



# Lazy Birding

Robin Redbreast



Red Cardinal

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Not everyone can or wants to travel to an exotic location to shoot subjects. Sometimes the best subjects can easily be found in ones own yard: birds for instance. Birds are found everywhere and with a little effort and forethought a very nice bird *studio* can be set up in the yard.

First, find or create a place in the yard with a nice background for shooting birds. Evergreens provide an excellent, thick green setting that contrasts very nicely with all species of birds. Possible choices of bird-attracting evergreens are hemlocks, hollies, junipers, pines, Balsam or Douglas firs, Blue or Norway spruces and Japanese yews. Next, lure the birds to the designated area with bird feeders and do talk with a good bird feeder supply expert because different types of feed will attract different species of birds. And now, for really lazy birding: it is possible to shoot through clear, clean glass from the comfort of your home. Gray overcast days minimize reflections.

Place the camera on a tripod and use at least an 80-400 mm zoom lens, then while warm and cozy in the house, photograph the birds. This photographer uses a Bogen 501 Pro Video Head®



*Cardinal with snowflakes*

with Quick Release on top of the tripod. It is actually meant for a video camera and has a swift moving swivel head that enables one to rapidly follow a bird's movement as it hops from branch to branch. Set up your tripod so that you are shooting the subject from eye level. Take into consideration the amount of available light and set your ISO accordingly: between 200 – 800 ISO will usually do the trick. Several of the newer DSLR's can use ISO's up to 3200 without producing any noticeable noise. Some birds, such as chickadees, will quickly become accustomed to the camera's presence and will swiftly adapt to the cameraman's movement as well. It does help if a drape or window divider can hide the shooter's presence because certain birds, like male cardinals, are very skittish and will fly off at the slightest hint of movement.

Be prepared to shoot many, many images in RAW mode utilizing the continuous shutter feature on the camera. Birds rarely pose and even when the bird is still, the tree limb or perch is usually in constant motion. Sometimes, shooting on an overcast day will not provide the light necessary for a quick shutter speed, so a great deal of patience, perseverance and lots of shooting is



*Common Grackle*



Red Finch

required. Take advantage of bad weather: rain, snow and fog can be a photographer's best friend. A little dismal weather can make the difference between an ordinary or extraordinary image. So while sipping hot cocoa, shoot away! The reward of a sharp, nicely composed picture of a brightly colored bird is worth the effort. Not only will you have fun shooting, but also the birds are enjoyable to watch and study.

After shooting, a minimum amount of work is necessary in the digital darkroom. Cropping and sharpening are usually all that are needed. If you do not plan to use your *little yard bird* in a nature exhibition, then some cloning may also be done.

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Chickadee



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Yellow Finch