



PHOTOGRAPHY MASTERCLASS

with professional wildlife photographer and tutor, **MICHAEL SNEDIC**

One of the best ways to photograph birds is to sit in one spot and wait patiently for the birds to come to you. Once you have located a flock or an individual, make yourself comfortable and sit quietly. By not moving or making any noise, many birds will feel more comfortable with you being in their 'patch'. Wearing coloured clothing that fits in with the surrounding environment also helps you blend in.

In this particular case, I was in the Red Centre when I noticed a Crimson Chat hopping around on the ground nearby, curiously looking behind every grass-stem and rock. I lay down on my stomach, elbows propped on the ground, holding my camera and 80-200mm lens and waited. The bird seemed oblivious to my presence and was intent on finding morsels of food.

I always recommend photographing birds as close to eye level as possible, especially ground-dwelling birds, so that the angle of the bird you are photographing doesn't look too steep. I appreciate that not everyone can physically get right down on the ground but getting as low as your body allows is definitely encouraged!

Once the Chat was close, I slowly lowered my lens, careful not to get any sand in my gear. I moved the camera's single focal point so that it was on the bird's eye (very important) and made sure there were no distractions in the background. My aim was

to get an image at eye level, with a blurred out background, therefore making it stand out. I used an f-stop of f4.2, which caused the background to blur and an ISO of 800, to 'freeze' the bird. By using a higher ISO, your shutter speed increases and therefore minimises the chance of a blurry shot when hand-holding your camera.

The Chat spent much of its time fossicking with its head down. I waited patiently and as soon as the bird lifted its head and looked towards me, I instantly pressed the camera's shutter button and took a series of shots. Voila!

Michael Snedic is a professional wildlife photographer and tutor and presents a range of bird photography workshops. For more details, please visit www.michaelsnedic.com.

