

Capturing the beauty of the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, one frame at a time.



by Jackie Nunnery

The magic of a moment

Scanning the horizon, they intently search the riverbanks and trees for signs of life. “Over there” says Betty Waldrop softly yet excitedly, pointing at a heron camouflaged near a piece of driftwood as it too looks intently, in this case, for lunch in the waters. Bob Waldrop, camera ready, snaps a few shots as they “hunt” off the back deck of their Hartfield home on the banks of Wilton Creek.

Nature photography is an opportunity to catch a glimpse of the wild, to see a world that is usually invisible even though it’s hiding in plain sight around us. And yes, there’s an element of excitement to it. It’s not only in coming face-to-face with wildlife or witnessing a beautiful sunset, it’s the luck at being at the right place and pressing the shutter button at just the right moment.

“They’re just being natural and you’re capturing that moment in time. I don’t take that for granted,” Bob said. “It’s something most people don’t see because they’re not looking.”

His interest in nature photography, particularly birds, developed from a love of nature: both watching it and being in it. “Wildlife in Virginia is so beautiful and we have always enjoyed the area,” he said. Bob started by taking pictures from their boat and while visiting nearby beaches. While he may be the only one taking pictures, for the Waldrops, photographing nature is also an opportunity to spend time together. And true to their partnership, most of their photos are of animal pairs.

Daniel Schiavo became interested in photography after moving to White Stone eight years ago from urban New Jersey. “I just started snapping pictures. Every day was a beautiful landscape and stuff I would never have seen before moving here. If you’ve grown up around it you might be used to it, but I think it’s something special.”



Proving that two sets of eyes are better when it comes to spotting, Bob and Betty Waldrop watch nature unfold out their backdoor. Photo by Jackie Nunnery

He was encouraged by friends after sharing photos of the area on Facebook or email. “I guess I have the eye for it,” Schiavo said.

Just get out there

Schiavo and Waldrop had similar advice in getting started with a rewarding hobby. Keep it simple. Don’t worry about getting expensive camera equipment or complicated photo editing software. Just about everyone has a digital camera on their phone and for Schiavo, that’s all it took to get started.

“While I purchased some upscale cameras and lenses in the past few years, I would say use the camera in your phone—it’s the way I started—and record in pictures what is happening around you be it weather, plants, flowers,



Waldrop and camera came face to face with an elusive prothonotary warbler. Photo by Bob Waldrop

insects, wildlife or sea life,” he said.

Even now, Schiavo finds that his iPhone is perfect for those spontaneous moments that always happen in nature. “I don’t always have time to grab my camera and lens or set up my tripod.”

He also uses his phone’s photo editing software, which has become quite sophisticated yet still easy to use, to touch-up photos whether taken on his phone or camera. “Sometimes what comes out of the camera is not quite the same as what I saw color-wise,” he said.

Advances in digital cameras, specifically Waldrop’s latest “point and shoot” type camera with a zoom lens,

allows him to take multiple photos and get close ups without getting too close to his subjects. “Sometimes we’ll take up to 500 pictures in an afternoon and find a few good ones to share.” Waldrop said his photos are mostly straight out of the camera, without much photo editing.

“Take pictures with any camera you have and share with family and friends. You would be surprised after a few pictures how much you will enjoy sharing what you have captured,” Bob said.

No place like home

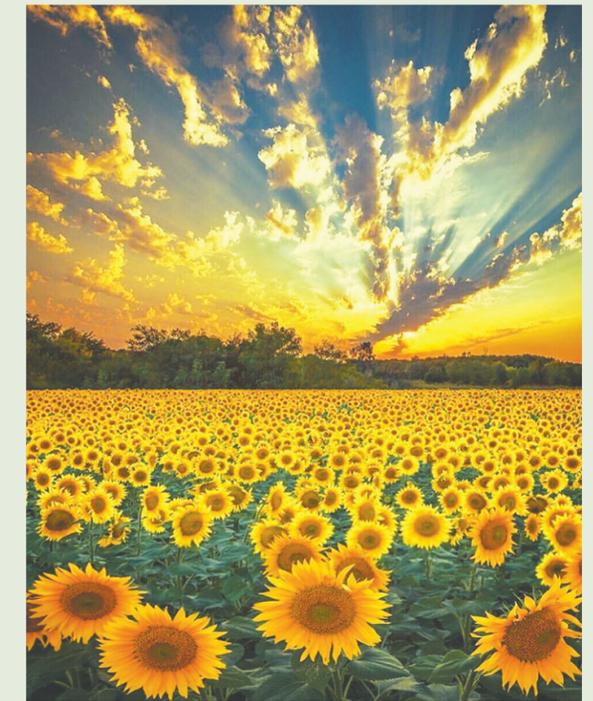
The Waldrops have traveled to many nature preserves and parks all



A pair of bald eagles on the Piankatank River. Photo by Bob Waldrop



A bale of eastern painted turtles sun themselves on Wilton Creek. Photo by Bob Waldrop



Daniel Schiavo happened upon this field of sunflowers at just the right moment. Photo by Daniel Schiavo



Daniel Schiavo loves to take pictures of “angry weather,” which have a painterly feel and “show the power of Mother Nature.” Photo by Daniel Schiavo



A pair of wood ducks swim through the reeds. Photo by Bob Waldrop

over the state, but local favorites are Bethel Beach and Haven Beach in Mathews County, and Hughlett Point in Northumberland County. And of course, there is the familiarity of the nature happening right outside their back door on Wilton Creek, where they can see a pair of osprey move in and build a nest, raise chicks and watch them grow. "It's pretty special."

Schiavo and his wife, Jeanne, like to hop in the car and "get lost" in search of photos. "I never know what I'll come across" like he did with a field of sunflowers one day. However, his favorite place to go is "out my back door. We are blessed to live right on the Chesapeake Bay on Fleets Island. Eagles and osprey abound and my bird feeders attract many species of birds. We've seen blue crabs, stingrays, dolphins, sea turtles, shrimp and even seahorses in the tidal flats and shallows."

If we're willing to take the time to look, there is an abundance of ever-changing beauty hiding right under our noses. It's there waiting to be seen and if you're lucky, captured in a glorious moment never to be seen again. Except in a photograph.



A pair of tundra swans swim in the waters off of Gwynn's Island. Photo by Bob Waldrop

"I just started snapping pictures. Every day was a beautiful landscape and stuff I would never have seen before moving here. If you've grown up around it you might be used to it, but I think it's something special."

-Daniel Schiavo



A different perspective on white birch contrasted against a rich blue sky. Photo by Daniel Schiavo



Proof that you don't need expensive gear to get a great shot, Daniel Schiavo took this photo of a recent storm with his phone. Photo by Daniel Schiavo



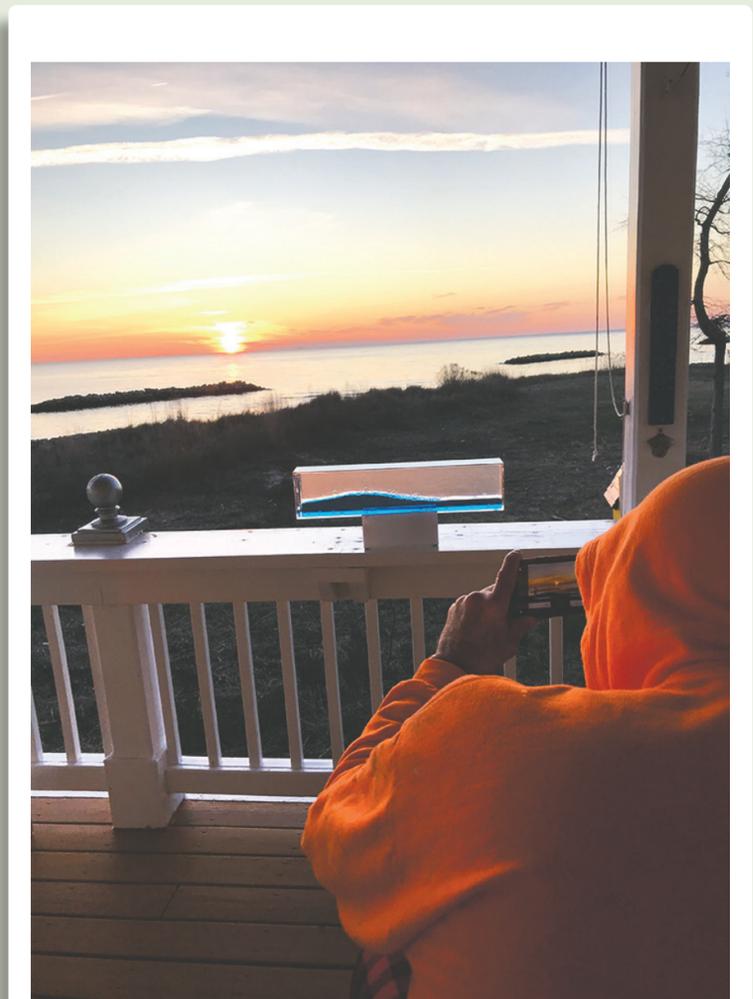
A pair of brown pelicans relax near Aaron's Beach with Wolf Trap Lighthouse in the background. Photo by Bob Waldrop

"Every day God paints a different and beautiful sunrise and sunset. Mother Nature provides the majesty of angry or beautiful weather."

-Daniel Schiavo



From his vantage point on Fleets Island, Daniel Schiavo was able to capture a striking image of a storm front as it rolled in. Photo by Daniel Schiavo



Daniel Schiavo taking a picture on his phone and the resulting photo. Photos by Jeanne and Daniel Schiavo