



## NPN Member Profile...



## Scott Leslie - NPN 0875



My interest in photographing nature stems from a childhood exploring the woods and shorelines near my home on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. There, I would collect reptiles, insects, and amphibians that I kept in terrariums that I made. It was not until later, after discovering a passion for birds, that I began developing as a naturalist. Thus, a lifelong pursuit was born.

It wasn't until after university that I really picked up a camera for the first time. My subject area was already established: the natural world. I quickly became engrossed in making photographs and spent hours upon hours roaming the wilds of Nova Scotia with camera in hand. At this early stage I learned from and admired the work of Tim Fitzharris (who started his career in Canada), Freeman Patterson, and John Shaw. Soon after, I

discovered the work of Frans Lanting and Stephen Dalton. Both of them continue to inspire me today. Photography had quickly gone from an interest to an obsession and I began selling my work through stock agencies and on my own. When I co-founded an organization called the Tobeatic Wilderness Committee (TWC) in 1992, I began to see the power of photography and words to achieve conservation goals. The TWC was fighting to protect the largest remaining wilderness in eastern Canada from logging and mining, and we used my photographs and articles extensively in the battle to win the support of Canadians. In 1995, the 250,000 acre Tobeatic Wilderness was designated a protected wilderness area.

In the late 1990s I became heavily involved in underwater photography (I was also much inspired by the work of David Doubilet, especially his wide-angle work) and also started a commercial diving business. After 5 years and over 3000 dives as a photographer, a PADI instructor, and a sea urchin harvester, I had just about enough of the underwater scene for the time being. I returned to my first love - bird photography. Actually it's my second love - my wife Paula, who has given me so much support and encouragement is number 1.

Since I have taken up the telephoto and wide angle once again to capture the beauty of birds on film or silicon, I have concentrated primarily (but not exclusively) on small birds in flight. This has really opened my eyes to the wonder of flight and the elegance of birds in action. It has also shown me why small birds are so seldom photographed in flight; they're really fast! As I continue along this photographic path, I am learning a great deal about anticipating birds' movement and behavior. I am also learning a lot about patience!

Nature Photographer's Network has been a real benefit to me. Since there are few really serious nature photographers in my area, I always work alone in the field. NPN has given me a community of like-minded people to belong to, and the comments, suggestions and inspiring images I've seen there over the past eight or nine months have been invaluable in my continued development as a photographer. I've also met online many great people who are kindred souls.



Throughout history, birds have been the most visible manifestation of the wonder of animate nature. They are a reminder of the “other” world out there. One that is astonishingly more diverse, and infinitely richer than our narrowly circumscribed human world. We are but one part of it. I photograph birds because I have a deep, abiding love for them. To be able to participate in some way in the fleeting moments of their lives by freezing those moments to share with others is, in my view, one of the greatest of privileges of being a photographer.

*Editor's note* - Be sure to visit Scott's [online portfolio](#) to view more of his work.

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