

## PHOTOGRAPHY MASTERCLASS

**Professional wildlife photographer MICHAEL SNEDIC explains the nitty gritty of how to get that perfect shot.**



I had spent many hours in a small boat cruising the waterways out of Port Douglas in Tropical North Queensland, where a pair of Ospreys were nesting in a nearby telecommunications tower. One of the Ospreys was perched on a branch, eyeing the water below for fish—a sure sign that a dive was pending. I was in a stationary boat and quickly picked up my digital SLR camera and 80-200 mm zoom lens in readiness, moving into a position where there weren't any distracting branches in front of the bird. Since the sky was bright blue and a wide aperture of f5.6 was used, it meant that the shutter speed reading was at 1/2000th of a second—perfect for freezing any movement.

Being a bright, sunny day and with the Osprey mostly white, I used a setting known as exposure compensation (+/-) to avoid the bird being completely overexposed, setting it to minus 1.3 to stop any unsightly overblown highlights which are near impossible to 'repair' in Photoshop or a similar image manipulation software program. You may need to experiment as to how much minus exposure compensation is needed, as it depends on the brightness of your subject and its surroundings.

As the Osprey leapt into the air I was ready! Pointing my lens straight towards the Osprey, I then moved the single focal point on my camera onto the bird's head. Just as the claws came out in readiness for a dive, I partially pressed the shutter to focus and then fully pressed it to get this shot. It was a moment of sheer exhilaration!

When wanting to take shots of active birds, try to spend some time watching your subjects and look for any signs of repeated behaviour, such as flying to a particular perch. In this instance, I noticed that the Ospreys were landing in one particular tree on a regular basis, especially when the tide was low and fish were easier to catch.

**Michael Snedic** is presenting an 8-day bird photography workshop at Bowra Sanctuary in August 2012. For more details, please visit [www.michaelsnedic.com](http://www.michaelsnedic.com)

