



PHOTOGRAPHY MASTERCLASS

Professional wildlife photographer, MICHAEL SNEDIC, explains how to capture the perfect flight shot.

One of the most striking birds in the Gold Coast hinterland's Lamington National Park is the stunning male Regent Bowerbird. It's an obvious choice as a photographic subject but I wanted more than just a static portrait shot. My aim was to capture this bird mid-flight.

After many attempts over an 18-month period, I finally managed to find an individual that was flying back and forth, from shrub to shrub, using the same flight path almost every time. Since Regent Bowerbirds are very fast flying, capturing images of this bird using auto-focus proved elusive.

By carefully watching the Regent fly, I pinpointed an area where the bird flew each time then positioned myself so there were no distractions in the background. I asked a fellow photographer to hold out a stick in the area where I knew the bird would fly and focused on the stick. He then moved it out of the way and I stayed in position, using manual focus on my lens. By changing from auto to manual focus, I made sure the focusing point wasn't moving to the background.

After many attempts, the moment finally arrived. My camera was set on aperture priority at f3.2 (a wider aperture helps blur the background and made the bird stand out) with an ISO setting of 200. I also set the camera's shutter setting to 'continuous high' or 'burst'. As the Regent Bowerbird started flying, I waited until it was a metre or two in front of the spot where I had my lens focused and then pressed the shutter rapidly. That way I made sure that the camera was firing away at the critical point when the bird was exactly where I had pre-focused.

Sometimes it pays to think outside the box. By assessing the situation and using a bit of improvisation, you can end up with some great results.

Michael Snedic is presenting a birding and bird photography workshop at Bowra Sanctuary in August 2014 (August 2013 fully-booked), with birding guide, Barry Davies. For more details, visit www.michaelsnedic.com

