

Robert Raymond
North American Wildlife Artist
by Christopher J. Gervais

Rainy days never bothered Robert Raymond as a child. The weather was just an excuse to sit at this desk and draw. As long as he can remember, drawing is all he wanted to do. “I guess I have always been a very visual person, so I am drawn to things on that level. At age eleven he produced “Robert Raymond’s Book of Illustrated Birds”, a hand-drawn one of a kind book. Like most artists, Robert is attracted to various subject matter but, wildlife has always figured prominently in his artwork. “Growing up I always loved watching wildlife programs like *Wild Kingdom* and especially *Wild America*.

“I was very fortunate to have been raised by my indulgent Grandmother who financed my obsession. I had a wonderful childhood and have just one regret about that time. I wish I had started approaching art more seriously earlier on. For some reason I never really used paint, other than a bit in high school. And I didn’t think in terms of light and shadow, but strictly line.” Robert feels he could have been so much farther ahead by now, but at the time was content to use pen and ink, crayon and felt-tip markers to produce his images. All of that changed in the summer of 1997 when a friend introduced him to wildlife artist Greg Beecham.



“Stalker”

“Meeting with Greg in his studio had a big effect on me. He had me do a couple drawings and when I returned for my critique, he was pretty hard on me.” Rather than being discouraged, Robert found himself encouraged to try harder. It was then that he bought his first set of paints and began thinking about how light affects a subject and the importance of composition. Since he was working a full time job and beginning a family, time was very limited so he made the decision to focus on wildlife almost exclusively. “I have always had a strong attraction to wildlife, so that was the preferred subject matter for me.” Besides, Robert has plenty of inspiration nearby. Living in Puyallup, Washington he is near Mt. Rainier National Park and makes frequent trips there with his family. He also takes full advantage of the numerous zoo’s and wildlife parks within easy driving distance. The Raymond’s have also made numerous road trips to Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and up into Canada combining family time with reference trips.



“Something On The Wind”

“My family will always come before my artwork, so I work a very full-time job to provide for them.” Despite having a small studio at work where he can paint on his lunch hour, the long hours keep Robert away from the easel more than he would like. As a result, although he bought his first paints ten years ago, he feels like he has about two or three year’s experience. “There is this thing called “miles on the brush”. You can think about painting all day long, and I do, but you can really only improve by doing it.



“Amber Eyes”

There may be this romantic notion about the artist that locks himself in a little room and obsesses over his work, never really having any family or friends. That’s not for me.” Robert’s family is a co-creation with his wife Jennifer, and includes their two daughters Laura and Robyn and a son Zackary. “I hope that I never feel that I have made it as a painter, or that I know everything because then I believe I will have stopped functioning as an artist. My paintings are never as good as I want them to be, but I know that failure breeds success.” Like most artists, Robert uses photographs as a primary reference, but he doesn’t like to be a slave to a single photo. “I want to get to a point where I can create an image that doesn’t exist anywhere and use photos as a simple reference tool. Ultimately, I want to show off God’s creation to people as interpreted through my eyes. That is a tall task that inspires me to try and acquire the technical skills required to pull it off. If I arrive at the point, then I believe I will have succeeded.”

Robert’s paintings in this article are as follows: "Stalker" 8x10" Oil on Canvas, "Something On The Wind" 24x36" Oil on Canvas and "Amber Eyes" 14x11" Oil on board. To purchase these or any of Roberts work contact Western & Wildlife Art Magazine @ 610-896-4776.