

“An Abundance of Birds: Photographs taken at Onondaga Lake”
Written by Gallery Coordinator Karen Jean Smith

Have you ever spotted a magnificent bird in the natural environment of Central New York and wished you could see it up close? “An Abundance of Birds,” the latest art exhibit at Baltimore Woods Nature Center, may provide you with just that opportunity. Five photographers - Tim Corcoran, Joe Fratianni, Sarah Beth Moses, Jeff Perkins, and Steve Ratliffe - have joined together to create a collection of work capturing amazing birds of Onondaga Lake.

The exhibit will be on display from March 4 through April 24 in the John A. Weeks Interpretive Center at 4007 Bishop Hill Road, Marcellus. The public is invited to attend the opening reception on Saturday, March 4 from 2:30 until 4:00pm where they can learn more about the collection. In addition, the exhibit may be seen when the Interpretive Center is open Monday through Friday (9am - 4pm) and Saturdays (10am - 4pm). There are no admission or parking fees. A portion of the proceeds from sales will be used to support the mission of Baltimore Woods Nature Center.

In recent years, Onondaga Lake has become a more welcoming environment for many species of birds, and an exciting place to view Bald Eagles. All five of the exhibiting photographers visit the lake at various times of year to enjoy the different birds and record their habits of feeding, nesting, and migration as the seasons change. A sampling of these birds - Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Wood Duck, Herring Gull, Kestrel, Snowy Owl, and Bald Eagles - are represented in this gallery of photos.

While the images are all unique, one of the recurring themes in the collection is that of a Bald Eagle with a fish in its talons. “All of us who photograph these birds learn about bird behavior, which helps us time when we click the shutter,” states Jeff Perkins. Perkins will tell you that avid photographers can even recognize the behavior of Bald Eagles before they snag a fish in the lake. The excitement of this is expressed by Tim Corcoran. “There is nothing like the adrenaline rush you get when you know you’ve nailed a shot,” says Corcoran.

In other words by Sarah Beth Moses, “I have learned that the best image is the one that spoke to you... the one that you couldn’t wait to get home and look at... Whatever it is, you will know it the moment you press the shutter - some moments just draw you in differently, and those are the ones that you hope to have captured well.”

“Being able to show an instant in time that can’t be seen in any other way is incredibly rewarding,” explains Joe Fratianni. The five photographers, who credit technological advances in photography for making this possible for hobbyists as well as professionals, have been taking

photos for many years, and started off with very basic equipment. That has changed significantly.

The right equipment plays another role in bird photography - for the closeups captured in this exhibit, telephoto lenses are key. It is important that respect for the safety of the birds is given so that they are not stressed and their nesting locations go undisturbed, thus ensuring that Onondaga Lake will remain a welcoming environment for them. According to Steve Ratliff: "Most birds are not very tolerant of humans, and most of us that photograph raptors use large zoom lenses. This maintains a safe distance between the photographer and the subject bird."

There is more to photography than just having the right equipment, however. Patience and timing are necessary, along with an understanding of the camera so adjustments can be made for the time of day, lighting, and even the temperature. As can be observed in "An Abundance of Birds," the photographers have considered detail, color, composition, texture, and even unique perspectives when determining their most successful images.

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Baltimore Woods Nature Center is a leader in facilitating opportunities for people to build personal connections to nature. Through engaging experiences and place-based exploration, we envision communities united in stewardship and love of the natural world.

A portion of the proceeds raised from the sale of the artwork goes to support the mission of Baltimore Woods Nature Center.

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