

## New Winter Photo Opportunities

by *Sandy Selesky*

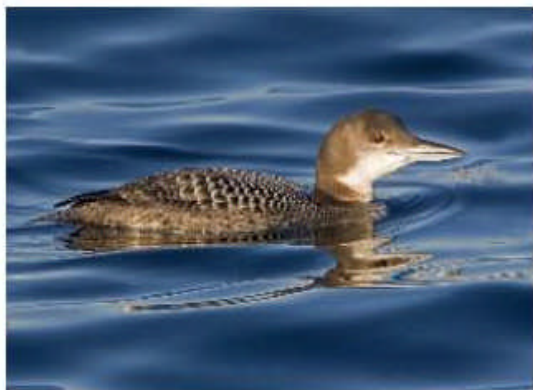
I've had several members of the club tell me that they've run out of photo opportunities in the winter. Well, I rarely run out of photo opportunities and wanted to suggest a couple of places, especially if you're interested in birds, boats or reflections. Of course, you do need lots of time and lots of patience, which I tend to have. You also need to take LOTS of images, not just a few. Keep going back to the same places, trying different exposures, different compositions, different angles, in different types of weather, etc. etc.

I've been taking pictures in Gloucester for many years but have only just discovered the Gloucester Fishing Pier - also called the Jodrey Fishing Pier. I went there for the first time last Sunday and then spent 6 hours yesterday, February 24th, on a beautiful and cold winter day, taking over 550 pictures of ducks, gulls, loons, and harbor seals swimming in the ocean along the docks there. There is a huge fish processing plant there, and men were at work there even on a Sunday. Occasionally, the workers would throw fish parts back into the ocean, and the birds would all be vying for the food. But I was interested/obsessed in getting good shots of Red-breasted Mergansers and Common Eider, both beautiful ducks that are usually far out in the ocean and hard to photograph. In past years, I've gotten pictures of them at Rockport Harbor, another good places for photography, but it's hit or miss whether a few of them decide to come into the inner harbor from the outer ocean. If you wait long enough, they usually do but then again, they might stay further out.



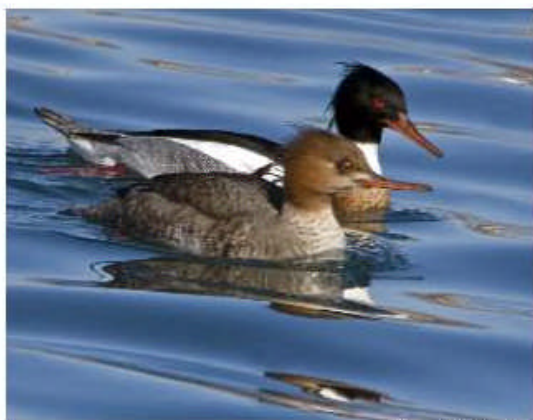
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At Jodrey, there are many of these ducks and they are constantly swimming back and forth, sometimes close, sometimes further back, but always around for photo opportunities in the winter. At low tide they are quite close up and even at high tide yesterday they were continually swimming closer at certain times during the day. It's just a matter of patience. There are lots of boats with colorful paint jobs and buoys by the docks and these brings lots of colorful reflections into the water on a calm day. If you can get the ducks or gulls swimming into these reflections, you can make some very colorful images. But even if you can't, you can make some beautiful reflection shots without the birds, or just images of the fishing boats themselves either docked or going to and from the harbor. On a calm, blue sky day, you are also going to get beautiful reflections of the ducks themselves in the blue water of the harbor that adds something special to your photographs. And also look for action shots with the birds sitting up to flap their wings after preening on the water or taking off or landing. Watch the sun, though. Make sure it's behind you when photographing the birds in the water or you will blacken out the green head of the male mergansers and get harsh shadows on any of the ducks. If you stay for hours, the sun will move around so always make sure you're checking to make sure you're photographing the ducks with the sun behind you as its direction changes.



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For camera equipment, I used my Canon 30D, a 100-400 IS zoom lens with my 1.4 teleconverter. When the ducks were further away, I actually combined my 1.4 with my 2x teleconverter and on my tripod I was able to manually focus and still get some very sharp images, believe it or not!!! I've been using this combination more and more. Or you can use just the 1.4 or just the 2x. At low tide when the ducks come even closer, you can probably get away with just using the 100-400 (or Nikon 80-400) without a teleconverter. I used an exposure compensation of minus 2/3 (evaluative metering - 2/3) so that the whites on the ducks on a sunny day wouldn't be burned out. You could also spot meter on a medium tone somewhere on the bird or elsewhere in the scene if you prefer. When they swim into darker reflections, I decreased the exposure by minus 1 2/3 to minus 2!



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**Directions to Jodrey Pier:** 128 North to Gloucester past the 3rd rotary where you can go left to Rockport (127). Go straight to the light which is Main St. Turn right and make a quick left on Parker St. Go straight down Parker St. (lots of trailer trucks parked on the left and the big fish processing warehouse on the right) and park straight ahead. This is the fishing pier area. I photographed off the piers on the right, straight ahead (if the sun isn't in your eyes and it's low tide there), and even on the left pier which says **No Trespassing** (private boat tenants docked there but I walked on the pier anyway and took some really nice duck and boat reflection shots from there; other birders were walking there too and no one bothered me so don't know whether or not it can be problematic in ignoring this sign). If you're going to Rockport Harbor, just go left on 127 at the 3rd rotary.

**Directions to the Chain Bridge in Amesbury for possible bald eagles:**

Rt. 495 North to Exit 55 - Salisbury. Right off the exit past 2 lights. Go past Burger King on the right, past the entrance to 95S, past Clarks Rd. and make the 2nd right after the Chrysler/Jeep dealer (facing the Cross Roads Plaza sign on the other side of this street). Go down past the next light which is Main St. and you'll come to the bridge. There will be "Entering Newburyport" sign on the left at the beginning of the bridge and a "Chain Bridge" sign on the right. Turn left into the small parking lot and walk down the path to the point looking out on Eagle Island. Look for eagles in the trees or in the air or stand on the bridge. Sometimes they're flying over the bridge or sitting in trees on either side of the bridge. Ducks and cormorants are often swimming in the water below or flying overhead as well.