

Wildlife Photography Hints and tips by Margaret Hocking

- Know your subject
- Be patient!
- Go to places where it is easy to photograph wildlife.
- Use a hide - a car can be a very good hide!
- Use RAW if you can.
- Start photographing early and move in slowly
- Set your camera up beforehand for what you think you are going to photograph.
- But be prepared for the unexpected!
- If you have custom function settings, use them.

I have 3 set:

1. Aperture and ISO set, speed variable.
 2. Speed and ISO set, aperture variable.
 3. Aperture and speed set, ISO variable, High speed burst. (On my camera this is at the far end of the dial so it is easy to set by just turning the dial as far as it will go.)
- Use a camera with a negligible shutter delay for moving wildlife.
 - If the subject is moving fast, or likely to:-
 - Use 1/1000 sec shutter speed at least
 - AI servo (Canon – may be called something different on other makes) and
 - High speed “burst” shooting
 - Remember composition “rules” but don’t be a slave to them.
 - Get down low.
 - Try and photograph your subject doing something, i.e. not just a “bird on a stick.”

- Using extension tubes with a telephoto lens can enable you to get close up images of insects without getting too close and frightening them.
- Try and keep the background uncluttered/ out of focus.
 - Viewpoint
 - Large aperture
- Try using a telephoto lens for plants – with a wide aperture the background will be out of focus.
- Alternatively, use a wide angle lens to show plants in their environment
- With plants and insects, try to photograph undamaged ones.
- Look for detail
- Use natural light where possible – foil reflectors are less harsh than flash.
- Make sure you have a spare battery and enough memory!
- Don't use "cute" titles. Find out what the organism is as far as possible.
 - "Fungus on birch" is far preferable to "Pretty toadstool".
- Eschew the hand of man as far as possible
- Take landscapes with wildlife in them
- Try abstracts
- Think of how you are going to present your work – is it just for you, for single images for a club or regional/national or international competition, or as a series, e.g. a book.
- For a series, you may need to photograph the environment in which the rest of the images are taken.
- There may also be an opportunity to explain an image which is not the case in "one off" competitions.
- For nature/wildlife competitions read the rules carefully and abide by them.
- Remember the light!
- Be lucky!!