



Distinctive Image

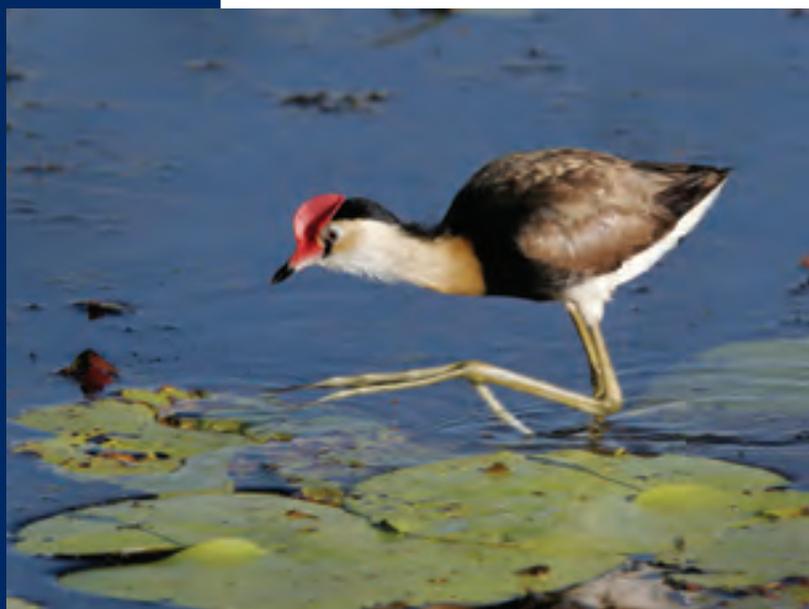
featuring...

Robert Griffith, FPSA, MPSA

Veradale, Washington



White-crowned Sparrow



Comb-crested Jacana

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series, this time featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) artist **Robert “Bob” Griffith, FPSA, MPSA**, who enjoys nature photography and who shares his bird images in this issue. Bob has been a member of the Society since 1990 and resides near Spokane, Washington.

Bob won the prestigious Nature Slide of the Year (1999) and the Wildlife Slide of the year (2002) in the Nature Division of PSA, Best in the Chapter Showcase in 2007 and Best in the Local Showcase in 2010. He is a prolific exhibitor and to date has earned 2,479 acceptances: he has a Galaxy II in the Color Projected Image Division (CPID); 7 Galaxies in the Nature Division; 4 Stars in the Photo Travel Division, and 2 stars in the Photojournalism Division. He earned his Excellence Distinction (EPSA) in 2008 and his Master Distinction (MPSA) in 2012.

An active member of the Society, Bob has served in a variety of capacities. At present he is into his fifth year on the Service Awards Committee and is currently the Chairman. He has been a presenter



Flicker Family

Photos © Bob Griffith,
FPSA, MPSA

at PSA Conferences; served as a commentator for the Color Slide Division's (now CPID) Slide study groups #63 and #64; has been involved in the TOPS in Photography program by creating and narrating digital programs; he has created several instructional slide sets for PSA's audiovisual offerings; and has published a feature article in the *PSA Journal* along with audio/visual information.

In the last 15 years Bob and his wife, Dolores, have made over 35 trips to all seven continents. He has been published in several books and magazines and in the late 90's he began making two projector slide shows of their trips. These have been shown throughout the Northwest; at PSA Annual Conferences in Toronto, Portland and San Diego; Photo Clubs; Councils; at many schools; the Spokane County Fair, Civic Groups and assisted living centers. Bob regularly donates photos to the Nature Conservancy, local National Wildlife Refuges, Washington Fish and Wildlife Departments and charitable organizations.

After the switch to digital photography in 2003, he began making digital programs focusing on nature and travel themes, (*Antarctica, Arizona Birds, Australia, Costa Rica, Florida Wading Birds, Midway Islands, Polar Bears of Churchill, Sea Birds: Puffins to Penguins, Southern Africa, Svalbard*), and a few more instructional programs to aid others interested in the nature photography field. Many of the slide programs have been converted to the digital format. He has been active in the Spokane Valley Camera Club for more than 30 years.

Bob has a Bachelor of Science degree from the

University of Idaho. Before retirement, he was the owner of a precision sheet metal manufacturing firm with two production centers that supported the electronics industry in the Northwest.

In an article called *Unsung Hero Bob Griffith*, author Fran Haywood of the Spokane Audubon Chapter stated, "Bob's programs are educational travelogues presented with a chuckle...tongue in cheek **humor**, frequently at his own expense... Bob is the **generous** person who contributed 4500 bird images to the Spokane Audubon." Those two words, *humor* and *generosity*, came up time and time again in preparation for this article and perhaps best capture the person that is Bob Griffith.

Spotted Towhee





Prairie Chicken Duel



Darned Mud



In the Tallons

Artist Statement • Bob Griffith



My interest in photography started with recording our children as they grew and matured, and job-related travel. For several years my job required traveling the U.S. and abroad so I took a camera along to record such things as historic American and European sites. After retirement I had more time to devote to this interest and I was fortunate to have had a mentor, **Dr. Bill Biedel, FPSA, EPSA**, in a slide study group who inspired me to focus on the detail. He didn't travel far to get great photos and his message was to concentrate on the subject and create a lasting image, not to merely record it. My natural disposition was to be a *ready-fire-aim* type of person. Eventually I was able to grasp the significance of the whole picture and it certainly has been rewarding. In the last several years I have concentrated on nature subjects and find nothing more satisfying than observing nature. It's more than capturing the moment; it's helped me to better understand the interrelationships of the complex world that we live in.

Equally satisfying to getting the image and knowledge of the subjects is being able to pass on the lessons learned to others; whether it is about a bird or a cathedral in Europe. I've attempted to do this through sharing photos and producing both instructional and entertaining programs. Many groups, non-profit and others are appreciative of the information that we can and do produce.

Technique

Most, but not all, bird photos are taken with telephoto lenses of 300mm and up. The smaller the bird, the larger the lens as the saying goes. These lenses have a very shallow depth of field so accurate focusing is imperative. Camera manufactures have improved the auto focus feature so much in the past few years that tack sharp photos of flying birds are attainable.

For flying or perched birds a single focusing point is used. The camera is set to the "al-servo" mode that tracks the moving bird, keeping it in continuous focus. Some cameras, such as a Canon® and Nikon® DSLR's, can be programmed with the focus button on the rear of the camera separate from the shutter release button. This is extremely useful when shooting birds or any action subjects. It takes practice to keep a moving subject in the view finder with the focusing sensor on the subject. Slow moving birds that fly in a straight line like herons or egrets are the easiest species to track. With practice, one can move to birds with more challenging flight patterns.

Because of the camera-lens combined weight, tripods are essential, but with the advent of image stabilized lenses and fast shutter speeds made possible with higher ISO's many successful photos are taken with hand-held equipment. Tracking is quicker with a hand-held camera, but over time, sharpness will be better shooting from a tripod (and your body will thank you for the consideration). A tripod is a must in low light situations.

Light within two hours of sunrise or sunset is ideal for bird photography as well as for landscapes. The birds will be most active during those hours enabling one to get desirable action shots. Generally, front lighting of the subject is best on a bright day as harsh contrast decreases your chance of getting detail on the shadowed side of the bird. High, thin clouds that break up the harshness of direct sunlight are desirable but not always available. When in the field, conceptualize the whole photo area and try and take background into consideration in addition to your prized subject.

The non-technical aspect of bird photography is to be there early, be patient and be there as often as you can. Stay alert and capture action; any action is better than a static subject. Study your subjects and check photographic magazines or websites for locations that have an abundance of birds and locations where the birds are accustomed to humans allowing close approaches.

With regard to getting photos ready for competition, I use post-processing sparingly. The normal routine is to size, tonal adjust using curves and sharpen. Distracting highlights may be toned down as well.

And to borrow the American Birders Association statement on birding ethics, "Respect wildlife, its environment and the rights of others. In any conflict of interests between birds and birders, the welfare of the bird and their environment comes first." I strongly believe the same ethical statement applies to bird photographers as well.



Mountain Blue Bird on Thistle



Meadowlark