

Gerlach Nature Photography
South Texas Bird Photography Workshop
at the marvelous **Laguna Seca Ranch**

with John Gerlach and Dixie Calderone

www.gerlachnaturephoto.com

March 1 – 6, 2022

March 6-8, 2022 Whooping Crane Extension

(Note: Since these workshops are so far off as I write this on Feb 24, 2030, it is possible we may have to increase prices slightly if the ranch or hotel raises their prices)

April 16 – 21, 2022

(This is Easter weekend but a super time for bird photography)



Figure 1 Crested Caracaras are common at the ranch, especially during early March.

The Laguna Seca Ranch in south Texas is devoted to wildlife photographers. Known worldwide for superb bird photography, the ranch is 700 acres of pristine brushland that attracts an abundance of wildlife including many special birds. The ranch owner built permanent photography hides designed by photographers near waterholes that attract scores of colorful birds. Plus, they have raptor blinds where food is provided to attract crested caracaras, hawks, and vultures. All birds are photographed at close range with telephoto lenses in the 400-600mm range.

We led these tours in 2021 and they were spectacular! Both March and April are terrific for bird photography. During early March, numerous raptors, including more than two dozen crested caracaras are drawn to the photo blinds with food and water. And many resident birds such as green jays, cardinals, black-crested titmouse, long-billed thrashers, and pyrrhuloxias regularly visit the photo blinds. During April, spring migration is underway, and this is a superb time to photograph migrating birds along with all the local birds that live at the ranch. Raptors are less numerous then as they are nesting, but the abundance of colorful songbirds at the photo blinds is a joy to photograph. Most of the birds you photograph are species you have never seen before.

This is a fantastic 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.

For more info about Laguna Seca Ranch, visit them online.

www.facebook.com/LagunaSecaRanch

www.lagunasecaranch.com



Figure 2 The striking ground dove is a joy to see and photograph!

What you will learn:

Take your bird photography to the next level! John and Dixie are avid bird photographers. During 2020, they shot more than 200,000 bird images from their floating blinds, seed feeder setups in their yard, and water features built in the nearby aspen forest. We are experts at bird photography and will teach you how to consistently shoot outstanding images.

- 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 photogenic perches
- How to use long lenses effectively and easily
- 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 edit bird photos with Canon's DPP4 and post them on the web

Field Trips

We all travel together in our Ford Expedition Max SUV or a rented vehicle. Each morning field trip begins early as we plan to be at the ranch at sunrise when bird activity is high, and the light is superb. We will shoot thousands of images, break for a hearty lunch in Edinburg, and return to the ranch in the afternoon for more photos.



Figure 3 Northern cardinals are common in south Texas and readily attracted to the water and food provided at the ranch. At times, more than a dozen are present at the same time.

Tour Limit: **8 participants** during the March and April ranch session. Only **4** can join us for the March whooping crane extension due to limited space on the whooping crane viewing boat.

What's Included:

- **Intensive photo instruction** from John and Dixie in the classroom and in the field
- **All meals** beginning with dinner on the first evening and ending with breakfast on the last morning
- **5 nights lodging** at the Hampton Inn in Pharr, TX
- **All ground** transportation in our Ford Expedition Max or rented SUV. This includes pickup and return to the airport.
- **Teaching slide programs**
- **All ranch fees** for using their blinds and property
- **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:

Hampton Inn & Suites
300 W. Nolana Loop
Pharr, TX 78577
(956) 781-1116

We have a block of rooms reserved for our group. You do not need to contact the hotel. We take care of the lodging for you.

Price and Payments

Price:

\$2800 for one participant with a private motel room

\$2600 each for two participants sharing a room

\$3500 if you are taking the special March whooping crane extension – limited to only four participants and that includes extra meals, lodging, transportation, and boat fees

Payment:

Full payment for the March and April workshops is due two months before the start of each 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. To use a credit card, call Dixie at (812) 350-0799.

A \$1000 per-person **deposit** holds your space in the March or April photo workshop.

We suggest buying trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment.

Refunds and Cancellation Policy

If written Cancellation is Received:

Cancellation Fee:

90 days or prior: 100% refund minus fees we cannot recover (normally only credit card charges)

89 to 61 days prior: 50% of trip fee

60 day or less: no refund unless we can refill your spot

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



Figure 4 The curved-billed thrasher is a common resident that loves to pose for your camera!

March 1 – 6, 2022 Bird Photography Workshop

Itinerary

Day 1: Tuesday

March 1: Fly to McAllen International Airport (MFE) in McAllen, Texas. Let us know when you arrive, so we can 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 will have a short meeting to prepare you for the week.

Day 2-5: Wednesday – Saturday

March 2-5

We take everyone in our Ford Explorer Expedition and rented vehicle to the Laguna Seca Ranch to be there in time for the first light at dawn and all the hungry and thirsty birds. After a full morning of intensive photography, we return to Pharr to eat lunch and discuss photo techniques. Then we return to the ranch and photograph birds in the beautiful afternoon light around 3pm till sunset. We

use different blinds and perches to produce a variety of images. With a maximum of eight participants and John and Dixie, we will shoot in groups of five and share the blinds during our four intensive days of photography. The ranch offers two morning and two evening blinds, so you get to photograph all the time.

March 6-8:

Sunday - Tuesday

We eat breakfast together and for those who are not going on the extension, we will drive you to the airport.

March 6 – 8 Whooping Crane Extension

www.texasbirdingphotos.net

Endangered whooping cranes are making a comeback and the best place to see and photograph them is Rockport, Texas where the largest wintering population resides. Prime time to photograph them is late February to mid-March before they migrate to Canada. We have chartered a custom photography boat that can get us close to the whooping cranes. The boat has room for six photographers, so we must limit this to the first four who wish to join us. This is the best opportunity there is to photograph whooping cranes.

Extension Schedule:

March 6-8

March 6

Relax in the morning while those who are not going on the extension are driven to the airport for their flights out. When everyone not going on the extension has been delivered to the airport, we drive on to Rockport, TX to overnight near the whooping crane boat tours. We do plan to make an afternoon stop for bird photography at one of the many bird hotspots in the area.

March 7 We depart the hotel early and board the boat for a 4-6-hour photo cruise to the birds on the bay with special emphasis on whooping cranes. In the afternoon, we enjoy more bird photography using a blind owned by the boat captain.

March 8 Early in the morning we drive to McAllen for your afternoon flight home.

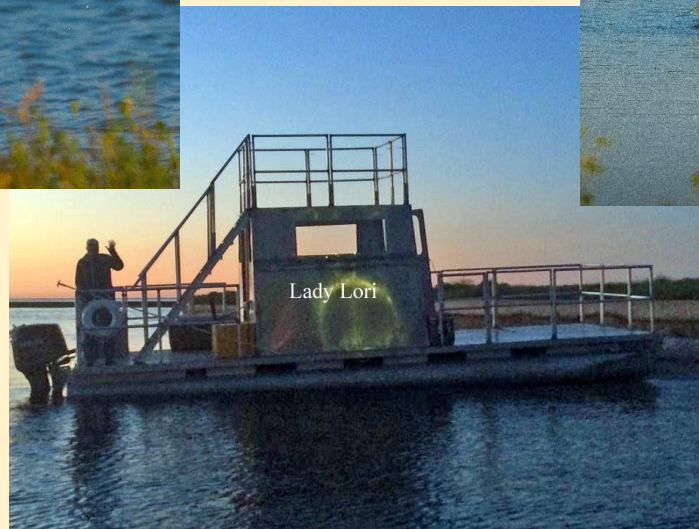
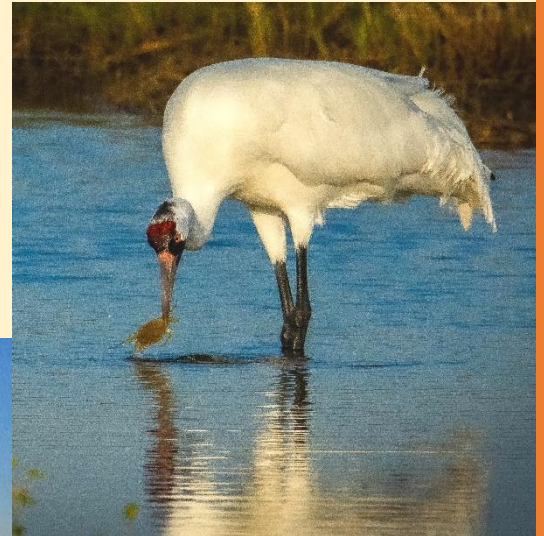


Figure 5 Whooping crane with a crab breakfast and the Lucky Lori that is built for photographers. Photos are courtesy of Kevin Sims from Aransas Bay Birding Charters

April 16 – 21, 2022 Bird Photography Workshop

Itinerary

Day 1: Saturday

April 16: Fly to McAllen International Airport (MFE), Texas. Let us know when you will arrive so we can pick you up at the airport. We meet in the hotel lobby at 6 pm local time and will take you out to dinner. Then we return to the hotel for a short meeting.

Day 2-5: Sunday – Wednesday

We drive everyone in our vehicles to the Laguna Seca Ranch to be there in time for the first morning light and all the hungry and thirsty birds. After a full morning of intensive photography, we return to Edinburg to eat lunch and discuss photo techniques. Then we return to the ranch at 3pm and photograph birds in the beautiful afternoon light until sunset. We use different blinds and perches to produce a variety of images. With eight participants maximum and John and Dixie, we will shoot in groups of five and share the blinds during our four intensive days of photography.

Day 6: Thursday

April 21: We eat breakfast together and take you to the airport, so you have plenty of time before departure.



Figure 6 Crested caracaras are animated raptors that are a delight to photograph.



Figure 7 You probably know the blue jay. Did you know another jay called the green jay is common at the Laguna Seca Ranch? They mostly live in Mexico but are abundant along the Texas border.

What to bring:

Clothes

South Texas is warm, even in March. While dawn may be in the low fifties, temperatures tend to warm up quickly into the seventies and even the low nineties are possible. Dress in layers to stay warm at dawn and take some layers off to stay cool during the rest of the day. Enclosed shoes protect you from cactus spines, spiders, and possible scorpions.

This will help you plan for the weather. Rain is unlikely, but possible.

Sunrise/Sunset and Average Temperatures

March 1 Sunrise: 6:56am Sunset: 6:34pm

April 20 Sunrise: 7:04am Sunset: 7:59pm

March. average temp 79 and 59

April average temp 87 and 65

Camera Equipment

Camera Gear:

- 2 cameras (one as a spare)

- Plenty of memory cards as it is easy 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 and 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 sturdy tripod for holding a heavy long lens
- Shorter zoom lens for photographing the blinds and our activities at the ranch such as a 70-200mm
- John uses a Canon R5 mirrorless camera with a Canon 600mm f/4 lens and this is attached to a Wimberly Gimbal head on a sturdy Gitzo tripod and Dixie uses Nikon gear that includes a D500 or D6 with a 500mm PF lens or a Tamron 150-600mm.

Examples: Long prime lenses of 500mm and 600mm are excellent for wildlife and work best at the ranch. You can buy a long lens or use teleconverters on a shorter lens. For example, a 1.4x teleconverter used on a 400mm lens gives it the reach of a 560mm lens.



Figure 8 Crested caracaras often squabble with each other.

Important Notice: The enormous number of images our workshop participants shoot creates their biggest problem. It is rather easy to shoot 10,000 images per day and we had one client shoot over 20,000 images per day. Downloading and storing this many images can become a huge problem. We would have a minimum of 512GBs of memory card space to last all day and a 5TB external hard drive to download the images to. And you must have plenty of extra camera batteries and bring two battery chargers. AC power is available at the ranch, so it is possible to recharge your batteries there. But it is best to have enough batteries to last all day so you can recharge them in your hotel room at night.

Here is what John uses to handle shot images with his Canon R5. He has six LP-E6NH batteries for the Canon R5 and two chargers. His camera takes two types of cards – the SD and the CFexpress. John has two 128GB Hoodman 2000x memory cards and two Sony CF express 256 GB cards. That is a total of 760GB for the day. Please be prepared for the number of images you will surely shoot!!!!!!!!!!!!



Figure 9 Harris's hawk is often attracted to the raptor blinds.



Figure 10 Lincoln's sparrows are frequent at the ponds.



Figure 11 Crested caracara getting ready to be photographed



Figure 12 Other birds we expect to photograph include: Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Black-crested titmouse, Common ground-dove, pyrrhuloxia northern cardinal, and Curved-billed Thrasher!

