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Care and patience help in capturing a close-up image of the barking gecko's remarkable eye and skin patterns.

Barking gecko

Photographing reptiles may seem quite easy. The animals often don't move around much, especially in the colder months. There are, however, a number of pitfalls to be noted.

When photographing reptiles that are predominantly ground-dwelling, it may seem easier to shoot from above, but you really need to get down low. Wildlife photos look so much better if you are eye level with the subject. Also, in order to capture the amazing patterns in their eyes or skin, you need to get as close as possible without disturbing the animal or putting yourself in danger.

This barking gecko was quite a challenge, as it was fairly active. I used a macro lens on my SLR camera with a macro flash attached, making it portable. I then placed a poncho on the ground to keep out of the dirt, lay on my stomach and followed the little gecko's every move. Apart from waiting for it to stop moving, I also wanted some sort of 'behaviour' to occur, so it wasn't a simple shoot. I didn't want to overexpose the photo, a concern due to the gecko's shiny skin. In order to soften the light on the gecko's body, I added some wax paper over the dual flashes.

Lying on your stomach, with elbows propped on the ground, isn't the most comfortable position and getting up and repositioning yourself when you are trying to photograph a constantly moving reptile doesn't make things easier. To get 'the' shot often requires patience and putting up with discomfort to be ready instantly when behaviour happens.

The barking gecko eventually poked out its tongue and I was ready. I focused on its eyes with my macro lens and pressed the camera's shutter immediately.

By using the correct photographic equipment, a bit of improvisation and lots of patience, you too can take great shots of reptiles. It's certainly fun trying and the end results are often very pleasing indeed.

Happy Photography!

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