

## Hudspeth fascinates with his 'Return to the Southern Wild'

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By Bobby Cleveland

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**H**ard to tell it from his pictures, but Joe Mac Hudspeth Jr. of Brandon is a self-taught naturalist photographer. True story: The first wildlife photo he took came on an old Kodak instamatic camera. Hudspeth now uses much more sophisticated equipment, but has never lost the basic skills of his trade: a talented eye and the ability to be in the right spot at the right time to get the shot. His images grace auction prints for conservation groups, the Mississippi Sportsman's License and so many state duck stamps. They have been featured in magazines, newspapers, including this one, and other publications. His first book, *In the Southern Wild* (University Press, 2003), earned much deserved acclaim.

Hudspeth's second, ***Return to the Southern Wild***, is self-published and is now being circulated throughout Mississippi in select locations. It is priced at \$40.

### A long, wild trip

The subtitle is aptly named - *A Photographic Journey by Joe Mac Hudspeth Jr.* It is a chronicle of his three decades behind the lens, and even includes that first picture, taken with the small Kodak, of a screech owl. The book is a testament to the thousands of hours of his dedication to getting the shot.



Joe Mac Hudspeth of Brandon has a soft spot for wood ducks, which is why the cover shot for his new book is one called "Top of the Morning" (above).

The blue-winged teal below is also in his "Return to the Southern Wild." / Joe Mac Hudspeth/Special to The Clarion-Ledger

"Some of my best shots just happen and I just happened to be there when it happened," Hudspeth said. "An example is *Top of the Morning* (the book's cover shot, above). It just happened while I was sitting in a blind waiting on some wood ducks to appear and do something cute. "When I looked out the back of the blind a fog bank was moving in and completely hid the sun. I happened to have a small 70/210 mm lens with me and I turned around to photograph the eerie scene. At that moment a drake wood duck landed on the dead snag and stayed long enough to let me capture two images."

Lucky? Sure, but usually not always.

"More times than not I sit in a blind for hours and never even turn the camera on. That's the challenge of what I do," he said.



### His book, his choices

The second book takes us further into Hudspeth's world than the first.

"Self publication of the book gave me the freedom to use the images I wanted," Hudspeth said. "It's more work, yes, but I like having that control. I was able to get a better mix of wildlife in the book." Waterfowl, and especially his personal favorite wood ducks, are featured. But there are chapters on shore birds, turkey, deer, birds, more wildlife and even scenery.

**Hudspeth Book Signings**

**Lemuria**, Jackson, April 9

**Meet and Greet** Joe Mac Hudspeth, sponsored by the Mississippi Wildlife Federation, 5:30 p.m. May 19 at The Cedars, 4145 Old Canton Road, Jackson.

**Simply Space**, Madison, June 4

**Persnickety's**, Ridgeland, June 18

**Signed books** can also be ordered from Hudspeth by calling (601) 992-0752 or at [www.southernfocus.com](http://www.southernfocus.com).

"The book includes the first two photos I ever had published, back in the 80s, and even some from last year," Hudspeth said. "It truly is my journey. And it's been fun."

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