

PHOTOGRAPHY MASTERCLASS

Professional nature photographer MICHAEL SNEDIC makes the most of a low light situation.



In most cases, the aim of bird photography is to make sure your subject is well exposed. There are, however, situations where you want the total opposite, as was the case with the Great Egret image featured here.

I was walking along a pier in Cairns, Queensland, just before sunset. The sky was filled with a blaze of golden cumulus clouds, which reflected into the slightly rippling water. A Great Egret was standing in the water. Immediately, I visualised the Egret silhouetted against the stunning gold-coloured water. I set my Nikon camera's metering to Matrix (also called Evaluative, Multi-Segment, Multi-Zone or Pattern with other brands), so that the Egret would end up as a dark silhouette against the golden ripples of water. Had I used spot metering and focused on the Egret, it would have been fairly well-exposed and I wouldn't have ended up with the desired effect.

Rather than have the egret as a main feature of my image, I decided to keep it quite small, so that it didn't overpower the scene. By doing this, the viewer's eye goes to the egret and then continues to the rest of the image. I also made sure that I left plenty of room in the direction the egret was facing, an important 'rule' when photographing wildlife (such as birds) and people.

The wonderful part of digital photography is that you can experiment with different metering modes, composition and focal lengths and instantly see the results on the back of your camera's LCD screen. If the image isn't spot on, you can then try another setting until you get it right. This method is especially handy when your subject remains in one spot for a period of time.

Michael Snedic is presenting a birding and bird photography workshop in the Bunya Mountains, Queensland, with professional bird guide, Barry Davies, in late October 2013. They are also presenting another eight-day birding and bird photography workshop at Bowra Sanctuary in August 2014. For more details, please visit www.michaelsnedic.com.

