

Who are the photographers?

I am so fortunate to have these photographers working with me. Some of them belong to camera clubs and some have won awards, but none make their living from their photography. They started out like all of us who would like to take photos. These photographers studied and practiced and you can see their results all through these PDF's. These are amateurs who took photography seriously and they worked hard for years to perfect their interest. And now, they all shoot simply wonderful photos. With study, patience, and much practice, you can also improve your own photography. These people are all terrific examples of not just talent, but hard work and self-discipline. It is exactly the same with becoming a good birder. Hard work, time, and patience. Remember, you did not learn to tie your shoes the first try, and no one has ever mastered playing the violin or kicking 55 yard field goals in one afternoon. Practice! Patience! And more practice and patience!

Virginia Kickle – Virginia has always enjoyed photography. But it quickly became a passion when she retired in 2000 and joined the Decatur Camera Club. She loves animals and the great outdoors and her photography reflects that. She is an enthusiastic travel photographer, but many of her favorite subjects are closer to her home in central Illinois. She particularly enjoys bird photography and most of her bird photos are taken in her own backyard. Virginia enjoys sharing her work and her greatest satisfaction is being successful in conveying to the viewer the feelings she experienced when capturing a photograph. Virginia has won many awards with her photography.

John Niehay.

John lives in central Illinois and is a long-time member of the Decatur Camera Club. He has had a lifelong interest in nature and wildlife, so when he became interested in photography, being outside with his camera just seemed right. John has won many awards with his photography.

Jim Oettel.

Growing up, Jim was exposed to nature, identifying birds, feeding birds, and constructing bird houses. As a biology teacher, he frequently took field trips with students for bird ID. Following retirement, he and his wife, Judy, traveled and this is when he began serious birding and nature photography. And to quote Jim, "Learning from nature and others is a wonderful part of retirement."

Jim and I were partners in writing the column Avian Adventures which appeared in the Decatur Area Audubon Society newsletter for about five years. I wrote and he supplied all the photos – and the inspiration when I had none!

Eileen Owens.

Eileen Connell Owens was born and raised in Illinois. She was introduced to birding at a young age by her mother. As an adult, she started to travel and one of her favorite things is looking for regional birds wherever she is. She also enjoys taking trips devoted to just birding. As an amateur photographer, she loves to catch a good shot of a beautiful bird.

Eileen was the first photographer I contacted. I heard a talk given by her daughter, Tina Owens Anderson, on backyard feeders. It was a wonderful talk with a power point full of terrific photos. Afterwards, I asked Tina if she would be interested in providing some photos for my PDF's. Tina laughed and said she had not taken any of the photos – they were all her mother's. She asked her, Eileen agreed, and sent me a thumb drive full of photos. All were of birds at her feeders – her immaculate feeders. I took a good look at my own feeders and decided I was not doing a good job at keeping them

clean and the area tidy. I credit Eileen with not only providing me with wonderful photos, but also getting me past the “Yes, I know it is important to keep feeders clean....” to my actually keeping the feeders clean on a weekly basis. And I am sure the birds in my backyard are thanking her for this!

Danny Pratt.

Danny got started in high school when a teacher took him to a wildlife park. Deer and a raccoon caught his eye and he took photos of them. He was bitten by the photography bug that day and his interest in photographing nature has never waned. Cleon saw one of Danny’s photos on display at a nature center and was so taken by it, he inquired who the photographer was. So, he met Danny first – and explained to him all about my PDF’s. Danny was interested and started sending me photos – which I immediately used.

Bill Shreve.

I met Bill quite by accident. I was in the middle of writing these e-books, but had big gaps in photos. I was already receiving photos from all the photographers listed here, but none had many of birds found more on The Great Plains. Cleon and I were traveling – birding, of course! -- and we spent a few days at Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Comanche County, OK, which has a wonderful Visitors’ Center. As we were walking around, looking at the displays, I saw beautiful photographs of birds hanging on the walls. I asked at the desk and the two people there told me all the photographs were taken by their longtime volunteer Bill Shreve – who was actually working that day. They found him, I introduced myself, told him about my e-books, and he agreed to send me photos. This was the best bit of luck I could have had! Without Bill, there would not be many photos - or none - for some of the birds in these PDF’s.

Avery Cleon Spence.

My husband. Cleon did not become interested in photography until later in life – which is when he also became a birder. He, Jim, and Eileen share the interest of travelling, looking for regional birds, and taking photos of them. He does credit me with getting him interested in birding – we were both hikers and backpackers and I always had binoculars around my neck. At first, we shared binoculars, then he got his first pair, and he found he became fascinated trying to ID birds and watching birds live out their lives. His photography evolved from this. He was surprised to find out that he had the patience to stay with a bird until he could get the right shot.

Friends, friends of friends, and my family.

And a big thank you to the following people who sent me a few photos to help me out!

Matt Frey
Tom Halliwell
Karen Parjani
Rick Radis
Connie Requarth

Noel Straley
Riso Straley
Mack and Debbie Thompson
Jean Vandenberg

Once I got every photograph I could from all these photographers – and I cannot thank them enough for the amount of time it took them to go through their files! – I still needed some. I then turned to the website Unsplash. For a yearly fee, anyone can use the photographs available on this website – and there are thousands. Besides the fee, they request credit which I am happy to supply. When photographs are from this website, it will include both the photographer’s name and Unsplash.