

A Sharp Eye on

wildlife
photography

INSECT BEHAVIOUR ISSUE

twenty useful photography tips
humour & puzzles

ISSUE THREE JULY 2020



Malachite kingfisher (*Corythornis cristatus cristatus*)
Lake Baringo, Kenya, October 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/640 sec, F13, ISO 400



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Finally, the kids were allowed out to play 'Hide and Seek'.
As usual, Moira was chosen to be 'it'



Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) sleeping, The Pitt Building, Cambridge
Photograph Milo Lazar (age 12), May 2020
Nikon D3400, 400mm, 1/500 sec, F8, ISO 200

Front cover
Garden locust (see back cover)

Groan Animals

Free-licence images courtesy of Wikipedia photographers

Although IKEA was now open,
Maurice decided the queue was far too long



Not being able to get a haircut, Bernard
had to use a stronger hairbrush



With restaurants still closed, the kids were
enjoying regular home deliveries



top

Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis camelopardalis*), Masai Mara, Kenya
Photograph Benh Lieu Song, January 2102
Canon EOS 7D, 100mm, 1/3200 sec, F7.1, ISO 400

middle

Northern white-breasted hedgehog (*Erinaceus roumanicus*) juvenile,
Vinnitsia Oblast, Ukraine. Photograph George Chernilevsky, June
2020. Canon EOS 750D, 50mm, 1/500 sec, F8, ISO 400

bottom

Great crested grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) feeding chicks, Aischgrund,
Bavaria, Germany. Photograph Reinhold Möller, May 2017
Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark II, 210mm, 1/1000 sec, F5.6, ISO 200

A Sharp Eye on WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

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All photographs by Charles J Sharp except where
indicated. These are all wild animals. They were not
photographed in safari parks, rescue centres, zoos,
butterfly houses, in captivity, or in a studio.

Most full resolution images are on
Wikipedia and on Flickr.

Previous issues on the website

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Scarce morpho (*Morpho deidamia neoptolemus*) female
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/30 sec, F5.6, ISO 800



Scarce morpho (*Morpho deidamia neoptolemus*) male
Canon EOS 70D, 200mm, 1/60 sec, F5, ISO 800

Both photos taken at
Cristalino Lodge, Amazon rainforest, Brazil, September 2015

A Special Place... **Cristalino: Amazon rainforest** is on page 34

What I like about photographs
is that they capture a moment
that's gone forever, impossible
to reproduce.

Karl Lagerfeld (1933-2019)
Designer, artist, photographer

We meet again...

Locusts are large grasshoppers. Most of the time they potter and hop around on their own minding their own business. They do not fly. Every few years, usually after drought followed by abnormally high rainfall, they forget all about social distancing and become 'gregarious'. They march together in formation. Their physiology and size changes. Their colour changes too. If you really want to know, the process is called phenotypic plasticity. Then the bad news. They grow wings and migrate on the wind.

We are all so concerned about Coronavirus that a plague of locusts does not garner many headlines. In May this year, locust swarms in Kenya were consuming twice as much food every day as the Kenyan population of 50 million people. Countries in the Horn of Africa like Ethiopia are equally badly affected in the biggest outbreak in 70 years. The Indian subcontinent is having its worst in 25 years. There can be up to 60 million insects per square kilometre – that would be 6 million in Wembley Stadium. One Kenyan swarm covered an area of 60 x 40 kilometres, an estimated 200 billion locusts. The swarms may get worse.

Most insect behaviour is less devastating and a joy for the wildlife photographer. Insects do amazing things. Many have bright colours and macro photography can reveal details that are tricky to appreciate with the naked eye.

This issue has another twenty tips for photographers. In addition to the Wikipedia feature, three other Wikipedia photographers have contributed images for the *Groan Animals* captions on the opposite page. Young photographer Milo was able to take the photo on the contents page because his school is closed. A birdwatcher making very good use of his free time.

Charles Sharp

... stay safe

Tip #41 Find the resident expert

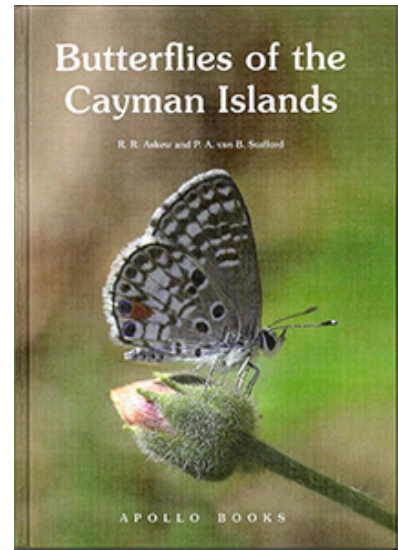
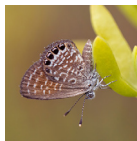
The Cayman Islands is not known as a wildlife haven. But like many islands, Grand Cayman does have its endemics. The Grand Cayman blue iguana is the best known, but the endemic subspecies of the Western pygmy blue is far more of a photographic challenge.

The Grand Cayman pygmy blue is the smallest butterfly in the World and is extraordinarily elusive. How do you find it? You know you will be on the right track if you are with *the expert*. In the Cayman Islands, you need Ann Stafford. She wrote the book.

The pygmy blue is not an early riser, so the odds are better later in

the day. Ann took us to one of the two or three places where it lives. The last two times Ann had been there, there were none around. We parked off the busy highway that runs along Seven Mile Beach. The butterflies inhabit a scruffy area no bigger than a tennis court. Nothing for five minutes. Then my wife spotted them; as few as three or four tiny butterflies. They flew close to the ground for less than ten minutes then they all disappeared.

The length of their forewings is 6.5-8.5mm:



Butterflies of the Cayman Islands
by Dick Askew and Ann Stafford



Blue iguana (*Cyclura lewisi*) male (released), with identification beads
Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, Grand Cayman, February 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1, ISO 800

EN



Grand Cayman pygmy blue (*Brephidium exilis thompsoni*)
on sea purslane (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*), Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands, February 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 100mm, 1/500 sec, F5.6, ISO 800

Tip #42

Get down and dirty

It is usually a good idea to take a photograph from the same height above ground as the target. For the Grand Cayman pygmy blue that means you have to lie flat on the ground. You cannot even use your elbows as a tripod. You squirm around on the ground and hope one lands nearby. The pygmy blue perches with its head down so that doesn't help you get any light on it either.



Photographing the Grand Cayman pygmy blue on *Salicornia perennis*
Photograph Ann Stafford, February 2016

True or false

This is the whistler butterfly (*Leptosia sibilusi*). It has been nicknamed the Lord Voldemort, or the *He Who Must Not Be Named* butterfly by South African children and has had its own *Facebook* page since 2010.



True or false

I have removed the colours from the photo, but the Cuban tody is actually an amazingly colourful little bird, with bright red, green, blue and white feathers.



True or false

Dragonflies, like this male black darter (*Sympetrum danae*), do not have very good eyesight. Their rapid movements in flight allow them to triangulate their prey



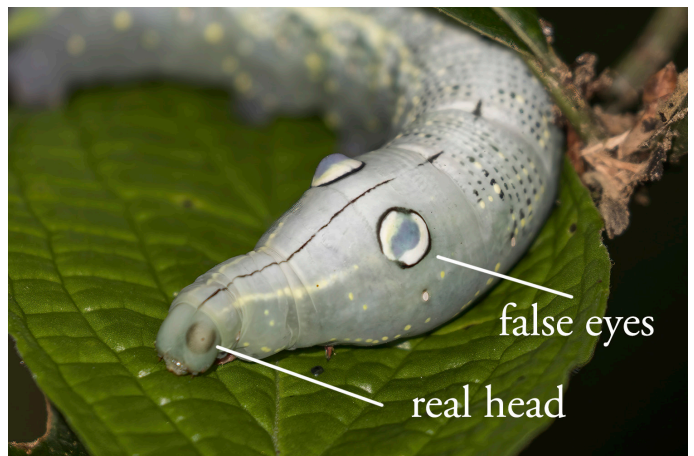
Tip #43

Capture the life cycle

I like to be able to photograph the larva, or caterpillar, as well as the adult. Many adult *Lepidoptera* (butterflies and moths) have eyespots (ocelli). These are said to warn off predators or to act as a sacrificial part of its body, as with eyespots that run along the edge of a butterfly's wings. There is an alternative scientific explanation: that predators are wary of prey with striking patterns that imply toxicity. If so, why would the marks look like eyes? One explanation is that as the caterpillar or imago (adult) develops, molecules that produce pigment can easily radiate from a central point, resulting in circular designs.



Sphinx moth (*Xylophanes sp.*), Mount Totumas, Panama, May 2019
Canon EOS 80D, 100mm, 1/640 sec, F6.3, ISO 250
Focus stack of 4 images



Sphinx moth (*Xylophanes crotonis*) caterpillar, Panama, May 2019
Canon EOS 80D, 400mm, 1/250 sec, F5.6, ISO 200
on-camera flash and off-camera Canon Speedlight 430 EXII flash

The eyespot explanation is certainly right for one type of caterpillar (*Eumorpha*) where the eyespot 'blinks' as the caterpillar moves.

Some caterpillars have eyespots that mimic the eyes of their enemies' predators. Although nobody knows for

sure, it seems as if *Xylophanes* is mimicking the entire predator. Perhaps its bulging eyespots and distinctive red tail look like a small mammal to some hungry birds? *Xylophanes* are large moths with a wingspan of about 10cm and the caterpillars are even larger.



Sphinx moth (*Xylophanes crotonis*) caterpillar, Mount Totumas cloud forest, Panama, May 2019
Canon EOS 80D, 158mm, 1/250 sec, F5, ISO 200, with on-camera and off-camera flash. Focus stack of 2 images

Quiz level - EASY

What do these *Lycaenidae* butterflies from three continents have in common?



... and do they have anything in common with this much larger longwing butterfly?



answers on page 33

Tip #44

Don't forget the basics

1. Enough space on the memory card
2. Battery fully charged (carry a spare one)
3. Correct time and date (geotagging option)
4. No dust spots visible (photo of blue sky)
5. Image size to largest (+RAW), 3:2 aspect ratio
6. Autofocus and IS enabled on lens
7. Auto White Balance
8. Standard ambience setting
9. Neutral Picture Style
10. No in-camera noise reduction
11. Dioptic correction for viewfinder
12. Auto 'sports' setting for instant action
13. Remove lens cap if using zoom lens
14. Clean lens (microfibre cloth)
15. Lens hood for zoom lens (not for macro)
16. Neutral-coloured clothing
17. Hat (not cap) to make you look less human
18. Ankle-supporting footwear
19. Waterproof bags/jacket/backpack
20. Light behind you (but watch for shadows)
21. Wind in the right direction (mask your scent)
22. Select better settings when you have time
23. Shutter priority min. 1/500 sec for 400mm
24. Aperture priority for macro lens
25. Higher F number for greater depth of field
26. Lower F number for blurred background
27. ISO maximum 800 (do not select auto ISO)
28. One-shot AF for a stationary animal
29. Middle or one-above-middle for mammals
30. Support the camera body
31. Use viewfinder, not LCD screen
32. No delay between focus and shutter release
33. Test shot as soon as possible
34. Check result (zoom in on playback)
35. Adjust exposure compensation

36. Continuous shooting for moving animals
37. AI servo and zone AF for moving animals
38. Shoot, then move in closer if you can, repeat
39. Compose using single-point AF on the eye
40. Try different settings if you have time
41. Return settings to normal when you are done
42. Write down your guide's identification
43. Delete rubbish photos (sit in the shade)
44. Back up memory card at lunchtime/evening
45. Check species id with a second (better?) guide
46. Memory cards travel in hand baggage
47. Process copies, never the originals
48. Adjust WB, shadows and highlights in RAW
49. Rotate and crop is the last step in processing
50. Validate species identification at home

Tip #45

Take your time

Sometimes the wildlife isn't going to crawl, walk, jump, run or fly away. That's when to experiment with composition and camera settings. We found a cherry tree with dozens of caterpillar nests. In June, these moth caterpillars are fully grown. They come together and form silk webbing nests in which they will pupate into adults.

I had time to choose a suitable nest that would fill the frame. I also wanted a neutral background so that the nest would stand out. There was continual wriggling in the nest so a slow shutter speed didn't work. The best result used a small amount of infill flash with F13 and a reasonable ISO.



Bird-cherry ermine moth (*Yponomeuta evonymella*) caterpillars, Lahemaa National Park, Estonia, June 2017
Canon EOS 70D, 100mm, 1/250 sec, F13, ISO 200

Groan Animals

Piers had made good money demonstrating the two metres social distancing rule



Francine ate everything
– as her father always demanded –
even though the bark was worse than his bite



EN

Jonathan realized that Paloma didn't understand his grammatically simplified English



top
Turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), Viñales Valley, Cuba, February 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/2000 sec, F5.6, ISO 400

middle
Golden monkey (*Cercopithecus kandti*) eating bamboo
Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda, October 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 70mm, 1/800 sec, F4, ISO 1600

bottom
Wood pigeons (*Columba palumbus*), Cumnor Hill, Oxfordshire, May 2016. Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/400 sec, F9, ISO 640

Tip #46

Look for nymphs

It is easy to think you've found two different insects when you come across an adult and a nymph walking together in the park. Most grasshoppers jump away when you come too close, but the koppie foam grasshopper doesn't bother and so is easy to photograph. Why so?

No predator wants to eat it. It tastes disgusting (so I'm told) and is poisonous. It achieves this by eating noxious plants like milkweed and it sequesters (keeps) the toxins in its body. The *rooibaadjie* (red jacket in Afrikaans) has developed its bright colours to let predators know before they take a bite. The nymph has bright colours too. Many other red-coloured insects and spiders also have this so-called aposematic colouration.

If a predator is too stupid to know that red means danger and takes a bite, it will get the insect equivalent of pepper spray in the face. The grasshopper releases a smelly toxic foam from glands behind its head which irritate the predator's mouth. It is soon dropped back on the ground.

Tip #47

Buy secondhand

I don't know about you, but I never buy a new car. I buy a car with a bit of experience, and one that comes with a decent warranty. I have done the same with camera bodies and lenses. I bought my two EOS 80D camera bodies online from Wex Photo Video. They give their used equipment a rating and all grades come with a 12-month warranty. I would normally buy grade 9- or above, but when I bought my 1.4 extender (tele-converter), grade 8 was the best they had and it works just fine.

There are quite a few other companies you can trust. Who knows - might now be a good time to find that bargain prime lens you've been promising yourself?



Koppie foam grasshopper (*Dictyophorus spumans spumans*) nymph, Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens, Roodepoort, South Africa
Canon EOS 80D, 400mm, 1/250 sec, F11, ISO 400, December 2018



Koppie foam grasshopper (*Dictyophorus spumans spumans*) adult, Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens, Roodepoort, South Africa
Canon EOS 80D, 400mm, 1/500 sec, F5.6, ISO 800, December 2018

Test for expert readers

See if you can work out the name of these two butterflies from Argentina and Trinidad.



The clue is not one seven seven

and the name of this brilliant blue butterfly from Madagascar?



answers on page 33

Tip #48

Connect with the locals

If someone calls and is looking for wildlife in July in Oxfordshire or Buckinghamshire, I'll know where to send them. I know what butterflies and dragonflies are flying. I can point them to websites and blogs which record any unusual birds in the area. If they want a nice place to walk and take pot luck, that's no problem.

When we went to Sorrento last year, we wanted to spend most of the time looking at the sights, but I planned a day hunting butterflies. I didn't want an expert guide; I wanted to know where to park and wander. Local hotspots are difficult to find on your own. Ruth Peake from *Sorrento Amalfi Walk With Us* knew where they are from her experience leading guided walks. We had a great day with a nice lunch at a friend's restaurant.

“ *local hotspots are difficult to find on your own* ”

*I only ask to be free.
The butterflies are free.*

Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1852)



Old World swallowtail (*Papilio machaon gorganus*) on red valerian (*Centranthus ruber*)
Termini, Sorrento Peninsula, Italy, July 2019
Canon EOS 80D, 255mm, 1/640 sec, F5.6, ISO 100

Tip #49 Rotate your pictures (*photo on next page*)

When you take a picture of herds of wildebeest sweeping majestically across the plain, you try to keep the camera level. The eye can detect a tilt of less than one degree if the sea is in the image. It is easy to rotate the image when you get home but make sure you leave space around your subject because you will lose the edges. But that's not what I'm talking about here.

When you photograph an insect, the horizon is irrelevant. Often, like with the pygmy blue on page 7,

the orientation is important as you do not want to mislead. Natural shadows can also look bad if you rotate too much. A small rotation can deliver a more compelling image.

The insects overleaf are a type of planthopper. The white ones are the nymphs. The white strands are a waxy substance that they produce to fool predators. They conceal the nymph's body. The nymphs transform into the pink/red bugs. I rotated the image about 5 degrees to get the branch to bisect the frame.

Flatid leaf bugs and nymphs (*Phromnia rosea*)
Ankarana Reserve, Madagascar, December 2018
Canon EOS 80D, 234mm, 1/250 sec, F13, ISO 400





Caption competition

Here are the winner and the three runners-up from our caption competition



Galápagos sea lions (*Zalophus wollebaeki*)
Isabela Island, Galápagos Islands, Ecuador, March 2012
Canon EOS 300D, 210mm, 1/1000 sec, F5, ISO 400

'We will fight them on the beaches'

Winston S. C., London

'Once more onto the beach dear friends'

Henry V., Agincourt

'Join us for vitamin sea'

A. C. Line, Ecuador

'Life's a beach'

Name and address withheld

This month's caption competition

Send your entries to
charlesjsharp@hotmail.com



European greenfinches (*Chloris chloris*)
Česká Olešná, Jindřichův Hradec, Czech Republic
Photograph Dr Miroslava Necasova, April 2020
Olympus E-M1X, 300mm, 1/1000 sec, F5.6, ISO 2000

Tip #50

Call for help

That's what I am doing on this page. When I get back from a tour I always have the mammals and birds identified; most of the reptiles, frogs, butterflies and dragonflies too. After that things get tricky. There are so many different insects and spiders and there are few field guides or reliable online resources. With hard work, I can identify quite a few moths, but there aren't any decent guides for moth caterpillars. I'm not sure why that is.

Moth caterpillars (larvae) are amazing, particularly those with urticating 'hairs'. These are the bristles that you do not want to touch. They are similar to the hairs on nettles, only nastier. I know some of the families and a few genus names. But none at species level. So if any reader can identify these caterpillars, please get in touch. I'd love to know what they are.

“ *I'd love to know what they are* ”





Tip #51 Don't forget the dung

Dung beetles, families of scarab beetles, have scent detectors on their antennae and are quick to react when a mammal has done its business. They rush to the steaming mound. Each beetle rolls away huge chucks to hide and eat later or to turn into a brooding pool where the female can lay her eggs. Watching them navigate their way home is a fascinating pastime. Navigation is a problem. They roll the dung balls with their back legs which means they cannot see where they are going.

The plum dung beetle is a 'roller' and has developed an ingenious technique. Every few yards the beetle stops, turns around and clambers up on top of the dung ball. It then performs a complete turn, climbs down and sets off again. The beetle uses the sun as a navigation aid. Researchers have found that some species can navigate at night using the light of the moon and even the Milky Way.

If it is cloudy, or the sun is right overhead at noon, some dung beetles can navigate by sensing the wind direction on their antennae.



Green dung beetles (*Garreta nitens*) and plum dung beetles (*Anachalcos convexus*) on elephant dung, Phinda Private Nature Reserve, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, October 2014
Canon EOS 450D, 100mm, 1/640 sec, F7.1, ISO 800

There was a young beetle called Clyde
Who ate so much poo that he died.

And so did his brother,
His father and mother,
And now they're interred side by side.



The beetle climbs on top to get clear of any obstacles



It starts turning to check where the sun is

Plum dung beetle (*Anachalcos convexus*), Phinda Private Nature Reserve, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, October 2014
Canon EOS 450D, 100mm, 1/200 sec, F5.6, ISO 800

Tip #52 Get out of the National Park

Most of us want to see apex predators. Kids want to see lions and tigers too. And rhinos and herds of elephant and buffalo. The animals must be protected, so most live in government-run National Parks. Unless you do your homework, you may end up stuck in your vehicle, unable to get down and photograph the small stuff. Private game reserves set their own rules and you can

also find professionally-guided walking safaris in some National Parks in Africa and the Indian subcontinent. In most National Parks, the vehicles have to stay on the road. In some private reserves, they will go off-road. Choose accommodation that has walking trails or a large garden where they do not use pesticides and haven't planted borders with pretty ornamental plants that do not attract insects.



Brown-veined whites (*Belenois aurota aurota*) on white rhino dung
Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, November 2014
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/1000 sec, F11, ISO 400



It gets down after it has completed one and a half rotations



and turns around to carry on rolling the ball backwards

Tip #53

Know the seasons

Don't rely on tour companies who give ratings for every month of the year. Sunshine, rainfall, humidity, sea temperature are their prime criteria, i.e. what's best for sightseeing and relaxing. For safaris, they will recommend the dry season for easy viewing at waterholes and low grass height. Perfect for first-time safari guests.

Wildlife photography demands different priorities. Rain is OK as long as it is short-lived and the sun comes out again. The green (= low) season has many attractions. Costs are lower but you need to stay longer to increase the odds of good sightings. Specialist tour operators know their stuff and will send you to the right place at the right time for hatching turtles,

breaching whales and migrations. They all know about birds and a few know about insects or reptiles, but it is tricky to find accurate seasonal information if you do not want to join a group tour.

The chimpanzees in the Kibale Forest in Uganda eat over 100 plant species, but figs are their favourite food. They eat them all year round, getting sustenance from the seeds as well as the pulp. They prefer ripe fruit and they are not the only ones. During the one hour we were allowed to spend with the chimps on our chimp trek, dozens of brightly-coloured butterflies gathered to feed on the figs that dropped to the ground. Large forest butterflies (wingspan 60-80mm) that you hardly ever see otherwise.



Orange forester (*Euphaedra alacris*) female
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/1000 sec, F10, ISO 800



Lurid glider (*Cymothoe lurida butleri*) female
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/160 sec, F5.6, ISO 1000



King forester (*Euphaedra rex*) male
Canon EOS 70D, 100mm, 1/1000 sec, F11, ISO 1600



Angular glider (*Cymothoe theobene*) female
Canon EOS 70D, 100mm, 1/320 sec, F6.3, ISO 1000

All are in the *Nymphalidae* subfamily *Limnitiinae*. Kibale Forest, Uganda, October 2016



Only if we
understand
can we care.
Only if we
care will we
help.
Only if we
help shall
they be
saved.

Jane Goodall (1934-)



Common chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii*) feeding on a giant fig (*Ficus sur*), Kibale Forest, Uganda, October 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 114mm, 1/320 sec, ISO 2000

Tip #54 Get square-on

Ever tried putting up a Christmas tree by yourself? Did you get it straight? You can't be in two places at once to check the verticals.

A true macro lens has a flat field. That means that there is not much distortion or loss of sharpness away from the point of focus. Images from traditional lenses are softer at the edges and that is a problem for close-ups. Macro lenses have a limited depth of field, i.e. the plane of focus. You must get square-on to your subject in both axes. Since you cannot have a peek from the side, use trial and error. Take what you think is the perfect shot. Then move up, down, left and right. And hope you get one that is spot on.

With mating damselflies, you have more time. In their hierarchy of behaviour, it is more important to mate than escape.



Tip #55 Shoot landscape

I see a lot of people turning their cameras through 90 degrees and shooting in portrait (or vertical). It is quite logical if you want to fill the frame. But does it work? If you get it right, you gain 50% more pixels than in portrait (horizontal), but only if you get it right.

It is much easier to compose a landscape photo and crop it to portrait later. 95% of my 'portrait' bird photos have been cropped from landscape. If you turn the camera it is more difficult to support the weight, select a good focus point and fire off the shot without camera shake. The controls are all in an unfamiliar place.



Small red damselflies (*Ceriagrion tenellum*) mating, female form *typica*
Ober Water, Hampshire. Female on left, male on right, August 2016
Canon EOS 80D, 100mm, 1/640 sec, F4, ISO 400

Groan Animals

I was going to share another Coronavirus joke with you about the falling infection rate, but you probably won't get it.



OK, so you do want another pandemic joke? Are you sure? I really don't want to spread it around. But if you insist? OK...

I went to the pharmacy this morning and asked the assistant:

'What gets rid of Covid-19?'

She said: 'ammonia cleaner'. I said:

'I apologise, I thought you worked here.'



Red-billed oxpecker (*Buphagus africanus*) on young impala (*Aepyceros melampus*), Etosha National Park, Namibia, March 2018
Canon EOS 80D, 560mm, 1/800 sec, F11, ISO 400 (top)
Canon EOS 80D, 318mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 400 (bottom)

Tip #56

Practice. Practise.

Tip #3 suggested that you practise taking pictures of common insects in your garden. There's more work ahead I'm afraid. You need to learn how your camera works. We own such complicated cameras that they are a nightmare to understand. The instruction book for my Canon runs to 517 pages. The 517 pages do not include instructions for the lenses or the flash units. There's no point splashing out on the safari of a lifetime (in 2022?) then struggling to get new toys working properly. Point-and-shoot is OK. It is better than fiddle-and-fail, but you will miss out on all the lovely technology that the manufacturers have kindly built in to confuse us.

Practice is boring but vital. You need to know where the key knobs are and what they do. You then have a fair chance of adjusting settings quickly. If you are still stuck at home, you have NO EXCUSE.

*The harder I practice,
the luckier I get*

Usually attributed to golfer Gary Player,
who credited golfer Jerry Barber.

The aphorism,

The more you know, the more luck you have,
was included in a book of maxims from 1896.

Tip #57

Walk in front of your guide

Where there is danger, the guide will lead. If you are in a group, the guide will have to lead. If you have a private guide for a walking safari and you know what you are doing, walk in front. You will see the insects first and have a chance to get your camera set up. If not, by the time the guide calls you forward and you've squeezed past her on a narrow jungle path, the insect will have taken flight.



Clouded yellows (*Colias croceus*) mating (male above female), Pirin National Park, Bulgaria, July 2017
Canon EOS 70D, 340mm, 1/800 sec, F16, ISO 500

Meet a Wikipedia contributor

Diego Delso is a committed free-licence photographer and has been a board member of Wikimedia Spain. He is a prolific contributor of high-class images to Wikipedia, with over 640 Featured pictures (FPs) on Wikimedia Commons under his user name *poco a poco*. More than anyone else. FPs are the highest accolade and images are voted in by majority voting over nine days. You have to be prepared for harsh criticism, some of which is constructive. Diego takes landscapes, panoramas, landmark buildings, architectural interiors, as well as wildlife. He has photos from eighty countries. 'If I haven't been wowed by the subject,' he says, 'it is difficult to transmit feeling into the photography'.

On safari in Southern Africa, he was lucky to be able to capture a leopard with its kill in the Kruger National Park – a natural event, not one set up for tourists in a private game reserve. He makes good use of a 600mm lens on his 50MP full-frame body, a professional-level camera.

It is not easy to get a good composition from a fixed-wing plane or helicopter. You have a restricted viewpoint; you are not in control of the aircraft; there is significant vibration. Only approved filmmakers can use drones for wildlife photography. The zebra image is a single frame, but Diego has stitched five frames together for a panorama of Victoria Falls from a helicopter.

Diego has just started scuba diving and underwater

photography. As a novice diver, he uses natural light in shallow water. He encases his Canon 5DS R in an Ikelite 200DL housing to keep it dry. It can go deeper than Diego. It costs around £1,900 for the housing, dome port and lens port extension. The kit weighs around 2.3kg and the size is 23.4 x 18.0 x 16.5cm.

The bearded fireworm is a type of bristleworm. It is a voracious predator about 20cm long. You do not want to touch it. The bristles penetrate your skin and the neurotoxin causes intense irritation, a painful burning sensation, nausea and dizziness – not ideal when underwater. Luckily, the worm is slow-moving.

The wrasse is a more peaceful creature. She is around 50cm long. Diego has probably photographed a female. How do we know? The ballan wrasse is a protogynous hermaphrodite. All fishes are female for their first four to 14 years. Then a few change into males. In the wrasse business community, *the big fish* is a female.

“ *If I haven't been wowed by the subject, it is difficult to transmit feeling into the photography* ”



Bearded fireworm (*Hermodice carunculata*)
Madeira, Portugal
Photograph Diego Delso, May 2019
Canon EOS 5DS R, 35mm, 1/250 sec, F7.1, ISO 400
Ikelite 200DL housing



Maragota or ballan wrasse (*Labrus bergylta*)
Mouro Island, Santander, Spain
Photograph Diego Delso, August 2019
Canon EOS 5DS R, 35mm, 1/250 sec, F4, ISO 800.
Ikelite 200DL housing



Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) with antelope prey, Kruger National Park, South Africa
Photograph Diego Delso, July 2018. Canon EOS 5DS R, 600mm, 1/320 sec, F9, ISO 250



Burchell's zebras (*Equus quagga burchellii*), Okavango Delta, Botswana
Photograph Diego Delso, August 2018, from helicopter. Canon EOS 5DS R, 300mm, 1/500 sec, F8, ISO 400

Tip #58 Make up your own story



Mills A. Boon
@realMillsandBoon

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Sophie. A boy came and perched beside her. She looked at him. He looked at her. Her heart started to flutter. They chatted like a couple of love birds. They kissed. It was love at first flight. And they all lived happily ever after.

1:40 PM · 16 Mar 20 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

6,054 Retweets 27.7K Likes



Rosy-faced lovebirds (*Agapornis roseicollis roseicollis*) courting pair
Erongo Region, Namibia, March 2018.
Canon EOS 80D, 400mm, 1/250 sec, F5.6, ISO 400

African lovebirds huddle
shoulder to shoulder, beak to
beak, frequently indulging in
mutual preening.
It is said that if the partner
of a pair dies, the other pines
and finally dies of grief.

Maurice and Robert Burton
Inside the Animal World, 1977



Tip #59

Record the habitat

I am not very good at remembering to do this. I am too busy trying to grab all the wildlife images I can. But remember your audience. Take a few shots that put your animal photos in context. You might even find someone who is prepared to sit through one of your 'slide shows'.

Many places have named rock formations, but this one was new to the owners of the lodge.



Natural rock formation at Erongo Wilderness Lodge, Namibia, March 2018
The lodge has had to close and the excellent management team now operates Ai Aiba Lodge



Tip #60

Play games

Kids are used to editing their photos and adding special effects on social media.

That may not be your scene, but you can do your bit to amuse children. Try creating your own hybrid animals. The elephant with butterfly wings has been done many times and I bet you could be more original and creative.

For older children, I've had packs of playing cards made with a different African animal on each card: spades are mammals, hearts are birds, diamonds are reptiles and clubs are butterflies. Naturally, the lion is the King of Spades and the little meerkat the two.



Common flash butterfly (*Hypophytala byettoides*), Ghana
African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), Uganda

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| A | A | K | K | Q | Q | J | J | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
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This is a butterfly with damaged wings. It is an African wood white (*Leptosia alcesta inalcesta*), the same species as the photo below



True



The Cuban tody is very colourful little bird, endemic to Cuba. Its scientific name is *Todus multicolor*. There are other very similar species on other Caribbean islands

False



Dragonflies have excellent vision, with 90% of their brain dedicated to interpreting visual signals.

answers

"It is hard to be brave," said Piglet, sniffing slightly, "when you're only a Very Small Animal."

A.A. Milne
Winnie-the-Pooh, 1926

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They are all zebra butterflies



They are all 'zebra' butterflies
(Top to bottom, left to right)

Common zebra blue (*Leptotes pirithous*), Madagascar

Madagascar zebra blue (*Leptotes rabefaner*)

Zebra blue (*Syntarucus plinius*), India

Zebra-striped hairstreak (*Pantheides bathildis*), Panama

Zebra mosaic (*Colobura dirce*), Panama

Zebra longwing (*Heliconius charithonia vazquezae*), Panama

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Bad luck; they are both called eighty-eights, even though most Cramer's 88s look like 89s

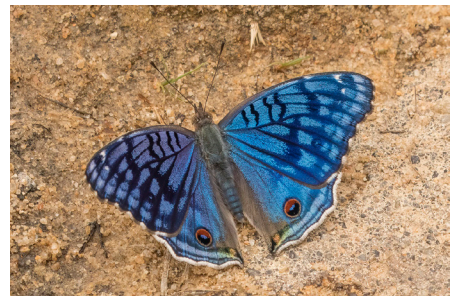


Anna's eighty-eight (*Diaethria anna*)
Iguazú Falls, Argentina, March 2012



Cramer's eighty-eight (*Diaethria clymena*)
Trinidad, December 2014

This one is called the brilliant blue



Brilliant blue (*Junonia rhadama*)
Madagascar, November 2018

A special place...

Cristalino

Amazon rainforest, Brazil

Everyone knows the importance of the Amazon tropical rainforest and the way that deforestation is shrinking its size every day. Primary forest is a photographer's nightmare. You hear much but see little. It is dark and damp and you cannot wander around on your own.

If you want to photograph birds, the Pantanal is an easier hunting ground than the Amazon. Nevertheless, Cristalino Lodge is a special place. You get there by flying to Alta Floresta, then travel by road and by boat up the Cristalino River. Many guests are birdwatchers and so, if you aren't, it's nice to earn bragging rights having seen a 'lifer' like a brightly-coloured cotinga, even if the photo is barely average. A lifer is birding-speak for your first-ever sighting of a bird species. Cotingas usually stay high in the canopy.

We walked on jungle trails and boated up and down the river. The tapir is the largest terrestrial mammal in the Amazon. We were lucky to have resident *Lepidoptera* expert Luisa Mota with us. She was doing research at the lodge and we were able to get out of the boat and explore along the riverbank. Luisa also knew where there was a butterfly courting territory. We found several *Hamadryas* 'crackers' there on their chosen trees, though we never heard the cracking



Cristalino Lodge's floating deck



sound that males make with their wings to defend their territory. We also saw Julia butterflies and dragonflies feeding on the salty tears of turtles. Marine reptiles and birds have salt glands. Turtles' excess salt drains into their eyes and looks like tears.

As an ecolodge, Cristalino turns off the electricity at night, so you need to be careful to recharge your batteries. On our last day, we saw the majestic harpy eagle, but it was no more than a distant record shot. To be honest, bird-photography opportunities are never that great in primary rainforest. You do see a few rarities, but they are not keen on perching in the isolated spots of dappled sunlight.



Spangled cotinga (*Cotinga cayana*)



Velutina cracker (*Hamdrys velutina*)

Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/200 sec, F5.6, ISO 1600



Julia butterflies (*Dryas iulia titio*) on river turtles, Cristalino River, Southern Amazon, Brazil, September 2015
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/2000 sec, F5.6, ISO 2500



South American tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*), Cristalino River, Southern Amazon, Brazil, September 2015
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/1000 sec, F5.6, ISO 6400

A Sharp Eye on
wildlife
photography

Front cover

Garden locust (*Acanthacris ruficornis*)

Assin Bereku, Ghana, April 2017

Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/800 sec, F10, ISO 800

Back cover

Italian locust (*Calliptamus italicus*) female

Nature Park of Alvão, Portugal, September 2016

Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/1250 sec, F11, ISO 640

