

10 TOP TIPS TO
INSTANTLY
IMPROVE YOUR
NATURE PHOTOS



THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

1

Don't be afraid to break some rules and experiment. Nature photography doesn't need to follow the 'traditional' methods that you see every day. Try and think about how you can depict your subject in a new, unique way. Consider doing the opposite to the general compositional guidelines, such as the 'rule of thirds', and you may be surprised by the results. For example, if you're photographing an animal you could experiment with the framing and just focus on one element, such as an ear or its mouth.



GET DOWN LOW

2

Make sure you stay on eye-level with an animal. It adds a huge amount of impact to your photos - a difference that you will see instantly. It may mean getting down and dirty, but it's definitely worth it.

Why does it work? Well, it helps to establish proper perspective of the subject. If you are always shooting from above, the viewer instantly becomes distanced from the scene. It also has the added bonus of increasing the distance from the background, helping to achieve a soft, clean backdrop.



PAY ATTENTION TO THE BACKGROUND

3

The background of your photo is just as important as what's in the foreground. Look out for distracting elements that may 'intersect' the subject of the photo. If there is something in your background that you don't like, try positioning yourself a few feet to the side. You may find that this 'moves' it out of the way.

A clean backdrop gives a much more 'finished' feel to your photo. A shallow depth of field (wide aperture; low f-stop number) will help to achieve this, as it will throw the background out of focus.



Will Nichols
PHOTOGRAPHY

CAPTURE BEHAVIOUR

4

Instead of just taking photos of an animal that show what it is, try capturing a specific behaviour in an image. It requires patience and luck, but photos are much more interesting if they tell a story about an animal's life, rather than just show you what it looks like. Try to spot patterns in an individual's routine - this will help you to predict any movements.



Will Nicholls
PHOTOGRAPHY

GET YOUR FOCUS RIGHT

5

A poorly focused image stands out like a sore thumb. The most common issue with 'below par' photos is the focus. This can be down to poor technique, laziness or even camera error.

When you are obtaining focus on an animal, make sure that you aim for the eyes! This is the most important part. Be sure that you haven't accidentally focussed on the nose or beak. This takes time to perfect, and everyone makes mistakes!

It is essential to use single-point autofocus. Don't let the camera choose where to focus for you - it will very rarely be correct. Instead, use the single point to carefully obtain proper focus yourself. You'll be kicking yourself that you hadn't done this earlier!

Once you've nailed the focus on the eyes, snap away and you'll have a much better picture for it.



Will Nicholls
PHOTOGRAPHY

USE A FAST SHUTTER SPEED

6

By using a fast shutter speed you can freeze motion and help to eliminate camera shake. A good rule of thumb is to go no slower than 1 over the focal length of your lens. For example, if you're using a 400mm lens you should shoot with a speed of at least 1/400 second. For very fast action you will need to increase this further. Light can be a limiting factor here, but increasing your ISO speed will allow you to use faster shutter speeds without underexposing your image.



TRY A DIFFERENT LENS

7

Who said you needed to stick with a wide-angle lens for landscapes, and a telephoto for wildlife? Swap it around!

Use a telephoto for landscape photos to isolate features in the scene, such as a distant mountain. It's a great way to draw the viewer's attention to something in particular.

Incorporate a wide-angle lens into your wildlife photography, with the help of a remote trigger release, to give a unique perspective to your photos. This can be great fun to do and allows you to spice up your images.



SHOOT IN RAW

8

Shooting in JPEG is understandable if you are just starting out and firing off endless images, but it won't be long before you should really start to consider using the raw file format.

When you take a JPEG photo, your camera is throwing away a huge amount of information and compressing the file. You lose detail in the blacks and whites, and are much more limited in what you can do with the photo.

Raw files are uncompressed and can be edited to a much greater extent, producing more accurate colours and

resulting in a higher resolution file as the end product. It's a non-destructive process too, meaning any changes you make do not overwrite the original file.

If you're scared by the idea of shooting raw, you can set your camera to take both raw and JPEG files at the same time until you are comfortable with making the full transition.



PROCESS YOUR PHOTOS

9

A lot of people who are new to photography like the idea of 'getting everything right in the camera'. However, when you shoot in JPEG your camera processes the image automatically, applying 'Picture Styles' that can be determined in your camera's menu.

The only way to get a true 'out of the camera' image is to shoot in raw, and you'll quickly realise that these images need processing. They appear dull and flat, but that's because they are created with the full intention of you making adjustments afterwards using editing software.

Editing images is not cheating. If you start chopping and changing a photo, then that is regarded as too much by most people. But simply adjusting things like the exposure, contrast, crop and sharpness of a photo is perfectly acceptable.

The aim is not to cheat the viewer, but to make your photos reflect a scene as you saw it.



DON'T GIVE UP

10

Rome wasn't built in a day. The photographers that get the best pictures are the ones who put in the most hours. If you're photographing the stars at night, but there's a bit of cloud spoiling your image, make sure that you stay out all night in case the cloud clears. You may just find yourself with a rather spectacular outcome.

This advice applies to all corners of nature photography. It sounds simple, but it's of great importance. Patience is a virtue, and you have to be in the right place at the right time to get the shot!



Want to Learn More?

There is no end to our tutorials - and they're all free! Just stay subscribed to our newsletter and we'll send you all of our best content so you can fast track your photography and start taking the photos of your dreams.

Nature TTL is a resource set up for photographers like you who want to improve their skills and enjoy nature in the process. Our content is written by some of the best photographers in the business, and we are proud to be able offer it to our readers at no cost.

I hope you enjoyed reading this eBook, and be sure to check out the website at www.naturettl.com



WILL NICHOLLS
Founder of Nature TTL

