



園圃街雀鳥花園
Hong Kong Bird Market

Joe Lipka



Hong Kong Bird Market

The Hong Kong Bird Market is a vibrant market with a long and interesting history. Officially known as the Yuen Po Street Bird Garden is located in Mong Kok. None the less, it is best known as the Hong Kong Bird Market.

It's been almost twenty years since these images were made. The old men in these photographs have passed on to the next life. They have been replaced by other old men looking, evaluating and considering which small song bird to add to their collection.

Song birds are part of the culture and tradition for old men in China. The search for the perfect song bird brings the old men together each day at the market so they have something to talk about as they pass the time waiting to see if the perfect song bird is at the market today.





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The market is filled with birds. They are everywhere. Hanging in cages from trees, or adding an accent to a fancy cage being offered for sale. The large, expensive birds may be outside their cages, but are securely chained to their perches. The tiny song birds can be found in the ubiquitous orange plastic cages stacked four or five high. The cages are covered with clothes to protect the birds from sunlight and to block their vision. If they can't see their neighbor, they sing to make contact. It's their singing that makes the birds valuable.







The market is a noisy place. Cacophony just might be the correct fancy word to describe the auditory experience. All the birds are making noises; the canaries chirp, song birds sing, the parrots caw and then there were the mynah birds.

One of nature's perfect mimics, the mynahs perfected the cell phone ring tone and many buyers were constantly patting their pockets wondering whose cell phone was ringing.



The market offers a wide selection of songbirds for sale. The selection for accessories for these valuable birds is just as great. The market has everything for birds; cages (fancy or plain – usually fancy), live food, dry food, custom mixed food and everything a pampered songbird could possibly need. The care and feeding of the songbirds is important and buying the very best for such an honored member of the family is not considered a luxury.





MATA PL

JAMBUL

SHAMA

THRUSH

U.T.Y. 20 UNITS
N.W. 10 KGS



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The old men come down early in the morning with their song birds looking for additional birds. The addition of a new bird to the household is a momentous decision. They have the time to spend at the market and the time to spend evaluating the hundreds of birds that fill the market. .

Such a decision cannot be made quickly, or made alone. Opinions from other bird enthusiasts are important. Discussions and advice are offered from other shoppers before the important decision is made. It takes a great deal of time to make this important purchase. So a great deal of time is spent contemplating the various birds. Because the choice is so great, the decisions take a long time.







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The new bird must not only look good with the current bird, it must be able to sing with their current song bird. Making this decision requires a long time to make. With the ever changing bird population in the market, it is necessary to make almost daily trips to browse the bird market.















The non-collectors also come to the market. Usually they are the grandchildren having a morning out with Grandpa with the hope they will carry on the tradition of keeping songbirds at home.

Children are spellbound by all the little birds in their cages and their singing. The presence of the birds slows the children down and they spend a lot time looking at all the birds.

It is a new experience for some and they will spend a lot of time listening to what Grandpas or Uncles will tell them about the birds.

If they are lucky, a shop owner will let a well behaved bird perch on a lucky boy or girl in the hopes of making a sale.











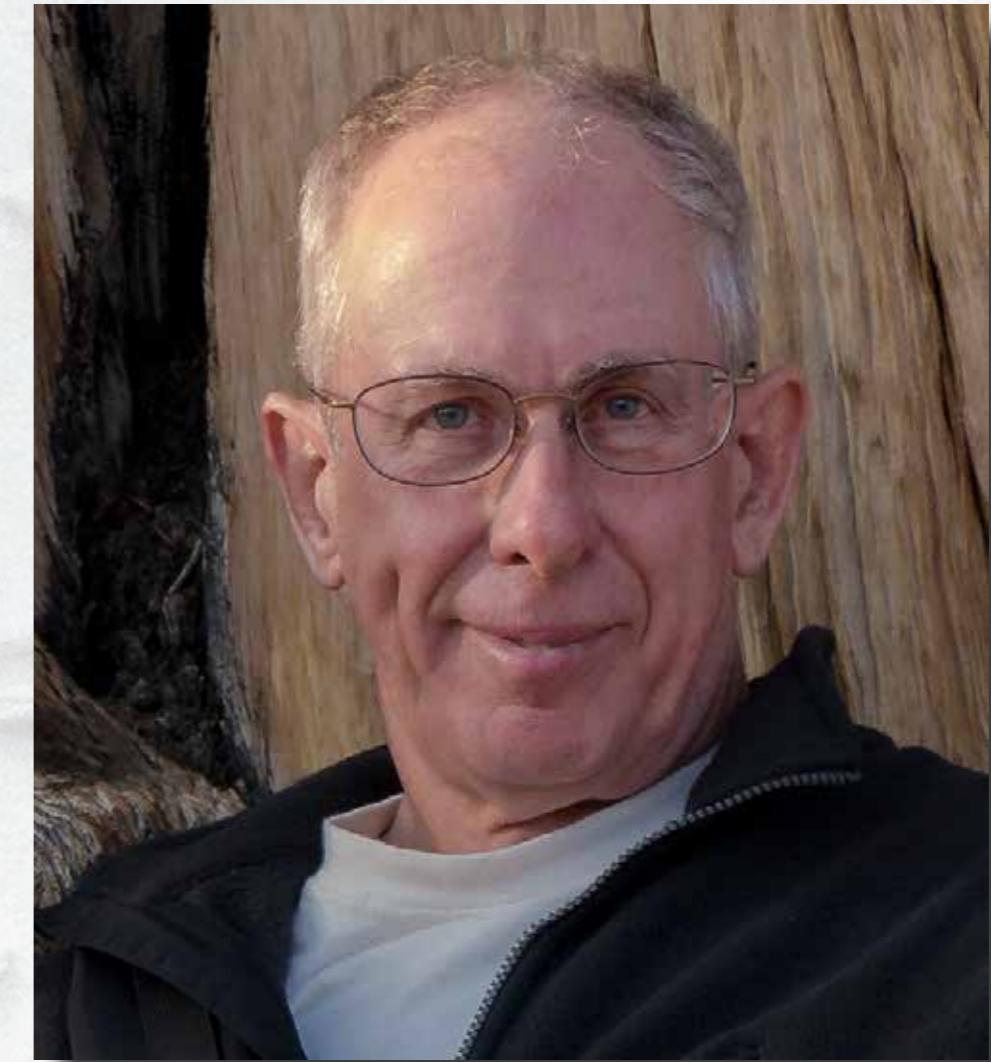
About the Artist

About the Project

I had multiple business trips to Shenzhen, People's Republic of China (PRC) in the early 2000s. We could only obtain five day work visas for the PRC and would spend weekends in Hong Kong. The camera stores on Nathan Street were my undoing and I was seduced by a beautiful Fuji 645Zi camera. Once purchased, I needed a place to photograph. I found the Flower Market and the adjacent Bird Market in Mong Kok and made several trips to these locations .

Pleased with the results, I added a selection of these images (scanned from the 3x5 fotomat prints at 72 dpi!) as a web gallery for my website. The Flower and Bird Market and the "Fifty" projects were dropped during the redesign of my new web site for these technical reasons.

I wanted to have these images on my new site and using a home-made copy stand, my digital camera and the Negative Lab Pro Plug In for Light-Room I converted medium format color film negatives to positives.



Joe Lipka has shared his vision since he began photographing.

In the last thirty years, his photographs have appeared in over one hundred juried exhibitions, more than twenty solo exhibitions and have been printed in both *LensWork*, *Black & White Photography* (UK) and F-Stop Magazines.

His website www.joelipkaphoto.com has continuously evolved since it was launched in 2004. His blog *Postcards from the Creative Journey*, published weekly since 2010, feature a photograph and a little bit of writing.

His newest blog, *The Daily Photograph*, is simply that. A new and interesting image posted every morning at 8:00 AM.

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Web site: www.joelipkaphoto.com

Blog: <http://blog.joelipkaphoto.com/>

Blog: https://joelipkaphoto.typepad.com/the_daily_photograph/

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