

A Beginner's Guide to Photographing Backyard Birds



**12 Tips for Improving
Your Birding Experience**

By Kristen Clark

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO
PHOTOGRAPHING BACKYARD BIRDS

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Photographs by Kristen Clark.

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A FEW ENCOURAGING WORDS

You're likely reading this book because you enjoy attracting birds to your backyard. That's great news! I can't think of a better way to spend my Saturday mornings than next to my kitchen bay window - a cup of hot coffee in one hand, camera in the other. Listening to the birds and watching them at my window is the perfect start to any day. And, their diversity in color, shape, and size make birds a fantastic subject for practicing my photography skills. However, taking pictures of birds can be challenging, especially when the bird is flying. The good news is that you don't need to be a professional photographer to take advantage of your backyard birding paradise.

Follow the simple tips provided in this guide and you'll be on your way to producing some stunning photographs. And, as Albert Einstein once said, "look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

Good luck!

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“Adopt the pace of nature:
Her secret is patience.”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson



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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #1

Photograph birds when they are most active, which is usually in the early morning and later in the evening. Look for photograph opportunities in your backyard habitat during these times.

My best photographs are usually taken around 7am and again around 5pm. Rain or shine, I can usually enjoy some fantastic photo opportunities during these time slots. Make sure to observe your birds first to determine when they are most active in your part of the country.



Female Dark-Eyed Junco

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #2

Photograph birds where they are most active. Sit quietly with your camera near the plants or trees the birds in your backyard most prefer and wait for the birds to come to you. Be patient!

Make yourself comfortable in the process and apply the right amount of mosquito repellent or sunscreen as needed. Also, bring along a beverage and snack. There's no need to suffer during your photo shoot. The more comfortable you are the more patient you'll be.



Male Young Cardinal

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #3

Fill the frame when photographing your birds. Use the zoom feature on your digital camera or a telephoto lens to make the bird appear larger in your photograph. The bird should take up most of your viewing window.

Tight close shots allow you to focus on the bird's beauty. The idea is to capture the details of every feather, movement, and feature, all of which make up the bird's personality.



Tufted Titmouse

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #4

Use a tripod whenever possible, especially with heavy telephoto lenses.

A tripod will help stabilize your camera for a clearer image, especially if you are using camera settings that are sensitive to vibration, such as settings for low lighting and dense shade.



Hairy Woodpecker

PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #5

Place feeders next to windows when the weather outside doesn't cooperate and make sure the screen is up and the window is clean.

The great thing about photographing birds is that you don't always have to be outside to get a stunning shot. This picture was taken from my kitchen bay window in August when the temperature outside peaked just over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. This little chickadee was standing on top of the bird feeder stand, right outside the window.



Black-Capped Chickadee

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #6

Schedule a photo shoot by choosing a day that's most convenient for you to take pictures, then put food out a few days in advance so the birds know where to come find it when you're ready.

Once the birds are used to finding food at your house, they'll come running when you put out a fresh batch. It doesn't take long for them to find their next yummy morsel, allowing you to take pictures at *your* convenience.



Red-Bellied Woodpecker

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #7

If the birds don't come to your feeders right away, you can attract them by wrapping a piece of tin foil at the top of the feeder. The birds will respond to the sun reflecting on the foil.

Also, bright colored feeders will attract the birds, too. Try using feeders that are bright red.



Male Black-Headed Grosbeak

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #8

Experiment with your camera settings and different angles.

Get familiar with your camera settings and try different shutter speeds and lighting. Also, play with your depth of field and adjust the focus on and off of the bird in the frame. Also, birds don't need to fit squarely in the frame to make an interesting photograph. Pictures of birds hanging upside down or slightly off centered can be equally intriguing.



Female Cardinal

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #9

Attract a variety of birds to your photo shoot by offering a variety of flavors and place settings.

Vary the food in your feeders and you'll vary the bird species to photograph. Black oil sunflower is the hands-down favorite of all the birds that visit tube and house type feeders, including chickadees, cardinals, titmice, and finches. White proso millet is favored by birds who visit platform feeders (doves and sparrows). Ducks, geese, and quail will eat corn.



Carolina Wren

PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #10

Be prepared to also take pictures during the winter months. Use an anti-fog eyepiece, if one is available for your camera, as this will help prevent your breath from fogging the viewfinder at the critical moment. Also, keep your fingers warm if photographing in low temperatures.

Don't let the snow intimidate you. Some of my most stunning pictures were taken during or immediately after a snow storm.



Scrub Jay

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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #11

Use a telephoto lens of 300mm at a minimum and faster shutter speed (at least five frames per second or faster) for capturing birds in flight.

This will take practice, so take lots of pictures. Take pictures of birds coming in for a landing at your feeder, or taking off. Also, practice by taking lots of pictures of hummingbirds, and use the ones you like.



Hummingbird

PHOTOGRAPHY TIP #12

Use a variety of attractive feeders for photographing your birds.

Bird feeders need not be expensive to be attractive and variety will spice up your photographs. Use store-bought feeders, but also try your hand at some inexpensive yet functional home-made feeders for added appeal. You will find plenty of creative ideas online.

For this photograph, I used a glue-gun to adhere a dime store teacup to a matching saucer. I filled it with seed and hung it from a tree. Pretty.



Blue Jay

ABOUT KRISTEN CLARK

Photographed from our cabin in the beautiful mountains of New Mexico and our suburban home in Texas, the pictures presented in this book were photographed using my Nikon Digital SLR camera and telephoto zoom lens, along with my deep passion for birds. And I am NOT a professional photographer. I'm just someone who loves the experience of birdwatching from my own backyard. Yes, the sign at our house reads, "Birds Welcome."

For more information about my backyard birding adventures, please join me online:

- BackyardBirdingParadise.com
- [Facebook.com/backyardbirdingparadise](https://www.facebook.com/backyardbirdingparadise)

And I look forward to seeing you there.

Kristen –

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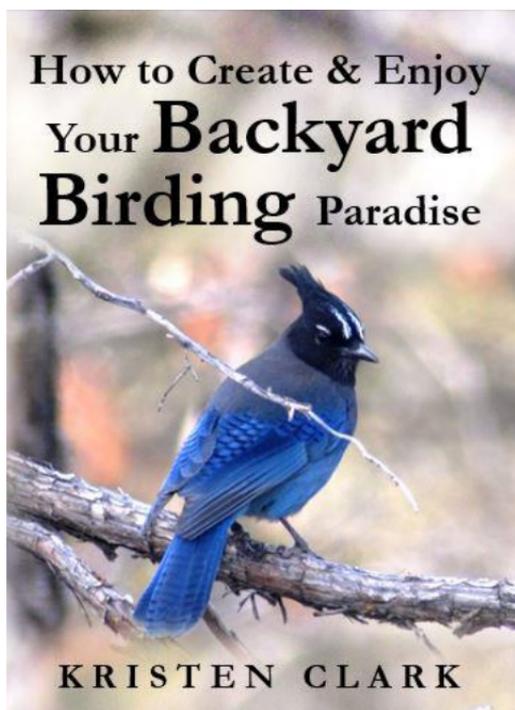
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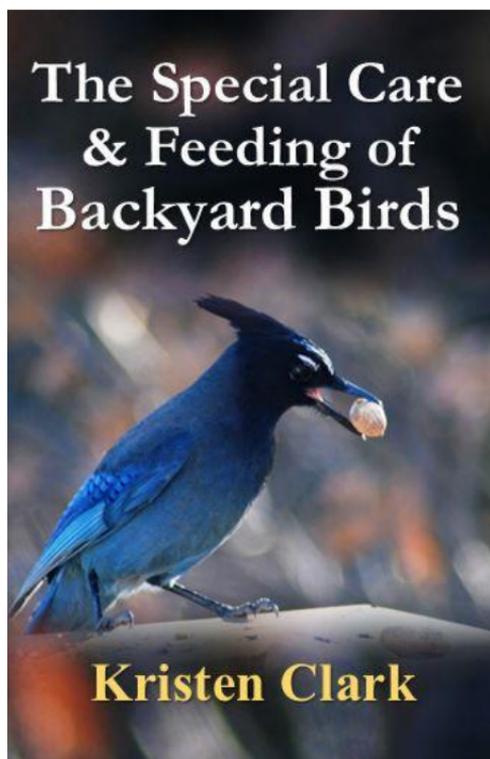


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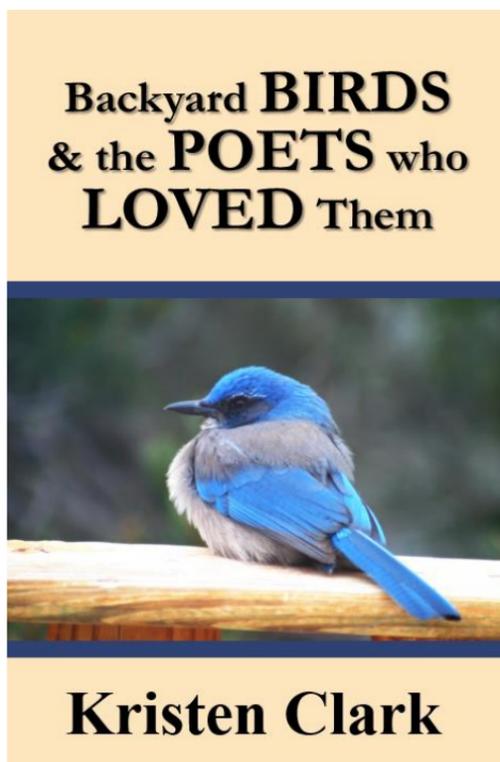


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