

OPTICS

TUNNEL VISION

Shooting through her spotting scope, a photographer captures the philosophical side of the birds around her.

Photography by Carol E. Richards

*Carol Richards often photographs very non-avian subjects: a view from atop the island of Capri, for example, or her niece's feet, stuffed into ballet slippers. But thanks to a bit of technological improvisation, Richards happened on to a new way to study the birds outside her window. The result, *Birds Have Wings* (Nizraeli Press), appeared late last year. Here Richards, who represents artists from her base in Los Angeles as well as shooting her own work, describes how the book got airborne.*

MY INTEREST IN TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS of birds through a telescopic lens was discovered accidentally, perhaps serendipitously. Some years ago, in Taos, New Mexico, I was having difficulty identifying a species I observed through the spotting scope and whose repetitive song had captured my attention. I took a photograph through the lens so that I could do some research, and found that the photo stood on its own. I liked the soft focus created by shooting through two, sometimes three surfaces (the camera's and scope's lenses, and occasionally the window in my studio, maybe even a screen). Also, the vignette created by the scope appealed to me, echoing dreamlike landscape photos I'd taken in the past with a Diana toy camera. Unlike some photographs of wildlife that are clear and provide answers, these soft visuals raise questions. It was a surprising discovery: As I spied on these birds, I could see their charm and individuality. Who knew? I hadn't realized that birds could seem thoughtful or look as if they were making plans."

To see more images, go to carolrichards.com.

