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Monday, 27 October 2014

October Print: 'Bird Impression' by Ctein

Ctein came across this remarkable find in St. Paul, Minnesota, last year, and made of it a photograph like none you've ever seen before. And seldom have we gotten more requests for prints than for this picture.

Unlike photographs that "project," you might find yourself having to explain to viewers of the print just what it is—the ghostly impression of the impact of a bird into plate glass, rendered on the glass in remarkable detail. It hints of violence as well as beauty, mystery as well as pain, and yet still possesses an undeniable gesture of grace. A collision, literally, of the manmade and the natural world.

For those who wish a closer look at the photograph before purchasing, Ctein has a larger JPEG on his own website: https://ctein.com/TOP/Bird_Impression3.jpg . The detail below (click to see it at ~100%) shows the exquisite detail in the dusty impression.

The photograph is printed on Canson Baryta Photographique paper with Epson Ultrachrome K3 inks. We're offering the print in two sizes this time—11x14 inches (9x12" image area) for $95, and 17x22 inches (15x20" image area) for $175. The prints will be signed and titled in ink on the front, dated and signed in pencil on the back.

Shipping costs are $20 for the smaller 11x14" and $25 for the larger 17x22" print, anywhere in the world. California residents must pay sales tax. The PayPal order buttons below reflect the total price, including tax and shipping.

Ctein has generously offered to donate a larger than normal cut of the proceeds to the "Help TOP Move" campaign, so orders help Mike too.

As usual, we accept orders for four days only. Sales close at noon Central Time on Friday. Then the prints are made to fill the orders we've received. Prints cannot be ordered past the close date.

HERE'S HOW TO ORDER

[Sale has ended, 12 noon 10/31/2014. Here is Ctein's email and his address is:

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Ctein
42 Skyline Drive
Daly City CA 94015

should you need to contact him about your order.

All prints will be delivered before Xmas. You will receive a shipping confirmation email with a tracking number from the U.S. Postal Service when your print ships. All prints ship USPS Priority Mail. Also, there will be a notice posted on TOP when they've all shipped. Please allow 45 days after your order before inquiring whether your order has shipped.

Many thanks to all the buyers of this print!]

Mike

> **UPDATE**: *If you'd like to help with the problem of stressors and dangers to bird populations, reader GKFroehlich recommends this informational page from the American Bird Conservancy. See his full comment in the Comments section. —Ed.*

(To see all the comments, click on the "Comments" link below.)

Featured Comments from:

Robert Hudyma: "I saw this image when Ctein visited in Toronto, and the web image displayed does not capture the subtle nuances that the Epson printer can render. The link to the higher resolution image is better. The original image will evoke an emotional response when you see it."

Jim: "Have you seen this, which was coincidentally posted today."

Darr: "I had a window desk on the fifth floor of a big office building once. The view was spectacular until one beautiful Spring day birds began flying into the windows and falling to their death. It was a traumatic experience because I never knew how those types of buildings could bring tragedy to the innocence of nature. I purchased this print in part to bring remembrance to the tragedy, and to share it with others. When I first saw this photo it reminded me of the feelings I had decades ago when I first read James Dickey's poem, 'Falling.'"

James Liu: "Nabokov's *Pale Fire* contains a 999-line epic poem that begins,

> *I was the shadow of the waxwing slain*
> *By the false azure in the windowpane;*
> *I was the smudge of ashen fluff—and I*
> *Lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky.*

John Seidel: "Ah. This hit a nerve with me as well. It is beautiful and terrible at the same moment. GKFroehlich covered the problem well. I have noted the vast decline in birds over the course of my life. I'm 63 and the lack of birds now as compared to my childhood is striking. I would have been very pleased to have taken this photo and at the same time I still find it heartbreaking."

Kevin Purcell: "John Myers wrote in the Comments: 'Looks like a rock dove (urban pigeon) but how could such avian impact leave an image on plate glass?'

"Feather dust. Feathers wear and abrade in use. The edges tend to be the most fragile. When the bird hits the window the impact breaks the edges of the feathers leaving the feather dust attached to the window. Hence the ghostly outline of the feather edges. I think I can see the alula extended on the leading edge (together with the forward sweep of the wing through the primaries); I suspect this pigeon was in the process of taking off rather than colliding with the window while in free flight."

GKFroehlich: "For John Meyers (et al.)—this is a quote from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology: 'Found only in certain taxonomic groups such as pigeons and herons, powder down feathers are never molted. Instead, they grow continuously but disintegrate at the tips into something like a fine talcum powder. The powder permeates the other feathers, presumably to provide waterproofing, although the exact function is not well understood.' Most (all?) of my images of bird strikes on windows are of pigoens and doves, of various species. I'm guessing a heron would leave *quite* an impression."

Aaron Britton: "There is a glass, Ornilux by Arnold Glas, that can help with bird collisions. Ornilux is a glass that has patterned UV coatings which are visible to birds but not humans. What you end up with is a piece of glass that looks like any other glass to humans but to birds they see a net type pattern. Interesting stuff."

Posted on Monday, 27 October 2014 at 12:00 PM in Ctein, Print Offers | Permalink

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Comments

Re: "Ctein came across this remarkable find in St. Paul, Minnesota, last year, and made of it a photograph like none you've ever seen before."

Mike,

I'm certainly not trying to be contrary, but this image hit a nerve, I guess. First of all, the "find" is, sadly, not remarkable at all. An estimated 300 million to 1 billion birds die each year from collisions with glass on buildings; this estimate includes everything from downtown skyscrapers to residential sliding-glass doors (http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions/index.ht
Birds can't distinguish reflections from reality (recall Jim Hughes's photos of the Song Sparrow combating its reflection in a car mirror --

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http://theonlinephotographer.typepad.com/the_online_photograp besotted-bird-love-is-in-the-air.html). Even when a bird flies away after striking a window, it often dies elsewhere as a result of the injuries sustained. While migratory songbirds are most at risk from collisions with glass, nearly 300 species have been reported as collision victims, including hummingbirds, woodpeckers, kingfishers, woodcock, and birds of prey. (The estimates, by the way, came from detailed studies in several cities, during one spring migration, where dead birds were collected and counted from the sidewalks below skyscrapers. The numbers were then "multiplied" by the total number of cities, scaled for size, within the migration corridors. If anything, the numbers are low.)

And not only have I seen many photographs like this before, I've personally shot a few dozen very similar photos.

The results of this study, combined with recent hard evidence of the number of birds (and other wildlife) killed annually by cats -- especially feral cats -- adds up to some sobering totals. A billion killed each year by window collisions, another two billion killed each year by cats (http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/pdf/Loss_et_ when combined with habitat destruction both here and on their wintering grounds, leads to some sobering population reductions, and very likely to extinctions. As a passionate naturalist, I have personally witnessed many of these declines over the last 30 years. (And now add the effects of global warming to the other stresses on populations, and ... well, that's a topic for another time and place.)

If you'd like to help with the problem, see http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions/glass.htm

Sorry, I'm not trying to diminish Ctein's photograph in any way. It was well-seen and well-executed. And and as an owner of several of Ctein's prints, I'm sure it will be remarkably well-printed, at a level I can only aspire to. Perhaps his photo can be used to increase awareness of these issues, and result in a "win" for everyone.

-gkf-

Posted by: GKFroehlich | Monday, 27 October 2014 at 01:14 PM

Electric wind farms and cars take a huge toll on birds too. If I had a choice between the bird impact photo and the smiling monkey selfie--I would prefer the monkey selfie at its original tilted angle as shown here once.

Posted by: Mathew Hargreaves | Monday, 27 October 2014 at 07:03 PM

All I can think of is bam! Numerous times my large front windows were host to flying objects of large dimension,
including birds and an owl which did the large reading room window grevious damage, killed the owl as well.
Hence don't really want this particular image.

Posted by: Bryce Lee | Monday, 27 October 2014 at 08:11 PM

Ah yes. Progress. Big shiny buildings. Tar sands exposed. We humans are a terrible lot. I too have noticed a huge decline in bird numbers here at our acreage just outside of Edmonton Alberta over the last 30 years. As Joni once sang " they paved paridise and put up a parking lot". We still get large numbers of the bigger species, but the little ones are now quite rare.

Posted by: Jeroen Grobben | Monday, 27 October 2014 at 08:39 PM

'Bird impression by Ctein' just brings to mind all kinds of images ... especially after his budgie posts.

Posted by: Dennis | Monday, 27 October 2014 at 08:59 PM

The limning of wing feathers and downy breast evokes an angel.

A haunting photograph.

Posted by: Elsa Louise | Monday, 27 October 2014 at 09:53 PM

Dear Richard,

I think that's a very good question. I'm not fanatical about this, vis:

It Doesn't Matter How You Get There If You Don't Know Where You're Going

So, keeping in mind that the JPEG in the web browser is a poor imitation of the print, and attempting subtle analyses of tone and color placement from it would be a fool's errand...

The coloration in the physical print is pretty subtle. It's a lot closer to monochrome than you'd think from looking at the screen images. The web browsers kick up the saturation in ways I don't understand and can't entirely compensate for.

Still, in the print, the background tones run towards the warm-yellow side, while the feather impressions are neutral to very slightly bluish. This helps provide some visual separation between the bird imprint and the background. It's a tricky thing to draw out in the print-- there's that bright/dark vertical fuzzy bar in the background just to the right of the bird's body. It almost overpowers the subject... but not quite. Part of what keeps it on the okay side of the line, compositionally, is the slight color differential. It's just a little bit of a kick to help the I separate the subject from the background, but it's important. In a black-and-white conversion, where that goes away, that bar gains too much strength, relative to the dust impressions.

With some very careful adjustment, one can make the picture work almost as well in black and white as color. The key word being “almost.”

pax \ Ctein
[Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training!]
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-- Ctein's Online Gallery http://ctein.com
-- Digital Restorations http://photo-repair.com
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Posted by: ctein | Monday, 27 October 2014 at 10:07 PM

How strange! I posted the same thing yesterday too!
http://www.duckrabbit.info/2014/10/when-worlds-collide/

Posted by: john macpherson | Tuesday, 28 October 2014 at 01:53 AM

think I posted my version of this phenomena last time, but I think Elsa point out what lift this shot above the ordinary (my version!)

On a side note, birds running into our windows happens enough that our dogs know exactly what the 'thud' means and get very excited about an easy catch!

Posted by: Nige | Tuesday, 28 October 2014 at 02:09 AM

Ha! Pale Fire was the first thing I thought of when I saw that photo too!

Posted by: Minnow | Tuesday, 28 October 2014 at 08:12 AM

Looks like a rock dove (urban pigeon) but how could such avian impact leave an image on plate glass? Just curious.

Posted by: John Myers | Tuesday, 28 October 2014 at 09:27 AM

Ctein's image can strike either a sublime or horror chord with a viewer. Perhaps, as with me, both.

Living atop a high-rise building for a very long time, as I have, bird strikes are very familiar to me. I recall well a twilight moment walking through my current home the day after closing on its purchase many years ago. Standing in the bare space that would become my living room I was enjoying my first glimpse of the wonderful view when the tranquility was shattered by a very loud BUMP on a window to my right. A bird had slammed into the glass. But instead of leaving a ghostly full-body outline there was only a wet red splatter at the point of an apparent head-on collision. Unlike Ctein's bird, mine apparently had no chance to put on the brakes. My heart sunk, as if I had somehow killed this bird. Of course I hadn't.

In the many years I've lived in the apartment since that moment I can only recall seeing one other bird collision. Nevertheless, high-rise bird collisions do occur, especially at this time of year when migrating flocks pass through town. (Locals seem to have radar-mapping navigation.) But plenty of low-rise collisions also occur. Our city has made an effort to reduce the attractiveness and confusing profiles of tall buildings for many years. It has reportedly helped somewhat but collisions still occur. Whaddayagonnado?

So this image can serve to be a freestanding observation of a type of beauty. It can also serve as an educational reminder of the horrors that can confront birds in a glass-loaded urban environment. Either way, it's a well-seen image.

Posted by: Kenneth Tanaka | Tuesday, 28 October 2014 at 11:40 AM

Dear John,

Most of the impression left in the glass is from powder (fine scales, actually) knocked off of the bird's feathers and feet. Assuming that pigeons generate this sort of powder (I don't know anything about pigeons)-- it varies from species to species. Some, like cockatoos, generate huge amounts of powder. African grays are also pretty powdery; the white circles around Elmo's eyes are powder. If you wipe away the powder, you see bare pink skin.

The powder helps protect against dust and dirt, to keep the bird dry, and deter parasites. It also acts as a bit of a sunscreen.

People who are allergic to birds, mostly, are allergic to the powder. Much the same way that airborne cat and dog allergies are primarily about the dander, not about the hair.

pax \ Ctein
[Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training!]
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-- Ctein's Online Gallery http://ctein.com
-- Digital Restorations http://photo-repair.com
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Posted by: ctein | Wednesday, 29 October 2014 at 03:46 PM

When you do these please highlight when the sale period ends. Easy to miss as it is now.

Posted by: Jim | Wednesday, 29 October 2014 at 03:56 PM

a follow-up of our 'kamikaze' birds. Had one hit our sliding glass door tonight and the dogs set after it. My wife opened the door to hold the dogs back and it flew inside. Great, now to catch it. It flew off, straight into another window, knocking itself silly again. She picked it up and it just sat in her hand. I thought of TOP and said, hold it there, I need a photo. My son grabbed the p&s off the bench and snapped a pic. The bird was released in a area the dogs can't get at and seems to be ok as it's now gone :)

click the link for the photo..

http://s299.photobucket.com/user/HGMonar0350/media/IMG_1

Posted by: Nige | Sunday, 02 November 2014 at 06:47 AM

If it's not too hard logistically, would you mind giving a little more notice before the next print sale? I was a little behind on my reading, and I just barely missed it. This is a fascinating photograph.

Posted by: Andrew | Sunday, 02 November 2014 at 08:36 PM

The comments to this entry are closed.