

# Gerlach Nature Photography

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## Birds from a Floating Blind, Landscapes, and Butterflies Workshop

### Island Park, Idaho

with John Gerlach and Dixie Calderone

**Only 3 Participants!**

July 8 – 14, 2026

July 17 – 23, 2026

July 26 – Aug.12, 2026



*Figure 1 We are avid wildlife photographers who immensely enjoy photographing birds at close range while hidden in a floating blind. We have five floating blinds that allows everyone to photograph at the same time. This is a hen ring-necked duck, and the photo is taken with a Canon 600mm lens and 1.4x teleconverter.*

We love spending summer at our Idaho home and know you would enjoy our spacious home too. We live on a mountain slope at 6600 feet. The average July high is 75 and the average low is 45 degrees. Humidity is always low (Never Humid) and that makes July weather truly delightful. Our ten acres is surrounded by BLM and national forest. It is the perfect place to summer and our yard is loaded with birds who are attracted to our seed feeders and reflection pools. Mule deer, chipmunks, and red squirrels are mammals we often see, but elk and moose are possible as both are common here. Wildflowers blanket the hillsides leading up to our home and that attracts plenty of butterflies.

The photography opportunities are impressive! Birds are easy to photograph, and we often shoot macros of wildflowers and butterflies in our huge six-car garage. Photographing inside our garage with our macro studio setup lets us control the light and backgrounds while avoiding all wind that would make it impossible to shoot sharp images. That means you can shoot high-quality macros any time you desire.

We are only 20 miles from the west gate of Yellowstone National Park that offers outstanding wildlife and landscape photos. We will take you on local field trips into Yellowstone, impressive Mesa Falls with a gorgeous rainbow dancing in the mist, and to the top of Sawtelle Peak where you get a beautiful 360 degree view and sometimes we get to photograph the resident mountain goats.

We have five bedrooms, four bathrooms and plenty of space throughout our home. Our view is amazing! The national forest begins 20 feet behind our home. To the southeast we look down on our 8-square mile local Lake, and to the north the Black Mountains tower into the sky. Wildlife is amazingly plentiful on our property and on the nearby lake.

We enjoy teaching small workshop groups and now we are offering a week with us for only **three** participants.

### **When this Tours Begins and Ends**

We pick you up in Bozeman at the airport upon your arrival on the first day and the workshop ends after breakfast on the last day. Then we drive you to the airport in Bozeman, MT.

### **What's Included:**

1. Each person will stay at our home in their own bedroom for a total of **six nights lodging**. We have four bathrooms, so each room will be assigned one of them.
2. We **provide transportation** in our Ford Expedition as it easily carries everyone in comfort along with photo gear for our daily photo trips. This includes all field trips and transportation to and from Bozeman, MT.
3. We provide all meals (and snacks too) beginning with dinner on the day we meet and ending with breakfast on the day we depart. Meals will be at local restaurants when we are traveling or at our home and prepared by Dixie. Dixie is terrific in the kitchen and John has a passion for cooking hamburgers, pork chops, steak, and chicken outside on the grill.
4. We spend at least a dozen hours a day helping you shoot wonderful photos and teaching you how to master superb photo techniques.

#### What is not Included:

1. Transportation to and from Bozeman to your home.
2. Alcoholic drinks
3. Admission into Yellowstone National Park (most of you already have a lifetime or seasonal pass anyway)
4. The highly recommended trip cancellation insurance.

We are anxious to teach you how to shoot many wonderful photos on our property and at nearby attractions. We are seeking photographers who wish to use a floating blind to photograph ducks and other birds on the lake next to our home as this is our main objective for this workshop. You will need chest waders or a dry suit and a long lens of 600mm or better that takes a quick release plate for a Wimberley gimbal head. It does not have to be a prime 600mm. Even a 400mm lens on a camera with a 1.5x crop factor sensor is equivalent to 600mm. During July, easily approached wild ducks and some with ducklings are likely along with many other birds to photograph. We are enthusiastic about floating blind wildlife photography. With more than 25 years of experience using floating blinds, John knows how to get super results. And during July, out of five mornings we are likely to get 3-4 suitable mornings to use the floating blinds. A floating blind with a Wimberley gimbal head is provided for each participant. The key to the floating blind is shallow water, lots of wildlife in and near the water, and flat calm water conditions. Waves – even ripples – make it difficult to effectively use a floating blind. Therefore, we will use the floating blinds whenever water conditions allow us to use them. The floating blind is a morning opportunity as the light is superb at dawn and that is when the lake is most likely to be calm. On a suitable morning, we will enter the lake at sunrise. Normally the breeze begins to blow by 9 am creating too many ripples for successful photos, so we quit then and return to our home to enjoy a hearty breakfast prepared by Dixie. The lake we use is only ¼-mile from our home so the morning drive to the launch site is short. The floating blind floats your camera gear and hides you from wildlife, but it does not float you. Instead, it supports you as you walk along the shallow margins of the lake – do not worry – it is easy to do, but you must be able to **walk well!!!** We find photographing in the floating blind is incredibly relaxing.

- When the lake is too rough (meaning ripples up to waves), then we do macro setups in our huge six-car garage in the morning or lead a photo tour into Yellowstone National Park or nearby Mesa falls – an eastern Idaho landmark. We also have reflection pools for bird photography available and a multi-flash hummingbird station.
- Days are long in July, so we move at a leisurely pace. Mornings and evenings are most productive for photos, so we photograph then. During the early afternoon, John presents teaching programs indoors. Plus, we will give you time to relax on our deck overlooking the lake. This workshop is a way to introduce you to western life and wildlife while we teach you how to shoot superb wildlife, landscape, and macro images.
- **Physical Fitness is Absolutely Necessary to Use the Floating Blinds! You must be able to walk along a muddy lake shoreline to get the best photos.**

#### Key Photo Skills You Will Learn:

- This workshop is huge on learning bird photography photo skills!

- You will learn how to photograph birds with a floating blind, how to use multi-flash for hummingbirds, and how to use a reflection pool for birds!!!!!!
- How to skillfully use long lenses
- Set excellent exposures for JPEG or RAW files quickly and easily
- Understand the histogram and highlight alert
- How to use full manual exposure quickly and easily
- When to use the powerful Auto ISO exposure mode
- Use a tripod properly and the gimbal head
- Shoot the sharpest images possible on a tripod, or handheld when necessary
- Use the benefits of live view for focus, exposure, and shooting images
- Focus precisely using manual focus or autofocus
- Shoot perfectly exposed and sharp close-ups every time
- How to shoot a focus stack for the ultimate control over depth of field
- How to process focus stacked images with Helicon Focus
- Use front, side, back, and reflected light to best advantage
- When and how to use the polarizing filter
- Compose powerful compositions
- Become an expert shooting wide-angle lenses
- Strategies for using a mirrorless camera

### **Bonus Bird Photo Opportunities!!!**

We have quite a few hummingbirds at our home in July. Our common nesting hummingbird is the broad-tailed hummingbird and some rufous hummingbirds that are already migrating south are usually around too. On our deck we will have a multi-flash (5-6 flashes) hummingbird station available for your use. Participants will take turns on the setup and the most productive time for using it is the last three hours of the day.

We also will have two reflection pools set up that attracts bird to the water. Once again they are both available for your use anytime you want to use them. Both mornings and evenings are productive.



*Figure 2 The male broad-tailed hummingbird on our deck during July.*





*Figure 3 This is our reflection pool.*



*Figure 4 A male Cassin's finch at the reflection pool.*



*Figure 5 Crested pool is a hot spring near Old Faithful that photographs best in the middle of the day because sunlight illuminates the interior of the pool when the sun is high in the sky.*

John and Dixie are avid photography instructors who have no secrets. We teach you everything. We know you want to become a super photographer because that makes photography more fun and rewarding. While we teach the ultimate photo skills you must master to shoot superb images, they are not hard, and everyone can learn them. We will advance your photo skills by several notches. This goal is especially easy to achieve because the group size is only 3 participants with two full-time instructors. This lets us provide unlimited one on one instruction!!!!





*Figure 6 This wildflower is a weed that grows in our garden, but it makes a fine close-up subject. We are using a photo background and 3 LED lamps to light it.*



*Figure 7 Fritillary butterflies are likely subjects in our close-up photo sessions.*



*Figure 8 Using LED lamps indoors is a successful way to photograph butterflies while creating pleasing light such as the backlight used on this one.*

## Image Review

We review your images brought from home and the images you are shooting during the workshop. We do this during the middle of the day when photo conditions are less desirable as mornings and evenings are reserved for photography. Bring 30 images from home to share with the group. Please load your images (JPEG only) on a jump drive. Give the drive to us and we will load them into the slide program. We will return your jump drive ASAP.

## Instructor Programs Presented

Programs we plan to present include:

- *Close-up Photography*
- *Landscape Photography*
- *Wildlife Photography*

*Special Demonstrations to be fit into the schedule include:*

- *Focus stacking – how to shoot the stack, process the images, and then stack them*
- *Creating your own macro stations – equipment, background choices, lights, power packs*

Participating in our nature photography workshop is the perfect way to tremendously improve your nature photography skills and learn about nature while enjoying the beautiful outdoors. We teach photography with great passion. Be amazed at how much you learn!



*Figure 9 We expect many ducklings like this ring-necked duckling.*



*Figure 10 A lesser scaup duckling dives for its food.*





*Figure 11 Castle geyser erupts twice a day. It is not easy to photograph due to the long 12-hour eruption intervals, but when it does, you get 45 minutes to photograph the action.*



*Figure 12 Chocolate Pots is a secretive hot spring that visitors see.*

## **The Workshop Schedule**

We believe in taking our field trips at the times when photo conditions are best. As an example, on July 15, sunrise is 5:56 am and sunset is 9:07 pm Mountain Time. The average high temperature is 75 and the average low is 43 degrees. On mornings when calm winds let us use the floating blinds, it is best to enter the water at sunrise. Since the furthest “launch” location is 15-20 minutes from our home, we leave the house 45 minutes before sunrise. If the wind makes it impossible to use the floating blinds, then we enjoy a more leisurely morning and shoot close-ups in our studio set up for that purpose or photograph songbirds at our reflection pools. We plan to drive to Yellowstone starting around 4pm, enjoy an early dinner at a restaurant in town, and then go into Yellowstone to photograph landscapes or wildlife until sunset. (During the three 2024 workshops, we enjoyed 15 consecutive perfect mornings in a row.)

## **About Yellowstone National Park**

The world’s first National Park, numerous thermals areas, waterfalls, and wildlife are protected within the parks borders. John has lived next to Yellowstone since 1987 and has led more than 150 week-long photo tours inside the park over the decades. You are traveling with park experts. We will monitor weather conditions and take you to super places that are perfect for the prevailing weather conditions.



*Figure 13 Grand Prismatic spring is colorful and fun to photograph from the boardwalk. When the breeze is out of the north to blow the steam away, the foreground is nicely revealed. A polarizer is enormously useful here to saturate colors by removing glare from the wet foreground.*

### **Transportation**

All participants will travel with us in our new Ford Expedition. Driving only one vehicle makes it much easier to find parking at the popular park destinations.

### **Viewing your Digital Images**

We use a high-resolution TV to view the images brought from home and shot in the workshop. Load the images to share on a jump drive and give them to Dixie.

### **Working on Your Images**

Most clients bring a laptop computer and download images to the computer or external hard drive. You will have a desk in your room to work on images. If you have several large capacity memory cards for your camera, you can leave them on the cards, but we would like to be able to see your images!

### **Meals**

Snacks are always available. Breakfast will be after the floating blind session around 9:30 am or around 8 am if weather conditions prevent the use of the floating blinds. If we can use the floating blinds, then we will have a small quick snack and off we go to the lake. When we return from the floating blind adventure, you will enjoy a hearty breakfast at our home.

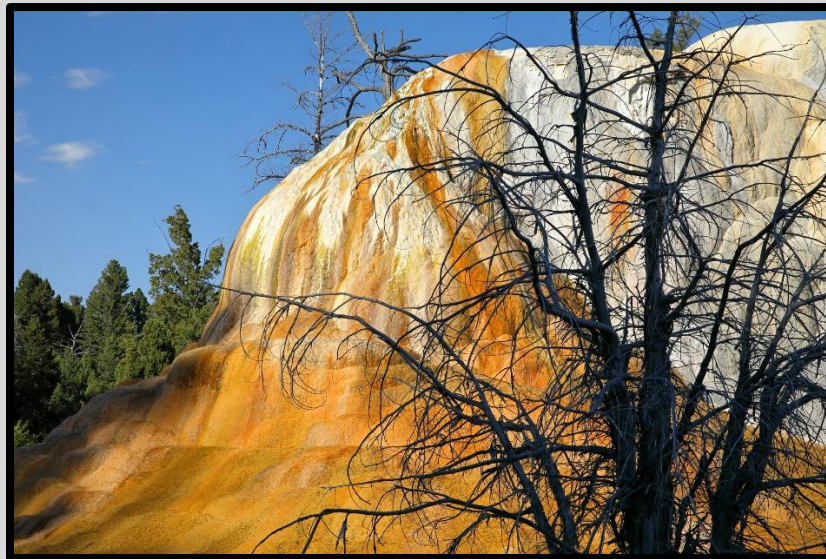
If the wind prevents the use of the floating blinds, we do close-up photography under controlled conditions using LEDs lights in our studio, so there is no need to be shooting at sunrise. We can enjoy shooting superb macro images and then have a hearty breakfast. We will have a mid-day snack. We will



enjoy an early dinner in West Yellowstone if we are going into the park for the evening. Dinner will be served at our home depending on the schedule for that evening.



*Figure 14 The floating blind provides low photo angles. Eye level or slightly shooting up provides an intimate viewpoint. A ruddy duck poses on the lake and a great-blue heron catches breakfast.*



*Figure 15 We will photograph many thermal features during this workshop. This is Orange Spring Mound.*

### **Tuition**

**The fee for this comprehensive workshop is \$3900. This includes:**

- **Intensive photo instruction from John and Dixie**
- **All meals beginning with dinner on day one and ending with breakfast on the last day**
- **Pickup and return to Bozeman and all transportation during the trip**
- **6 nights lodging at John and Dixie's home in your private bedroom**
- **Snacks Galore**
- **Use of floating blinds and close-up photo stations**



- **Payment:**
- A \$1000 per-person **deposit** holds your space in the workshop.
- Full payment for the Idaho workshop is 120 days before the start of the workshop.
- Payment can be made by check (no credit card fees) and made payable to: **Gerlach Nature Photography**. Mail check to John Gerlach/PO Box 318/Island Park, ID 83429. To use a credit card (3.5% fee will apply), call Dixie at (812) 350-0799.

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

Cancellation fee:

90 days or more before departure: 50% of tuition is forfeited

89 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 or health issues, 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 many 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. 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 gladly paid for your spot. Even though we often have a waiting list, in most cases those 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 able to give you a substantial 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 for a higher price. Many companies that provide trip cancellation insurance are found on the web. Two well-known insurance companies include:

[www.allianztravelinsurance.com](http://www.allianztravelinsurance.com)

[www.travelguard.com](http://www.travelguard.com)

Let us hope you never need to cancel your trip with us or anyone else! Happy travels!

### **Travel and Equipment Information**

After making a reservation, we will send pre-departure information describing the photo equipment and clothing that is most suitable for this workshop.

### **Getting to the Workshop**

We pick you up in Bozeman at the airport on the first day of your workshop. If you are driving to the workshop, let us know so we can arrange to meet. We will have dinner in Bozeman and then return to our home to prepare you for your first day of floating blind photography.

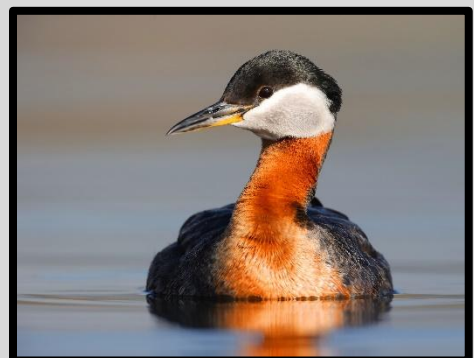
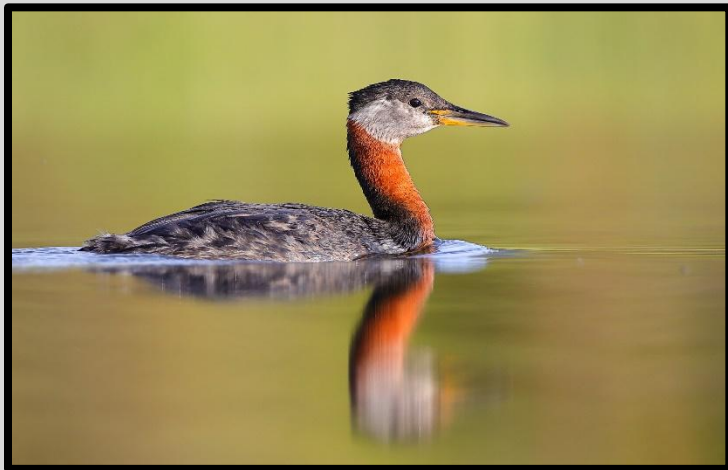
**Please let Dixie know your flight arrival and departure times prior to your arrival on the first day of workshop. Then upon arrival call or text Dixie and we will let you know where to look for us at the airport. Dixie's phone number is 812-350-0799.**



*Figure 16 White Dome geyser in Yellowstone erupts 2-3 times per hour. We will photograph and explore many thermal basins. We plan to visit Black Sand, Upper, Biscuit, Fountain Paint Pots, and Norris geyser basins.*



This drake pintail molts into these light brown feathers by July to help it hide in the aquatic plants surrounding the lake. Red-necked grebes are present, and birds along the shoreline such as this spotted sandpiper and sandhill crane are likely photo subjects.







Cassin's finches are abundant visitors to our July feeders and the sandhill crane warming itself in the dawn sunshine is often an easy bird to photograph from a floating blind.





Geysers fields offer plenty of unusual landscape opportunities.



Dixie getting in the float blind and on the next page is a tiny sample of the closeups we can make indoors.



