



One of the numerous inhabitants of the St. Lawrence Seaway islands, this kildeer must be photographed with a thousand millimetre mirror lens. Like herons, kildeers are among the group of birds which are least tolerant of photographers.

a couple of frames a second, just as my subjects noticed me.

Mallards fly like fighter planes, and these wasted no time on take off. As they climbed up, the golden light revealed the warm tones of their plumage. All were young birds, born the same summer, but already they exhibited the power which would enable them to fly south before the next winter. (Mallards are not afraid of the cold, however. A few years ago I photographed some at Hog's Back in Ottawa, during zero degree weather, as they swam in the Rideau River.)

Following them with the lens, I could see them turn 180 degrees and head towards Champlain Bridge, over the embankment which separates the Seaway from the St. Lawrence River.

Paddling across the Seaway itself (up to now I had been canoeing in the expansion basin of the Seaway system), I soon reached the embankment. I started walking cautiously on the service road which tops the embankment, peeking at the river's edge through the brush which lines the dike.

The superstructure of a large cargo ship seemed to bear down on me from the other end of the road. Having cleared the locks a few minutes earlier, another ship was negotiating the bend near Champlain Bridge, its pilot most intent on steering the proper course through the relatively narrow channel. With my telephoto lens I could make him out, and felt proud that a fellow Canadian was so efficiently handling such a responsibility.

Some movement in the sky caught my eye, and turning my lens, I spotted a small hawk going into a power climb, probably intent on catching a woodchuck for an early lunch. He was hard to follow and stayed up just long enough for me to get a couple of shots. His presence made me realize that man had not yet destroyed everything around the city.

Getting down on the river of the dike, I came upon a lone sandpiper, who tolerated me within 40 feet, allowing me a choice of poses before he flew off. I kept to the narrow pebble beach, looking far ahead to make sure I did not miss a shot by startling a bird into flight.

My caution was rewarded. Two herons were frozen in wait, a quarter of a mile away, and had not seen me as I started taking photos of them. Pausing every 25 feet or so, I kept trying to get closer, each time taking a photo I hoped would be bigger and better than the last. I was still further than 300 feet away when they took off in their slow, but powerful, style, heading down river for some other fishing spot. Walking towards herons is no way to get close-ups of them.

Heading back across the waterway, I resolved to build a blind for my next season of wildlife photography.

*Sgt. Laliberté adds, that as protection for his equipment, he places his Nikon, motor drive, 500 mm and 200 mm lenses in a plastic breadsaver type of container. In the event of an unplanned tipover, the kit floats and stays dry. Ed.*