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Rare and special opportunities are well worth the photographer's patience. This opportunity will not occur again – vale George.

Albert's lyrebird displaying

Many years ago, I became only the fourth person in the world to have professionally photographed a male Albert's lyrebird displaying. Since then, I had accumulated many more years of experience, my photographic equipment was of much higher quality and after years of observing him, I was able to predict this lyrebird's movements more easily. I decided to have another attempt.

The only way to photograph this timid bird was to head quietly down the rainforest track before sun-up towards his territory. I set up triple flash units (diffused) pointed towards one of the bird's favourite display platforms. I then sat in a hide, watched the sun rise and patiently waited, hour upon hour, until I could hear the lyrebird approaching his platform. This happened on a number of occasions, but the lyrebird must have sensed something wasn't right. He approached the hide, but didn't display.

After two long weeks of waiting, I saw the lyrebird timidly approach his display platform, look around and start mimicking other birds. Twelve years on, I savoured the sense of déjà vu. Slowly pointing my camera and lens in his

direction, I watched the stunning display for many minutes, heart beating madly and fingers trembling, readying myself for that 'pivotal' moment. The lyrebird turned my way and lifted that magnificent veil of white feathers above his head. I focused on his eye and took this shot. Even though he saw my camera flashes go off and heard the sound of the shutter being released, he continued to display. I was rewarded for my two weeks of patience and was able to take a few more shots.

Sadly, after more than 30 years of being observed by bush-walkers and birders, being studied by zoologists and ornithologists and being filmed and photographed by only a handful of people, 'George' the famous Albert's lyrebird is no more. He simply vanished one day and the rainforest has lost one of its greatest mimics and display artists....

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