



WATERFOWLING THROUGH A LENS

FOUR PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS SHARE THEIR SECRETS FOR CAPTURING SPECTACULAR SIGHTS AND SPECIAL MOMENTS IN DUCK COUNTRY by T. EDWARD NICKENS

DUCK HUNTERS AND OTHER WATERFOWL ENTHUSIASTS FIND THEMSELVES IN SOME OF THE MOST GORGEOUS PLACES ON THE PLANET, STACKING UP MEMORIES OF GLORIOUS SUNRISES IN MARSHES AND FIELDS ACROSS THIS CONTINENT. FOR MOST OF US, TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS THAT CELEBRATE THE BEAUTY OF WATERFOWL AND DOCUMENT THE THRILL OF THE HUNT CAN BE CHALLENGING, AND THE RESULTS ARE RARELY AS IMPRESSIVE AS THE PICTURES THAT POPULATE OUR MEMORIES. WE TALKED TO FOUR SEASONED PHOTOGRAPHERS WHOSE WORK HAS LONG BEEN FEATURED IN *DUCKS UNLIMITED*. HERE'S THEIR ADVICE FOR ANYONE WHO WANTS TO CAPTURE IMAGES THAT DO JUSTICE TO THOSE MAGNIFICENT MORNINGS CHASING DUCKS AND GEESE. >>

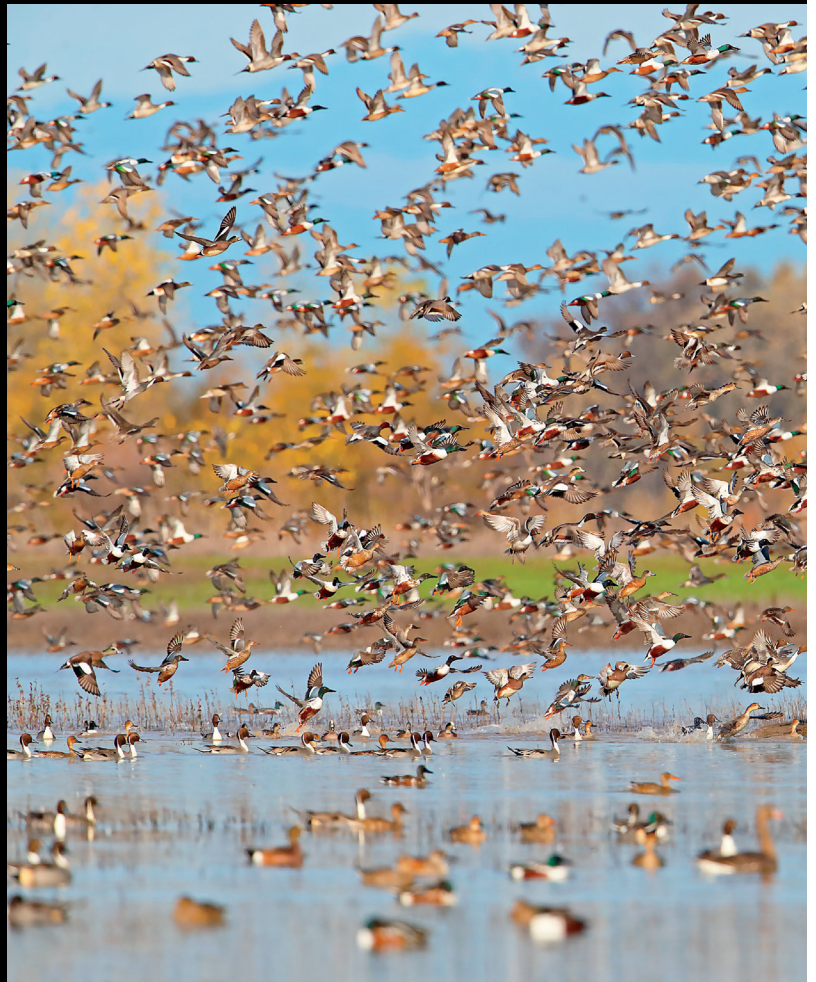
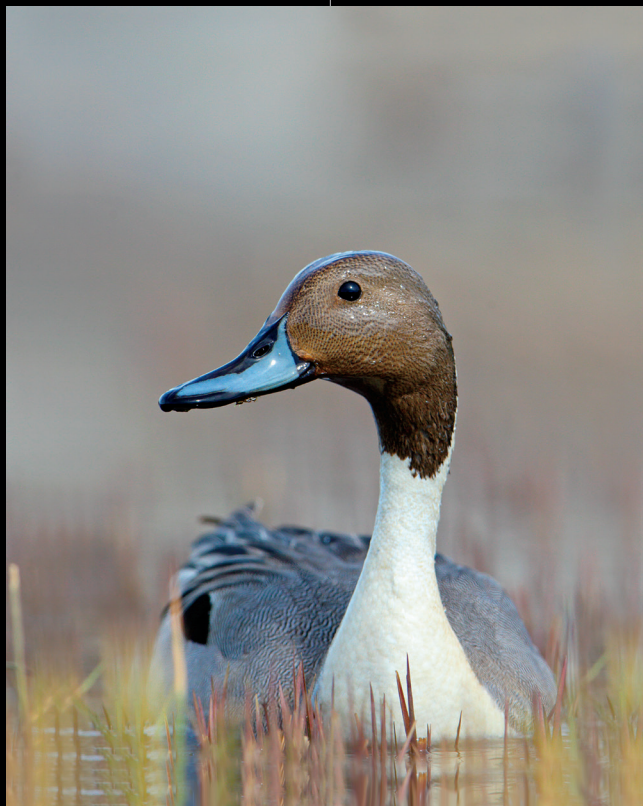
GARY KRAMER

HOMETOWN: WILLOWS, CALIFORNIA

No one person has photographed all 166 species of the world's waterfowl, but Gary Kramer is closing in on that goal. After 35 years behind the camera, he's down to the last few dozen ducks he needs to capture for a book called *Waterfowl of the World*. Kramer sold his first photograph to *Ducks Unlimited* in May 1988, and for the last 25 years he's had at least one photograph in each issue. He's also a wildlife biologist and an avid hunter, so he has a few ideas about how to get your hunting pals excited about having a photographer in the blind.



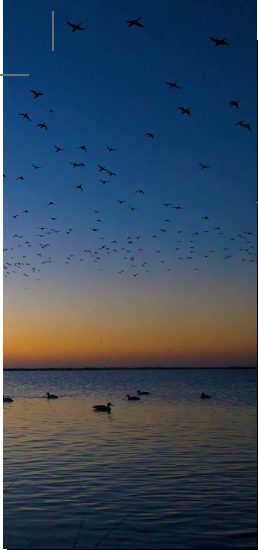
I started out hunting long before I got into photography, so I understand the tension that happens when you're trying to have a great hunt and also get photos. You can do both in the same day, but you can't do both at the same time, so you have to have discipline. If you're working on a picture of a dog retrieving and you see



birds coming and you put down the camera to grab a gun, then you'll probably screw up both the shot and the photo.

To get buy-in from my buddies, I have a conversation before the hunt about how I'm going to work to get solid hunting shots that we can all enjoy and share. I'll hunt like a madman that first 30 minutes, but then I put down the gun and shoot with my camera.

Work on the setup shots when hunting is slow. That's when you throw the bird eight times for the dog to retrieve, for example. I have friends who really get into this. They'll get photos of their dogs, their kids, the whole scene, so the morning is not just about pulling the trigger. They find that photography adds something to the hunt that they can keep forever.



FOCUS
It's nearly impossible to hunt and shoot photographs at the same time. To capture the best images, put your shotgun away.



PRO TIP: SHOOT THE DETAILS

Get in tight. Try close shots of the blue speculum on a mallard's wing. Duck feathers stuck to a cattail on a frosty morning. A shell ejecting from a shotgun. Pick two or three spectacular ducks, the kind you would mount, with no blood, and place them on a log with a couple of shells. These still lifes are a respectful way to tell the larger story of what goes on in a duck blind.