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A superb photo opportunity arrives barely moments before the storm.

Masked boobies

I had spent many mornings photographing masked boobies on the edge of a cliff at Norfolk Island. One particular pair roosted there daily and became habituated to my presence. I had taken a number of photos of them throughout the week and was pleased with the results so far. On the last day of my trip, I arrived at the cliff with a sense that something quite special was going to happen.

I was lying on my stomach in my usual spot. In the near distance, a massive build-up of dark, brooding clouds and torrential rain was moving quickly in my direction. My hire car was parked only about 15m away, so I knew I had an escape route once the storm hit, but my heart was beating madly. Any minute now, my camera gear could get drenched. Rather than panic, I decided to use the opportunity to capture a rare moment.

I had my scene composed, with the masked boobies facing towards to ocean. Suddenly, the clouds parted. A bright ray of sunlight shone onto the water. I quickly took a couple of

shots. The ray of light disappeared, the clouds closed in and the heavens opened up. I raced to my car and just managed to slam the door before torrential rain pounded down. It didn't matter – I had my shot!

When photographing wildlife, it helps to get to know your species and let your subjects get used to your presence. Observe their behaviour and remember any routines they may follow. If possible, photograph early in the morning or late in the afternoon, when light is at its most subtle. Bring all your necessary camera equipment, compose your shot, and wait. Patience is vital, especially if you want to capture that 'pivotal' moment.

Happy photography!

MICHAEL SNEDIC is a Brisbane-based nature photographer, writer and presenter of 'in-the-field' photography workshops. www.michaelsnedic.com and www.trekaboutphotography.com