



Newsletter

Issue 07 - March-May 2012

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Out and About with Michael

Welcome to issue seven of my photography newsletter. Life continues to be very busy, yet incredibly rewarding at the same time. I have loads of new and exciting projects on the way, including a new seven day 'Tasmanian Experience' workshop (more details on page 4).



Last month, Mark and I presented our five day 'Mountain Experience' workshop at Lamington National Park, in the Gold Coast hinterland. We had an absolute ball and lots of great photos were taken by the workshop participants during the five days. There have also been quite a lot of other things happening in the world of Trekabout Photography workshops, but more about this in the Trekabout section on page 3.

March also saw the publication of my bird photography page for the inaugural edition of the 84 page *Australian Birdlife* magazine, a quarterly publication. To read the article, click [here](#).



My 'Michael Snedic Photography' Facebook page is growing rapidly in members. Thanks to everyone who has joined and been active on the page since I started it a few months ago. If you are a Facebook user and would want to become part of my 'online photography community', click [here](#) (or on the Facebook logo at the bottom of the newsletter) and 'like' my page. I offer image critique, post photographic news links and clips, encourage people to post about anything photography-related and much more.



An image I took last December of sunset at Picnic Rocks in the Bay of Fires, Tasmania, has been chosen as the cover of the April 2012 edition of *Australian Photography* magazine. You can see the cover [here](#).

I hope you all continue to enjoy your photography!

Cheers

Michael

Product Review - Lowepro

Photo Sport 200 AW Backpack

In my last newsletter, I reviewed the Lowepro Pro Trekker 300 AW, my 'workhorse' photography backpack. In this newsletter I am reviewing another great Lowepro backpack, but one that I use for a totally different purpose, the Photo Sport 200 AW.

This backpack is used for times when you might be going for a jog or brisk bushwalk, mountain biking or other more 'active' outdoor activities, but still want to take your camera and a lens or two.

The Ultra-Cinch Camera Chamber™ has been designed to stop your camera bouncing around, by being in a secure, padded compartment. This backpack has been designed to be very light, so you aren't carrying any unnecessary excess weight when using up energy out in the field. The top-loading upper compartment allows for quite a few non-photographic personal items to be stored. A side-access pocket gives the photographer a chance to access his or her camera gear by rotating the pack to the front and unzipping it. As with the Pro Trekker 300 AW, there is a hydration pocket that provides easy access and storage for a 2 litre 'Camelbak' or similar hydration reservoir. Other features include an AW (all weather) cover, reflective piping, a molded airflow backpad as well as numerous attachment points.



The thing I love about this camera backpack is that it is so incredibly light, made of extremely tough material and is very practical for the active, outdoor photographer. I highly recommend it.

One-on-One Tuition



If you would like to get to know your camera better and learn how to take great photos, my half or full day one-on-one photography tuition might well be for you. Why not bring along a friend, relative or camera club member and reduce the price per person (maximum two people per session)?

For more information, click [here](#)

Trekabout Photography Workshops

Mark and I have been very busy over the last few months presenting lots of workshops as well as creating and planning new ones. Never a dull moment!



Full Day 'Australia Zoo Experience' - Sunday the 29th of April 2012

So far we have presented two 'Australia Zoo Experience' workshops and both were very well-received by participants. We have announced a new date for this workshop. To read more about this workshop or make a booking, click [here](#).

Six Day 'Red Centre Experience' - Monday 25th June to Saturday 30th June 2012

There is so much to photograph in the Red Centre and the destinations we will visit include Uluru (sunset shoot), Kata Tjuta, Kings Canyon, Trephina Gorge, Emily Gap, Jessie Gap, the Alice Springs Desert Park (lots of native plants and wildlife, including free-flight bird shows), the Alice Springs Reptile Centre and much more. For more information on our six day 'Red Centre Experience' for 2012, click [here](#)



Three Day 'Fraser Island Experience' - Friday 13 - Sunday 15 July 2012

Our new 3 day 'Fraser Island Experience' workshop booked out in under 24 hours, with a second workshop already filling fast. Mark and I simply can't wait to get back to Fraser to show participants around the island, as well as teaching them the best way to photograph it. To read more about our Fraser Island workshops, click [here](#)

'Tropical North Queensland Experience' - Coming Soon

We have booked our flights and are heading to Tropical North Queensland next month, to do a reccy for our future 5 day 'Tropical North Queensland Experience'. The workshop will be presented in late winter and the full itinerary and dates will be announced on our website, the Trekezone blog, and on Facebook sometime in May.

To view all of the different workshops presented by Trekabout Photography Workshops throughout 2012, click [here](#)

Trekabout Photo Competition

Trekabout Photography workshop's new photography competition is going great-guns! We received 105 entries for our inaugural competition, which had the theme of 'Primary Colours'. So many fantastic entries and we had real difficulties choosing a winner, but in the end it was Maria Wright's 'Three Buttons' that won. Congratulations to Maria, the other place-getters as well as all those who entered the competition! Our March competition which had the theme 'Water' drew 95 entries and has now closed, with results available on our website [here](#). Entries for our April competition are now open - theme MACRO. Details available [here](#).



Other Extended Workshops

All of the Trekabout workshops, apart from Mark's post-processing, 'Portrait, Process and Print' & upcoming 'Bali Experience' workshops, are presented by both Mark and me. There are a few workshops that I also present, either on my own or with other professionals. These include:



Eight Day 'Bowra Birding and Bird Photography Experience' – Friday 10th August to Friday 17th August 2012 (presented with professional birder Barry Davies).

The July workshop is fully-booked and due to popular demand, we have added another new workshop from the 10th to the 17th of August 2012. Spend eight days 'out west' looking for and photographing numerous birds. For more information, click [here](#)

Seven Day 'Lord Howe Island Experience' – Sunday 7th October to Saturday 13th October 2012 (presented by me, with a maximum of 9 participants)

Spend seven glorious days on this island paradise, learning how to best photograph it while also relaxing. For more information on this workshop, click [here](#)



Seven Day 'Tasmanian Experience' - Exciting new workshop! Details to be announced soon

I'm currently planning a new Tasmanian photography workshop. As one of my favourite photographic destinations anywhere in Australia, it was inevitable that a Tasmanian workshop would eventuate. At this stage, the workshop will be either mid to late November 2012, or February 2013.

This workshop will be presented by me and a renowned Tasmanian landscape and wilderness photographer/tutor, with a maximum of 10 participants for a better tutor/student ratio.

The itinerary will cover Cradle Mountain, Freycinet and lots of other stunning photographic locations. If you are interested in the seven day Tasmanian workshop, please send an email to msnedic@optusnet.com.au and write "Tasmanian workshop" in the subject line. I will put your name on an 'Expressions of Interest' list and send you full details when they become available. Interest is already high, so don't wait!

Photographing Wildlife Behaviour

Australia is blessed with an amazing array of native wildlife. They can be found right across the country, in every conceivable habitat and they come in all shapes and sizes. Seeing an animal midway through performing some type of behaviour can be a wonderful experience. Getting great photos of this behaviour is 'icing on the cake', but it can be quite challenging. My aim here is to explain, in simple terms, how to photograph wildlife behaviour by following some basic techniques and principles.

An SLR camera or a compact digital camera?

As far as a recommended camera goes for photographing wildlife behaviour, it is preferable to use an SLR (single lens reflex) camera. One of the reasons is that you are able to capture a certain behaviour the instant the shutter button is pressed and you can also choose the zoom or telephoto lens you wish to use. With a compact digital camera or a 'point-and-shoot', it is a bit more difficult to take a photo at the precise moment when a behaviour is happening. Compact cameras have an inbuilt shutter-lag, which basically means there is a delay from the time the shutter is pressed until the photo is taken. Photographers who use compact cameras often tell me they are frustrated by missing that special wildlife 'moment', due to the delay in the shutter button on their camera. If your subject is stationary, you first need to compose your photo then press the shutter button partially to pre-focus on it. Wait for the right moment when a behaviour is happening and then press the shutter button to take the shot. It takes a bit of practice and there will no doubt be many near-misses, but once you are used to this technique, it becomes much easier.

For photographing birds and bats in flight or mammals running, it is essential to use a fast shutter speed to freeze the action. In good light, it is quite easy to achieve a high shutter speed but when lighting conditions are poor, I suggest raising the ISO on your camera, which will subsequently increase the shutter speed on your camera. The higher the shutter speed, the better chance of capturing a sharp, focused shot, without blur or movement. Be aware that when using a digital camera, depending on the camera's make and model, you will experience some "noise" or digital grain if the ISO setting is set too high.

Tracking a moving subject....

When tracking a fast-moving animal with an SLR, I recommend setting the camera to continuous focus (also known as AI Servo for Canon users). As you follow your subject with the camera, partially depress the shutter button. Once focus has locked onto the moving subject, keep following the animal, all the while keeping your finger depressed on the shutter button. When you feel the time is right, press the button. Without this feature, it is a lot more difficult to focus on the moving subject just before taking the photo. I also suggest using the continuous shutter (high speed) setting on your SLR. This enables the capture of a full sequence of movement in a series of photos, without having to press the shutter button repeatedly. If



a behaviour is happening in front of you and there isn't time to adjust the settings on your camera, I recommend using the automatic "sports" mode (the universal symbol for this setting is a figure running). This will allow you to follow the action and press the button without having to think about what settings to choose.

If your aim is to photograph small lizards or frogs, it is generally best to use the macro setting on your compact camera or a dedicated macro lens on your SLR camera. This allows focus at a close distance. Position yourself close to eye-level to the subject and, if possible, focus on the animal's eyes. Then wait for that moment when there is some movement or interaction (such as a frog's throat pouch expanding or a lizard licking its eye) and quickly press the shutter. With wildlife behaviour, you can't predict what will happen and when it will happen. For me, this is what makes it so exciting and challenging!

Many animals are shy and won't act naturally in close proximity to humans. You will therefore need to use a zoom or telephoto lens with a decent focal length. For compact cameras, this is as simple as zooming in on your subject. For

SLR camera users, lenses with maximum focal lengths of 200 to 400mm (or higher) are recommended. If the budget allows, it is worth purchasing a fast-focusing lens. It will allow you to focus on the animal much more easily and will give you more chance at firing off a sequence of shots.

Leaping out of the water!



One of the more exciting photographic experiences you can have is photographing an animal jumping or flying out of the water. This may include a humpback whale breaching, a dolphin surfing or an osprey powering out of the water after it has caught a fish. Try to capture the exact moment when the subject is out of the water and the water droplets around it are frozen. If it is taken correctly, the photo can look absolutely breathtaking.

I prefer photographing wildlife either early in the morning or late in the afternoon, when the lighting is subtle, though of course you can't control when wildlife interactions happen, or the weather conditions. If you are out photographing wildlife behaviour in the middle of the day and the subject is white or brightly-coloured, the photos could easily end up being over-exposed. When using the aperture priority setting on your camera, as I always do for wildlife photography, set the exposure compensation setting (+/-) to minus, to help reduce any overblown highlights.

Observation - the key to successful wildlife behaviour photos

Choosing the correct camera settings and appropriate photographic techniques will help you to take better photos of wildlife behaviour. This is, however, only part of the equation. One of the most important aspects of this type of photography is to spend time observing the wildlife you wish to photograph. Each species will behave differently and often individuals will follow a distinct pattern of behaviour. Many birds, after catching some prey, will take their catch and land on one particular branch of a tree, before eating it. By spending time observing patterns such as this, you can set yourself up in a position where you know the bird will land in the same spot. Not only can you end up with photos of the bird flying to its perch, but there may be an opportunity to photograph it devouring its prey. By doing some groundwork and putting in a little extra effort to get to know your subject, you have a far greater chance of getting the photo you want.

Camouflaged hides or 'blinds' are an excellent way of keeping hidden, so that the animal feels relaxed and will continue to behave as per normal, without the threat of a human being visible close by.

Patience is a virtue

Another essential requirement in getting those special photos of wildlife behaviour is patience. If you expect to get those stunning photos within the first ten minutes of your shoot, then you may be greatly disappointed. Many of my more successful behavioural shots of wildlife were taken after days or even weeks of trying. To photograph a displaying male Albert's lyrebird I spent seven weeks in a cold, cramped bird hide in a rainforest in the middle of winter. The photos of osprey diving for fish were taken after repeated flights to Tropical North Queensland, over a three year period, driving many kilometres each day and spending countless hours on a boat. The photo of a breaching whale was only achieved after driving 200kms return on six different occasions over an 18 month period. These may be extreme examples, and you certainly don't need to go to these lengths to get that special shot every time, but it does illustrate the importance of never giving up. You may achieve that amazing shot first time around, but often it is patience and perseverance that will get you there eventually.

You don't always have to travel to far-reaching, exotic places to achieve photos of wildlife behaviour. It could be at a local pond in a botanic garden, at a zoo or wildlife park, by the beach or even in your own backyard. The joy of spending time observing and photographing wildlife behaviour is reason enough to get out there and have a go. Capturing that 'special' moment with your camera is simply a bonus. What are you waiting for? Get out there with your camera and start snapping!



Photo of the Month

Dainty Green Tree Frog. Photo: Anna Billingham

This month's photograph is a Dainty Green Tree Frog (*Litoria gracilentia*) also known as the Graceful Tree Frog. It was captured by Anna Billingham using a **Canon EOS 5D MKII** camera, with a **Canon EF 100mm f/2.8 Macro USM** lens. **ISO 1000, Aperture f/10.0, Shutter speed 1/125sec.** A tripod was used for stabilisation. This is what Anna had to say about the image she submitted:

Thank you Michael for the invitation to showcase an image for this month's newsletter.

The reason I chose this tiny baby Dainty Green Tree Frog - one of my most recent images - is it reminded me of the constant question 'where do you go to find these little critters'. My answer is 'if you take a moment and look closely, you will find something to photograph'.

I spotted this extremely tiny green head and eyes hiding in amongst the leaves - no more than 8mm in length - in the native bushes in our garden after recent rain - the frog itself was less than 20mm.

Since developing my passion for photography - in particular macro - I now see things that I was once oblivious to and have learnt so much about their tiny world through the lens. The camera has also given me the opportunity to capture the abundance of detail that is not always visible to the naked eye.

As the journey with my camera continues, my vision is to capture those rare moments in time and share an appreciation of the magical world of nature that surrounded us that we should never take for granted.



DAINTY GREEN TREE FROG
© ANNA BILLINGHAM

Photography Competitions



The Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize

The Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize is open for photographers to submit their finest portrait photos. This competition has become world-renowned and offers a staggering total prize money pool of \$130 000. My fellow Lowepro Ambassador, Jack Atley, took out this prestigious award in 2011 – a great honour indeed. To see his winning image and an interview with Jack, click [here](#)

For details on how to enter the Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize for 2012, click [here](#)