



I remember the first time I saw a drone in the field. It was August 2016, and I was on a photography workshop in Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, USA, with Ann and Rob Simpson, a husband-and-wife team of biology professors, nature photographers, workshop leaders, and authors I have known and learned from for many years through the Outdoor Writers

Association of America (OWAA). Shenandoah runs along a ridgeline in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and it features spectacular views of the landscape below on both sides of the ridge. We were at a pull-off along Skyline Drive, working on some different shooting exercises, when an obnoxious buzzing sound interrupted everyone's focus. Soon after, we saw the culprit zooming way too close for our comfort, let alone that of any wildlife in the trees it nearly clipped. I don't know where the operator was hiding, but wherever they were, they were way out of bounds.

Drones have provided a huge advancement in photographic technology — they basically eliminate the constraint of gravity from the camera's perspective. That's a *huge* gamechanger. But they come with some major caveats that photographers must fully consider long before launching. The U.S. National Park Service banned them in 2014 because they can, and do, disturb wildlife, people, and

the public lands and waters we all share. The drone I saw in Shenandoah may have done nothing worse than annoy a couple of park visitors, but others have had more serious consequences. The same year the NPS-wide ban went into effect, Zion National Park visitors witnessed a drone operator buzzing a herd of bighorn sheep, sending terrified lambs running and separating them from their parents. That “photographic opportunity” may have had fatal effects.

Outdoor journalist Kris Millgate (another photographer I have known and looked up to for many years through OWAA) is a drone pilot certified by the Federal Aviation Administration in the United States. In her article, “Over Your Head,” which starts on page 13, she shares her insights on some of the ethical, technical, and legal considerations that photographers need to keep in mind as they embrace this technology. You'll notice that some of her images included in the article weren't taken from a drone, and that's deliberate. It's critical to know when *not* to fly, as is often the best decision around wildlife. But there are certainly opportunities where doing so — legally and ethically — can generate incredible photos that may open people's eyes to wildlife in new, transformative ways. Imagine the images of a mass caribou or wildebeest migration, taken from a perspective that reveals the enormity and power of the collective. Or a bird's-eye view of a pod of dolphins being illegally herded into nets for capture or slaughter. This is the kind of work that changes minds, priorities, laws, and outcomes for wildlife.

This issue also features several other subjects that we hope will be useful to your education in wildlife photography. Kellie Oliver, whose work you last saw on the cover of the Fall 2022 issue of the *Journal*, relates a situation where she witnessed and photographed a heron snacking on a slider — and no, I don't mean a tiny hamburger. Tamara Blazquez Haik provides wisdom from her experience working with scientists and conservationists on how to use your photography to support the well-being of your favorite animal subjects. Joe McDonald brings us to the Pantanal and outlines what to expect on a jaguar-photography trip and how to prepare for the best possible shots of these big, powerful cats. Ruth Hoyt writes about how key it is for a photographer to deeply know their subject, and Alyce Bender covers the status of and photographic opportunities provided by the wild-horse herds of North America. The issue wraps up with a look at ruby-throated hummingbirds, their mind-boggling, do-or-die migration route, and the delicacy involved with banding their legs for tracking and data collection.

A journey in wildlife photography is one of constant improvement. There's always something new to learn and do better. The *Journal of Wildlife Photography* also operates in a state of constant improvement, and we do our best every day to make sure we bring you the best education we can on what's in front of your camera and how to operate as effectively as possible from behind it.

Recently, this has resulted in a number of new developments for our subscribers, such as monthly photo contests, live virtual trainings, an audience survey, and a subscriber-only online community. We've had a few growing pains, but we're listening to you and responding to your feedback on how we can serve you better.

For example, we figured that listing image metadata on the photos

we publish wasn't all that educational without any context of the situation in which each photo was taken (for example, what was the light like? Was the animal moving? How far away was the photographer?). So, we removed that line of information from photos in the Winter 2023 issue and instead asked our writers to provide insight in their captions about their shooting situation for each image and how it led to their settings choices. Well, you got in touch about that, and we heard loud and clear that you still want to see that image information on the photos we publish! So we're reinstating that in this issue with a hybrid approach, where the photographer provides the metadata as well as some context and insight about the circumstances in which they took their photos.

We've also added links to some of the gear mentioned throughout the issue to make it a little easier for you to check out the equipment our writers use themselves. Many of them have been shooting for decades, so some of the gear behind some of their images is no longer sold, but we've added links for what we can so you can familiarize yourself with the kind of equipment the pros use.

Thank you for being part of our journey, and for letting us be part of yours.

To your photographic success,



Danielle Phillippi
Editor