-inclusive workshops, fees for rental housing or motels, ranch fees, snowcoach fees, and many other fees must often be paid far in advance, and most are non-refundable to us. Should you decide to cancel the photo workshop, we still must pay for what you would have used even though you are not there. That means we cannot refund your money beyond what is in our cancellation policy. We wish we could be more generous, but we simply cannot afford to absorb significant financial losses because you cancel. When you enroll in our workshop, we reserve a spot for you and most often turn away others who would have enrolled. Though we often have a waiting list, in most cases people on the waiting list make other plans and are not available to replace you. If we can get a replacement for you (no guarantee) or you get a replacement, then we are happy and able to make a generous refund. We hope you understand our position. We wish to continue to offer high-quality photo workshops for small groups at reasonable prices. Gerlach Nature Photography encourages everyone to purchase Trip Cancellation Insurance that covers the most likely reasons you would cancel. And to be safe, you can buy 'Cancel for Any Reason' trip cancellation insurance. Many companies that provide trip cancellation insurance are found on the web. Two well-known insurance companies include:

- www.allianztravelinsurance.com
- www.travelguard.com

We strongly suggest buying trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment.



Figure 4 Mourning doves are plentiful at the reflection pool.

Arizona Bird and Landscape Photography Workshop

Itinerary

Day 1:

Fly to Tucson International Airport (TUS) in Tucson, Arizona. Let us know when you will arrive. We will pick you up at the airport. We meet in the hotel lobby at 6 pm local time. Then we take you to dinner. When we return to the hotel, we have a meeting to prepare you for the week and show a wildlife program.

Day 2:

Depending on the weather, we begin our shoot at a local park where waterfowl are easy to photograph or at the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum. In the afternoon, we begin our three days photographing the wildlife at the Desert Retreat.

Day 3 & 4:

Both mornings and afternoons are spent at the Desert Retreat photographing wildlife.

Day 5:

We spend our last morning at the Desert Photo Retreat photographing wildlife at the incredible reflection pool. In the late afternoon, we photograph landscapes.

Day 6:

We photograph in the morning at the Desert Museum or duck pond. We take you to a special restaurant and then view your photos you brought from home and also those you shot during the week. This is a wonderful way to crown such a busy and productive week.

Day 7:

We eat breakfast together at the hotel and say good-bye to our little “family” of photographers. We are available all day to take you to the airport.



Figure 5 The beautiful house finch will offer you numerous photo opportunities.

What to bring:

Clothing Strategy

Arizona is quite pleasant during late March and early April. Bring warm clothes, though, for early morning. Dress in layers to stay warm at dawn and take some layers off to stay cool during the afternoon. Wear enclosed shoes to protect you from cactus spines.

Weather Conditions

Rain is unlikely, but possible. On April 1, sunrise is 6:11 am and sunset is 6:43pm. The average high is 80 degrees, and the low is 65 degrees.

Camera Equipment

Camera Gear:

- 2 cameras (one as a spare)
- Plenty of memory cards as you are likely to shoot thousands of images each day (500GB is not too much)
- Computer with external hard drives to download your new images
- Camera lens that reaches out to 500mm. That can include a crop factor camera. For example, a Canon 100-400mm lens on a Canon camera with a 1.6x crop factor is like having a 160mm – 640mm lens.
- A tripod when shooting landscapes. We do not use tripods in the blinds because bean bags are provided on the window ledge provide a solid shooting platform. Shorter zoom lens for photographing the blinds and our activities at the ranch such as a 70-200mm.
- In 2023, John used the Canon R5 mirrorless camera with the Canon 100-500mm RF zoom lens quite effectively. Dixie used a Nikon Z9 with a 100-400mm lens and 1.4x teleconverter.



Figure 6 A view of the reflection pool from inside the blind. We put a few seeds and meal worms in the stones at the back edge of this pool to lure birds in, plus many come to get a drink anyway and that produces wonderful reflections. The back edge of this pool is about 10 feet from where you are photographing and concealed in the blind. John's Canon 600mm does not focus that close, but his Canon 100-500mm does and that lens is terrific at the reflection pool!

Important Notice: The enormous number of images our workshop participants shoot creates their biggest problem. It is rather easy to shoot 6,000 images per day and we had one client shoot over 10,000 images per day. Downloading and storing this many images can be a problem. Bring at least 512GBs of memory card space to last all day and a 2TB external hard drive to store the images on. Have plenty of extra camera batteries and bring two battery chargers. AC power is available at the Desert Retreat, so it is possible to recharge batteries while there. But it is best to have enough batteries to last all day so you can recharge them each night in your hotel room. We do return to your hotel each day around noon, so you can download images and charge batteries then.

John has four LP-E6NH batteries for the Canon R5 and two chargers. His camera takes two types of cards – the SD and the CFexpress. John has a 256GB SanDisk card and a 256GB Sony Touch CF express card in his camera and that stores thousands of images. That is a total of 512GBs for the day. Please be prepared for the number of images you will surely shoot!!!!!!!!!!!!!! John's images are downloaded to 2TB SanDisk SSD external hard drives. SSD (Solid State Device) hard drives are safe and fast!



Figure 7 Gila woodpeckers are fun to photograph and frequent visitors at the Desert Retreat setups. They are incredibly abundant at the Desert Retreat. You could call them a “flock of woodpeckers.”



Figure 8 Curved-billed Thrasher



Figure 9 This will be our base camp at the Desert Retreat where we have electric power, water, restroom, and nice chairs to sit in. Notice how remote this camp is compared to Tucson.



Figure 10 Harris's ground squirrels visit the reflection pool rather often.



Figure 11 We just love the red patch on the gila woodpecker.



Figure 12 Gambel's quail are plentiful at the retreat.



Figure 13 The Harris antelope ground squirrel often comes to the reflection pool in the morning to drink.



Figure 14 Harris Ground Squirrels frequently pose for you too!



Figure 15 A white-winged dove makes a gorgeous image at the reflection pool where you will be each morning.

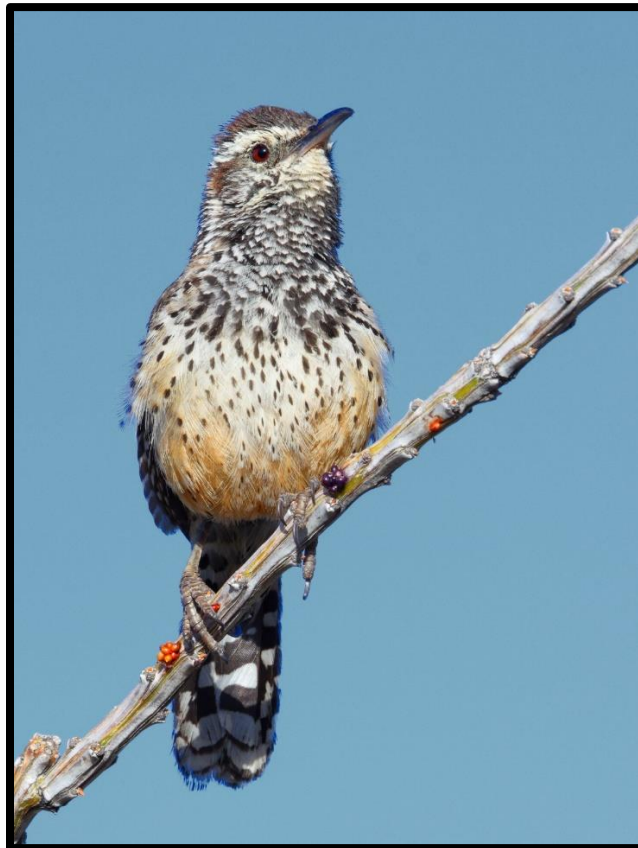


Figure 16 We may get lucky and photograph the cactus wren. This is the largest wren in the US.

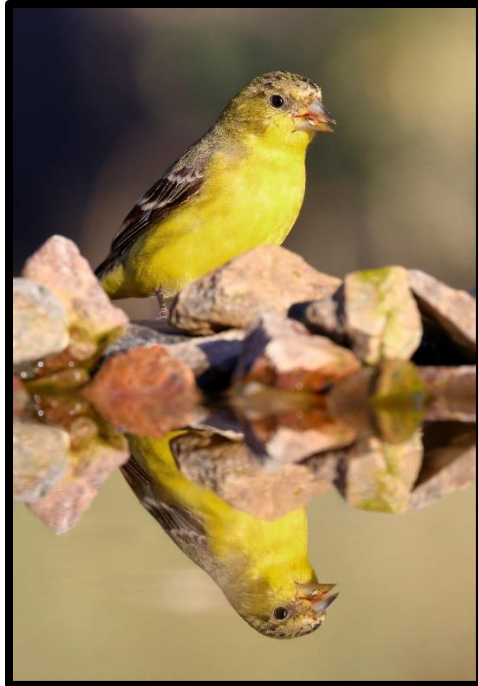


Figure 17 Lesser Goldfinch at the Reflection Pool



Figure 18 A young, black-crowned night heron on the duck pond in Tucson. Photographed from a distance of 10 feet.

