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11-17 APRIL 2024 ISSUE 603

Photography week



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PRO TIPS TO HELP YOU CAPTURE MACRO
IMAGES PACKED WITH COLOUR AND DETAIL

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Photography Week



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Welcome to the world's No.1 weekly digital photography magazine. If you're already a reader, thanks for your continued support and involvement; if you're new to *Photography Week*, you've come to the right place! In addition to expert advice, brilliant tips and step-by-step tutorials, every issue features interactive galleries of brilliant photos, how-to videos on

essential shooting and editing techniques, and in-depth reviews of the latest camera kit.

But that's not the whole story. *Photography Week* is more than a magazine – it's a community of like-minded people who are passionate about photography. To get involved, just follow any of the links below and share your shots and comments.

Jeff Meyer, Editor

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WHAT'S HOT

THE WEEK'S TOP HEADLINES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

TAMRON LAUNCHES 28-75MM F/2.8 FOR NIKON Z MOUNT

New constant-aperture zoom is cheaper and more capable than Nikon's own



© Tamron

Tamron has announced the 28-75mm F/2.8 Di III VXD G2. It's the brand's fourth Nikon Z-mount lens, and goes head to head with the Nikkor Z 28-75mm f/2.8. The Nikon lens is itself a very affordable pro-level lens, but the new Tamron will be cheaper still, and is a 'G2' (generation 2) lens with a more sophisticated optical construction.

The new lens follows on from Tamron's Sony E-mount version, and joins the Tamron 70-300mm F/4.5-6.3 Di III RXD, 35-150mm F/2.8 Di III VXD, and 150-500mm F/5.0-6.7 Di III VC VXD

(2023) in the brand's Nikon Z lineup.

The new lens has no fewer than 17 elements in 15 groups, including two LD (low dispersion) and two GM (glass-moulded aspherical) elements, which compares favourably with the Nikkor Z 28-75mm's 15 elements in 12 groups.

Autofocus is handled by Tamron's VXD (Voice-coil eXtreme-torque Drive) linear AF motor, which is claimed to deliver speed, precision, quiet operation and excellent focus tracking to make it suitable for both stills and video. It focuses pretty close for a lens of this type too, with a minimum object

distance of 0.18m at the wide end of the zoom range and a maximum magnification of 1:2.7.

The new Tamron is compact for a constant-aperture f/2.8 standard zoom, with an overall length of 119.8mm and a maximum width of 75.8mm, and a weight of 550g. It uses 67mm filters, and has a scratch-resistant coating on the barrel, a moisture-resistant design, and a fluorine coating on the front element to repel water and oil.

The Tamron 28-75mm F/2.8 Di III VXD G2 will be available from April 18, priced at £849 / \$999.

CLOSE AND CRISP

Pro macro photography is about far more than simply making subjects large in the frame. It's essential that you learn how to balance magnification power with compositional strength and context



© Ross Hoddinott

PRO STEPS TO INCREDIBLE MACRO

Ross Hoddinott reveals the tricks of the trade for capturing close-up images that are bursting with colour and detail

We can imagine humans, many hundreds of years ago, gazing up at the night sky and wondering what was out there, unable to see the true details of space because of a lack of optics with the necessary magnifying power. What is harder to fathom is that there were things much closer to home that were also invisible to them. Without high-magnification lenses, tiny subjects and the textures of organic surfaces were beyond the reach of human vision.

We might take them for granted now, but macro lenses, paired with the resolving power of modern digital cameras, offer an unprecedented view of

the world around us. With high-precision glass, complete with clarity-enhancing coatings, today's CMOS chips can clearly resolve two specks of detail as separate objects – the scientific definition of high-resolution. A lens with a 1:1 reproduction ratio will project the subject at life-size onto the sensor, isolating just a small area of it within the image frame.

In this feature, professional nature photographer Ross Hoddinott explains his key steps to achieving next-level macro and close-up shots. Discover how to read your subject's behaviour, how to compose the best frame possible, and how to use natural light to the max.

ROSS HODDINOTT



Ross is an acclaimed landscape and wildlife photographer, author and photography tutor. He regularly works for clients including the

National Trust and Kew Gardens. To see more of Ross's work, and for details of workshops visit: rosshoddinott.co.uk



FEATURE

UNDERSTAND SUBJECT BEHAVIOUR

Think like an insect to capture respectful shots filled with the wow factor



COMMON BLUE

Take the time to study your subject, and predict when they're most likely to be out and about

© Ross Hoddinott

To help your macro shots stand out from the crowd, try capturing some element of subject behaviour. Invertebrates don't display the same character or expression as feathered and furred creatures, making it harder for photographers to capture engaging, interesting shots. But if you can capture your subject 'doing' something – for example, moulting, mating, laying eggs or flying – your shots are more likely to grab the viewer's attention.

These types of active images usually rely on good knowledge of the subject. Google your subject's life cycle, habitat and food plants to gain a better understanding of its habits. Then, ideally, take time to study the subject in

person – this will help you to anticipate or react to photogenic behaviour. For example, photographs of dragonflies and damselflies emerging from their exoskeleton can look extraordinary, but require regular visits to the water's edge during spring and early summer, to find nymphs climbing out of the water to hatch on reeds and grasses.

Mating insects can also produce exceptional shots. Damselflies form a wheel or heart shape when paired, but capturing two subjects sharply in one frame can prove challenging. Be sure to select a narrow aperture, and keep both insects within the same plane of focus.

Although capturing insects in flight isn't easy, the speed and accuracy of modern AF systems help, as do camera

modes like Olympus's Pro Capture. When shooting action and behaviour, prioritise a fast shutter, increasing ISO manually or selecting Auto ISO to enables speeds upwards of 1/1,000 sec.



EMERALD DAMSELFLY Keeping both insects on the same plane of focus makes it possible to capture the detail in each



FEATURE

UNDERSTAND SUBJECT BEHAVIOUR CONTINUED

BE THE EARLY BIRD Get set up in plenty of time to capture the perfect shot

The best time of day to photograph insects is in the morning. This is because they're typically cool and inactive, making it easier to get within picture-taking distance. Insects such as butterflies, damselflies and dragonflies will roost overnight, clinging to tall grasses, reeds, vegetation or flower stems until the sun warms them up and they fly off.

Visit local meadows, woodlands and wetlands regularly during spring and summer to find insect hotspots. Return at daybreak, walk slowly, and crouch down to scan vegetation for sleeping beauties. Although it can feel like looking for a needle in a haystack, you'll be surprised at how much you discover when you take your time.

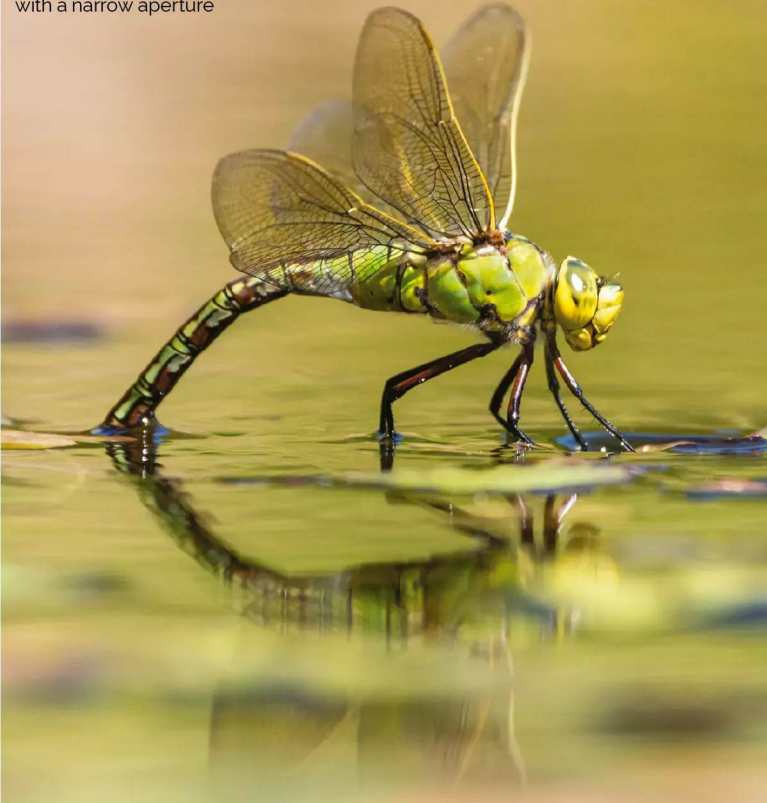
Once you've identified a subject in a position that makes for a strong frame, set up your tripod nearby, being careful not to knock or alarm the insect. Move slowly and deliberately, and remove any distractions, gently pushing grasses or leaves out of the way to create a cleaner background.



© Ross Hoddinott

EMPEROR DAMSELFLY

Focusing on the right point is important, even with a narrow aperture



© Ross Hoddinott

A MATTER OF ETHICS

Capture images while causing minimal environmental impact



© Ross Hoddinott

Insects are incredibly delicate and easily damaged, and particularly vulnerable when they're torpid, hatching or laying eggs. They might be small and considered a bit creepy by some, but invertebrates still deserve complete respect and, just like our feathered and furry subjects, their wellbeing is more important than our photos.

There is some abhorrent and unethical behaviour practised by a handful of macro photographers that include restraining, refrigerating, spraying, pinning, and even killing subjects to achieve their shots. This simply isn't acceptable – nature photographers have a responsibility to their subjects. Ideally, handling subjects should be avoided, or certainly kept to a minimum. And don't take photos if doing so might cause damage or distress, consequential predation, or reduced reproductive success.

All of my photos are taken outdoors, in situ within the subject's environment. Good nature photos should be the result of fieldcraft and camera skills.



FEATURE

CONSIDER COMPOSITION

Macro is not simply about filling the frame. Explore new ways of composing your shots so you can create close-up images that stand out from the crowd

Don't get so carried away with getting close to your subject that you overlook the importance of composition. The art of composition – arranging the elements within the image space in the most aesthetically pleasing way – is just as important when you're shooting miniature things as it is with other subjects. If you overlook the artistic side of macro photography, your images – while they may be technically competent – will lack balance and impact.

The 'rule of thirds' is still the best-known and most widely used compositional tool in macro and close-up work. By placing your subject, or a key point of interest such as its eye, at or near the intersection of the horizontal and vertical lines of the rule

of thirds grid, your composition will be more compelling. However, subjects boasting strong symmetry, like a flower or a head-on portrait, often work better when placed centrally.

The 'rule of odds' is also worth remembering, with an odd number of subjects providing better results – three subjects work well in composition, particularly if the focus is on the middle subject, framed by the others on either side. Try using out-of-focus grass and foliage to create a 'dirty frame' and help direct the viewer's eye to your point of focus.

Lastly, don't be afraid to discard or break the rules entirely. Try not to overthink the process: keep some guidelines in mind, then frame your images instinctively, which will become easier with practice.



FOUR-SPOTTED CHASER This shot combines a central horizontal placement with the rule of thirds for the insect's head

© Ross-Hoddnott



NEGATIVE THINKING

Rather than filling the frame, try adding some space around your subject

There's no denying that frame-filling portraits of alien-like mini-beasts usually have an instant impact. However, better results can often be achieved by taking a step back to include context and breathing space.

The subject's surroundings will dictate your approach. If they're messy, it's better to get in tight and exclude distractions, but if the subject is surrounded by delicate wavy grasses, colourful flowers, or attractive space, then why not capture this background too?

Negative space can also play a key role in close-up photography. Place your subject with space in front of it for it to 'walk' or 'fly' into.

© Ross-Hoddnott

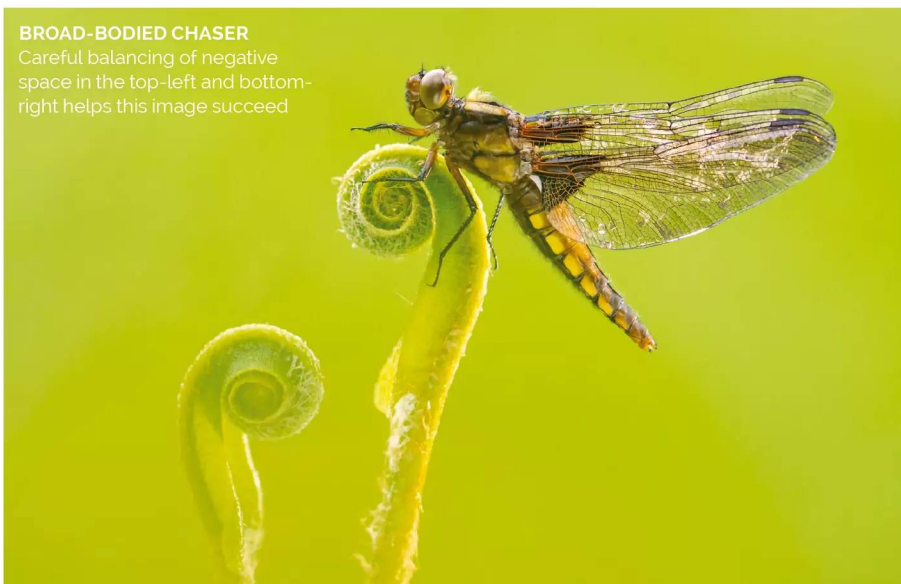


CONSIDER COMPOSITION CONTINUED



COMMON BLUE BUTTERFLIES
The out-of-focus butterfly and flower help to frame the in-focus butterfly on the left

© Ross Hoddinott



BROAD-BODIED CHASER
Careful balancing of negative space in the top-left and bottom-right helps this image succeed

© Ross Hoddinott

MANAGE MACRO BACKGROUND DETAIL

Three simple but effective ways to showcase your subject



© Ross Hoddinott

1 CONTROL FOCUS DEPTH

A subject's surroundings can make or break your close-up, and messy, busy backgrounds with lots of distracting vegetation will dilute the impact of your photo. One option in such cases is to select a wide aperture to create a shallow depth of field and throw the subject's surroundings out of focus.



© Ross Hoddinott

2 ISOLATE THE SUBJECT

Subject selection is important. Look for flowers and insects that you can easily isolate – the more distance you can place between your subject and its background, the easier it is to achieve nicely diffused backgrounds and attractive bokeh.



© Ross Hoddinott

3 COMPRESS THE SCENE

Shooting from a low perspective will often help – it's trickier to isolate subjects from their backgrounds when you're shooting from a more elevated viewpoint, looking down. Longer focal lengths foreshorten the perspective, so use a telephoto macro – upwards of 100mm – to help you achieve pleasing, 'mushy' backgrounds.



F E A T U R E

MASTER CAMERA SETTINGS

Adapt your camera work to capture fast-moving subjects up close



© Ross Hoddinott

GRASSHOPPER Shoot with a narrow aperture for the best depth of field, but avoid the narrowest settings if you don't want diffraction

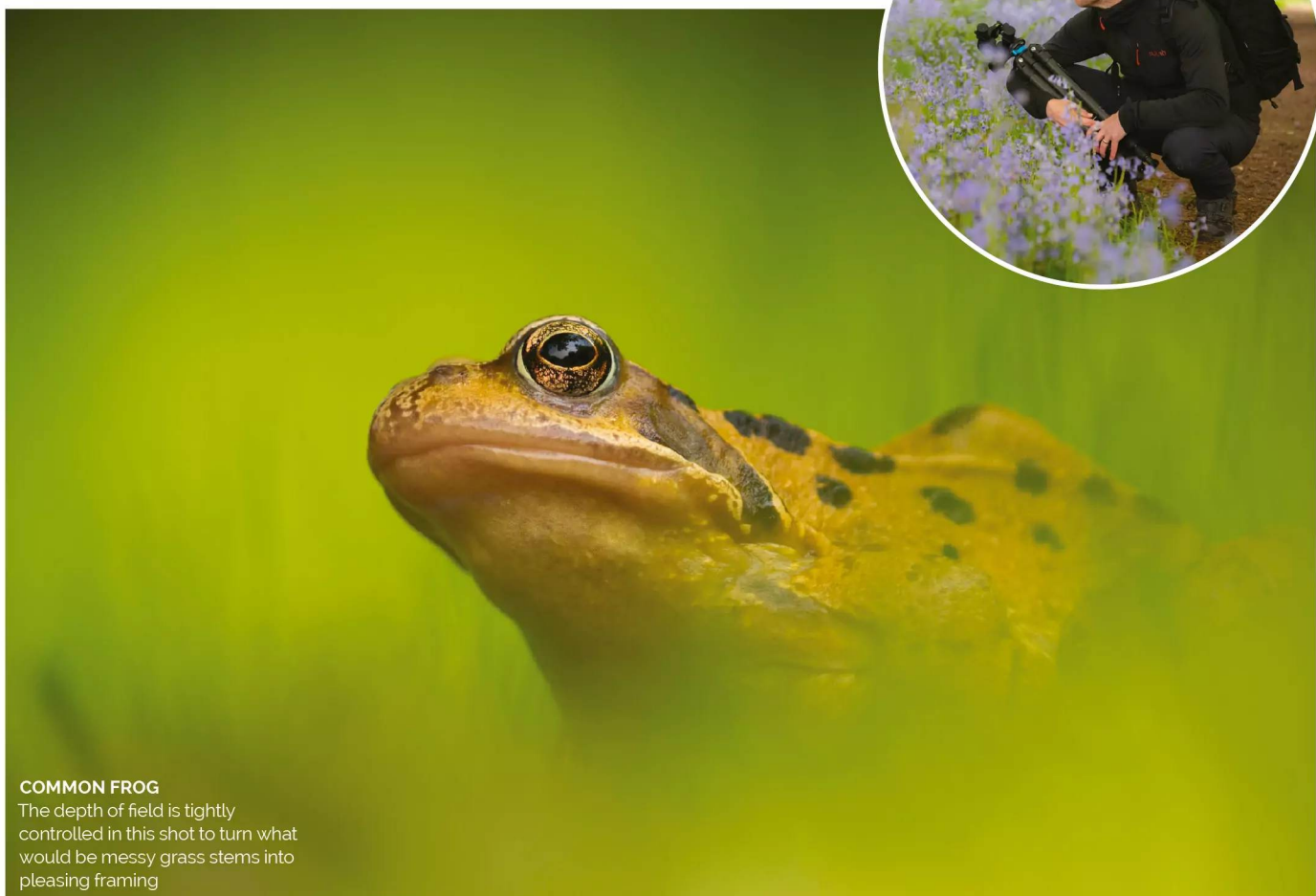
When you shoot at higher magnifications, the zone of focus is very narrow, making it tricky – if not impossible – to capture small subjects sharply throughout. You could try a narrower aperture, but if that doesn't help there are other ways to extend the depth of field.

One such technique is focus-stacking. In situations when you can't achieve the subject sharpness you require in one shot, stack several frames. The process involves taking a sequence of images, each one focused at a slightly different point on the subject, then combining the sharpest parts of each image.

Helpfully, many modern cameras have a mode or function that automates the process. For example, Nikon's Focus Shift mode, when activated, will automatically vary the

point of focus by a set amount over a series of shots. The camera creates the sequence for the photographer to later merge in Photoshop, or using dedicated stacking software, like Helicon Focus or Zerene Stacker. Some cameras can even create the stack in-camera.

Another advantage of stacking is that you can select a wider aperture to maintain lovely bokeh and a fast shutter speed. It's always best to use a tripod when stacking, as it'll be easier to align your images, but it's also possible to shoot handheld using a fast shutter speed and burst mode.



COMMON FROG

The depth of field is tightly controlled in this shot to turn what would be messy grass stems into pleasing framing

© Ross Hoddinott



FEATURE

MASTER CAMERA SETTINGS CONTINUED



GREEN-VEINED WHITE

Focus-stacking in-camera or using editing software is a useful technique to get sharpness all the way through your subject

© Ross Hoddinott

CAPTURE SKITTISH SUBJECTS Set up your kit to work fast and shoot sharp



1 WORK HANDHELD

Although some insects and reptiles can be surprisingly easy to get close to, others are timid and skittish, making a tripod largely impractical when you're in the field. Shoot handheld, and stalk your subject stealthily.



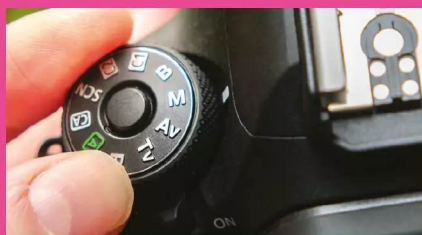
2 KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

A telephoto lens with a short minimum focusing distance, or a tele-macro – upwards of 100mm – is best for flighty subjects, providing a larger working distance and therefore minimising the risk of disturbance and missed shots.



3 STABILISE YOUR SHOTS

While working handheld, switch on lens-based or in-body image stabilisation, and ensure the shutter speed is fast enough to eliminate both camera and subject movement. Using 1/500 sec or faster is recommended.



4 CONTROL DEPTH

It's important to be in full control of depth of field, so shoot in Aperture Priority or Manual mode. Start with a mid-range aperture in the region of $f/8$, which will provide good depth of field while maintaining a practical shutter speed.



5 REDUCE FOCUS HUNTING

When stalking subjects, it helps to rely on the speed and accuracy of autofocus. Some macros have a limiter switch, which allows you to limit focus to within a given range, reducing focus hunting and speeding up focusing.



6 COMPOSE PRECISELY

The zone of focus is paper-thin at higher magnifications, so switch to continuous shooting mode and shoot a sequence to increase chances of a sharp result. Compose images on your rear screen.



F E A T U R E

WORK WITH COLOUR AND LIGHT

Get into position to make the best use of natural light and backgrounds

SCARCE CHASER

The backlighting in this shot serves to draw our attention to the fine detail of the insect's wings, while giving the shot a dramatic feel that's unusual in macro



Backlighting is particularly well-suited to shots of nature, helping to highlight exquisite details, such as the tiny hairs on a dragonfly's body or the transparency of a lacewing or butterfly. Backlighting can produce dramatic results by adding contrast, depth and an emphasis on shape and form. Morning and evening are the best times for shooting naturally backlit subjects, as the sun is low in the sky and the light is warmer.

To minimise highlight clipping while getting the best contrast you'll need to carefully position yourself to shoot towards the light. However, it's normally best to exclude the sun itself from the frame, and attach a lens hood to reduce

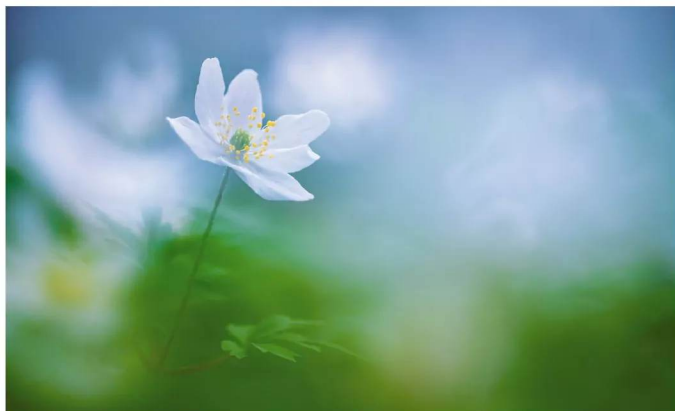
the risk of flare. On dull, overcast days, consider using a small LED device, or even the torch on your mobile phone, to create a backlit effect.

There's a wide range of rechargeable LED devices aimed at macro photographers – some even allow you to alter the light's colour temperature to warm up or cool down results. Place or handhold the device behind and to one side of the subject, ensuring that it's out of shot. With a continuous light source, what you see is what you get, so, unlike flash, you can preview and refine the light's effect. Move the LED closer to or further away from the subject to adjust its intensity until you achieve the result you desire.



F E A T U R E

WORK WITH COLOUR AND LIGHT CONTINUED



WOOD ANEMONE There's plenty of natural colour to act as a pleasing backdrop to this flower – but crucially, there isn't much yellow to distract us from the bright stamens



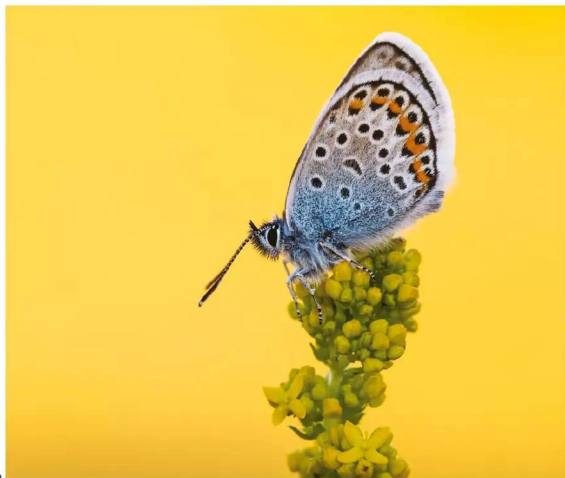
EARLY PURPLE ORCHIDS Green and purple are complementary colours on the RGB colour wheel, and the colour combination here feels like a natural pairing



SNOWDROP It isn't always necessary to capture sharp detail in your subject. Ross's choice here to keep the flower in soft focus serves to heighten the feeling of lightness



SPIDER WEB Isolating part of the subject from any context provided by the environment means that this shot of morning dew on a spider's web has an abstract feel



SILVER-STUDDED BLUE The strong yellow of the background helps bring out the delicate blue tint of the butterfly, which another colour might overwhelm

USE COLOUR COMBINATIONS

Use colour to really make a splash in your macro photos

Don't underestimate the impact and influence of colour in your close-ups. Many insects – particularly butterflies, ladybirds and beetles – are brightly coloured, and add colour impact without any assistance. But if you can combine a vibrant subject with a colourful backdrop, your images are sure to get attention.

Flowers are the most obvious provider of colour, but deep-blue water or sky, or verdant leaves and grass, are equally capable of producing an impactful wash of colour behind your subject. In some instances



© Ross Hoddinott

you might even be able to introduce an artificial backdrop, such as a piece of coloured card or material.

Personally, I favour natural backdrops, using a shallow depth of field to create a nicely blurred, diffused background. Think carefully about where you set up, aligning yourself thoughtfully to achieve a complementary background.

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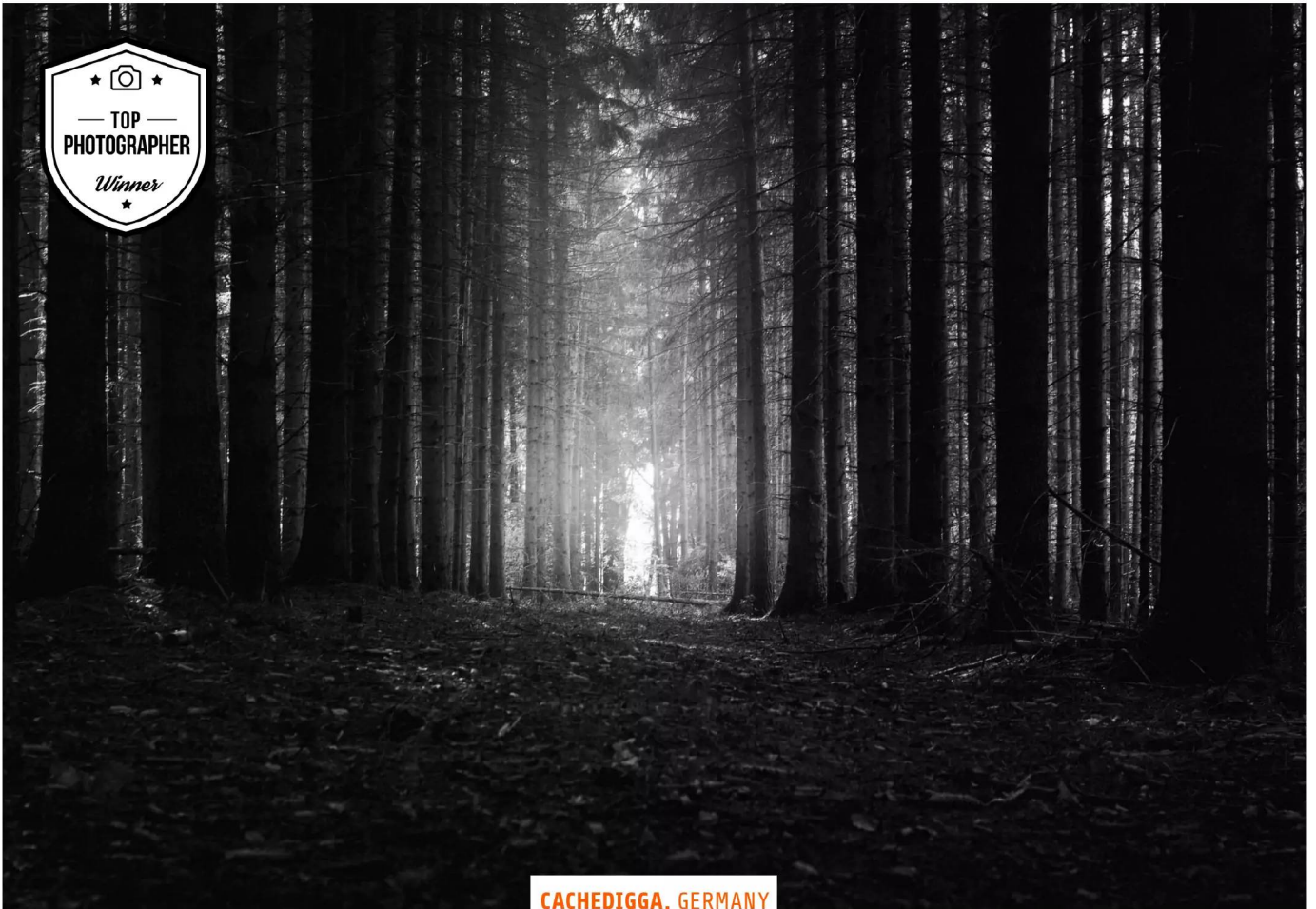


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GuruShots

We've joined up with online photo game GuruShots to print the winning images from the Mostly Black challenge

GuruShots is billed as the world's leading photo game. It's an online photography platform conceived to give global exposure to people who love taking photographs. GuruShots members start out as Newbies and compete with other photographers to win challenges, increase their ranking on the site and eventually

progress to coveted 'Guru' status.

Challenges are voted on by Gurus and the wider GuruShots community, and there's a fresh competition brief – such as this Mostly Black challenge – every day. Challenge winners receive prizes from GuruShots' sponsors, including Lowepro, Kodak and Lensbaby.

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Above, from top-left to bottom-right: **Jan Wolny** Poland, **Pavĺina Rolincov** Czech Republic, **Juha Hietanen** Norway, **Nicolas Drapier** France, **Luca Sharabidze** United States, **Bryony Herrod-Taylor** United Kingdom.



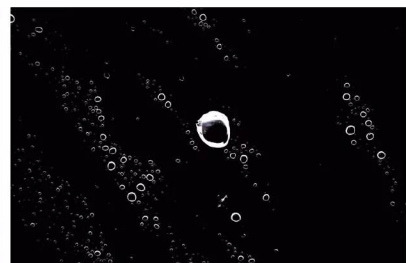
Above, from top-left to bottom-right: **Will** United States, **Daiva Ališauskiene** Lithuania, **Ian McC** Canada, **Adam Childs** United States.

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SPONSORED CONTENT
GURUSHOTS 'MOSTLY BLACK' CHALLENGE



Above, from top-left to bottom-right: **Maggie** Portugal, **Stephen Day** United States, **Eileen Roach** United States, **Teri Kelly** Australia.



Above, from top-left to bottom-right: **Serena Vachon** United States, **Miguel The Lion** Germany, **Riki Ambriz** United States, **Stephen Patterson** United Kingdom, **Gary Cox** United Kingdom, **Jo Kendrick** United Kingdom.

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I N S P I R A T I O N

IT'S COOL, THAT

THE BEST THING WE'VE SEEN THIS WEEK



Tracey Lund, Grand Prize Winner and Gold, Behaviour – Birds



Miki Spitzer, Gold, Nature Art



Amit Eshel, Gold, Animals in their Habitat



Alex Brackx, Gold, Behavior – Mammals

A BIRD BATH WITH A DIFFERENCE AS GANNETS BATTLE OVER FISH

Amazing underwater image wins World Nature Photographer of the Year

The World Nature Photography Awards has announced the winners of its 2024 contest. Every year the competition produces a breathtaking collection of images that celebrate the Earth's wildlife and natural environments, which also highlighting the rising threats to habitats and ecosystems.

This year's overall winner was Tracey Lund from the UK, for her stunning image *Underwater Gannets*, which depicts two

hungry gannets competing over a fish beneath the waves in waters off the Shetland Islands. Lund captured her image using a DSLR in an underwater housing attached to a pole cam, while sitting on the edge of a boat.

Click the link to see more incredible images from this year's contest at the World Nature Photography Awards website, where you'll also find details of how to enter the 2025 competition.



SEE MORE IMAGES
<https://bit.ly/3vBKb5g>

S K I L L S

CRASH COURSE

ESSENTIAL PHOTO SKILLS MADE EASY



FLOWERING ACHIEVEMENT

Mike Harris shows you how to pot a brilliant flower close-up using a telephoto lens and natural light

Spring is here, and that means it's time to head outside and enjoy some outdoor flower photography. If you don't have access to a blossoming garden you can head to a local park or shoot wildflowers, or simply buy some flowers to photograph and set up your shoot in a suitable location.

You don't need any special kit to capture close-up flower photographs. While a macro lens can certainly

produce stunning results, you can also shoot beautiful flower portraits with a telephoto lens – and it doesn't have to be a particularly fast one either.

We photographed our black-eyed Susan with a Nikon Z 5 and Nikkor Z 24-200mm f/4-6.3 VR lens. The optic's 0.7m minimum focus distance enabled us to get close enough to our subject so that it filled a good portion of the frame, while the lengthy distance between subject and background allowed us to

capture large discs of bokeh, despite the modest aperture.

Harsh midday sunlight isn't ideal for photographing flowers, so you're always better off choosing an overcast day, or periods when the sun is lower in the sky – and while natural light doesn't offer the absolute control of studio lighting, you can still manipulate it. Here's how to capture a floral close-up, and realise the budding flower photographer in you.



S K I L L S

HOW TO SHOOT A FLOWER CLOSE-UP



1

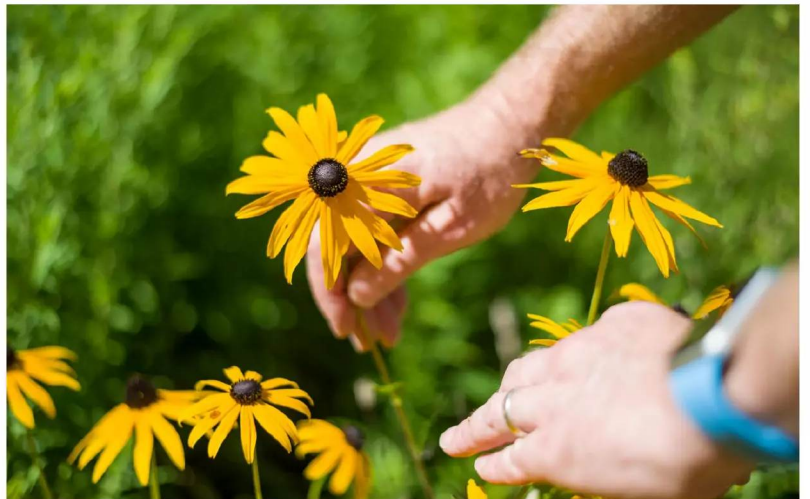
PLANT A TRIPOD

A tripod will allow you to refine your framing, and free up your hands so you can hold a reflector and/or diffuser should you need them. Don't be afraid to tilt your camera if it improves your composition – there's no reason why your frame needs to be perfectly level.

2

FLOWER ARRANGING

A clean background will direct attention to your subject. You may have to carefully reposition the main flower, or nudge nearby blooms aside, to achieve this (you can purchase specialist clamps to help). Don't risk damaging any plants though, and if necessary search for a more suitable subject.



3

SOFTEN THE LIGHT

We'd recommend photographing flowers on an overcast day, or when the sun is lower in the sky, so the light isn't overly harsh. If you have to shoot in the middle of a sunny day, angle a diffuser between your subject and the sun to soften the light and prevent the formation of dark shadows.



S K I L L S

HOW TO SHOOT A FLOWER CLOSE-UP



4

CAMERA SETTINGS

Set your aperture wide open. Despite our modest f/6.3 aperture, the lengthy 185mm focal length and decent distance between our subject and background produced a suitably shallow depth of field. We used a shutter speed of 1/250 sec to mitigate movement caused by a slight breeze.

5

FIND THE STIGMA

The centre of your flower – the stigma or stamens – should be your focal point if they're visible. We used single-servo AF, and placed a single focus point on the centre of our black-eyed Susan. We then checked our area of focus was perfect using the Z 5's handy focus peaking overlay.



6

REFLECT THE LIGHT

Use a reflector to direct light onto your subject to fill in any shadows. Wait until there's no breeze and fire the shutter – you can use a remote shutter release or self-timer to avoid touching the camera, or if you need to keep your hands free to hold a diffuser and reflector, but the self-timer might require a little trial and error, as it'll be more difficult to time your shot between gusts of wind.

QUICK TIP

If the weather isn't suitable for shooting flowers outside, try photographing a shop-bought flower inside. Simply set

your subject up by a source of natural light – a large window is ideal – and experiment with different backgrounds.

E D I T I N G

AFFINITY PHOTO

LEARN ESSENTIAL EDITING SKILLS FAST!



HOW TO...

MAKE A MANHATTAN MAKEOVER

James Paterson transforms a cityscape into striking art with a mix of blending and selection skills in Affinity Photo



With their angular lines and bold shapes, architectural photos and cityscapes are the perfect subject for a creative makeover in Affinity Photo, and this issue's video tutorial we'll show you how to transform an image of New York's grid of streets and avenues into a array of bold painterly splashes and drips using a combination of selection skills and layer blending tricks.

We'll begin by preparing our photo of the city, converting it to black and white

and boosting the contrast so that we have a strong graphic foundation to work with. Next we'll use the Pen Tool to isolate each vertical street, so that we can apply different colours to each. This helps to tailor the painterly effect to the image, as the streaks of paint we add will match up with the shapes we create for each street.

You can find free photos of colourful paint streaks online, but there's something to be said for making your

own. Here, we painted a few colourful streaks of watercolour paint on a piece of white paper. We kept the streaks in loose, vertical lines, then photographed the paper at a low angle, so that the perspective of the streaks matches up with the straight lines of the New York streets in our photograph.

From here, we can finesse the effect with simple layer skills, adjusting colours and positioning each piece in the puzzle until everything fits together perfectly.

G E A R

MIRRORLESS CAMERA TEST

EXPERT OPINION ON THE LATEST KIT



LEICA SL3

This could be the best mirrorless camera Leica has ever made, even if it lacks some of the soul of its rangefinder siblings

leica-camera.com [£5,920/\\$6,995](#)

The Leica SL3 is the first mirrorless camera from Leica that I've fallen in love with. I love using the M and Q cameras, but the SL series just never did it for me – and the fact that they were similar to Panasonic's S cameras, apart from the price tags, certainly didn't help.

However, the Leica SL3 absolutely knocks things out of the park in ways its predecessors never managed.

While it might lack the soul of a Leica M11 or even the Leica Q3, this beautiful slab of sculpted black metal is a straight-up spectacular imaging machine. The Leica SL3 takes a number of technological cues from the Leica Q3, namely its triple-resolution 60.3MP image sensor and phase-detect autofocus – the latter being nothing short of transformative for the SL series.

Depending on your resolution and workflow needs you can set the camera to capture a large, medium or small image, clocking in at 60.3MP (9520 x 6336), 36.4MP (7392 x 4928) or 18.5MP (5280 x 3504) respectively. The resolution makes the SL3 capable of 8K video up to 30p, with all the trimmings such as H.265 and ProRes protocols, timecode interface, Log mode and full-size HDMI port. The



MIRRORLESS CAMERA TEST LEICA SL3



sensor is Dual Basis ISO, too, with a Low setting of ISO 50-280 (ISO 200-560 in Log) and a High of ISO 320-100,000 (ISO 640-100,000 in Log), adding to the overall video-friendly functionality of this camera.

Accordingly, the SL3 introduces support for the CFexpress Type B format to facilitate the fast transfer speeds needed for such high-resolution imaging. It features a

IMAGE QUALITY

Does the SL3 provide the classic Leica performance?

The 60.3MP sensor is a thing of beauty. Of course, it gives you big, fat resolution, but it also delivers colour depth and dynamic range that are more in line with medium format. Working with similar files from the Sony A7R V or Sigma fp L gives you chunky images, but the 14-bit raw files out of the SL3 have a special kind of dimension and detail. Files straight out of the camera are pristine, including JPEGs – particularly when using the Leica Looks filters, downloaded from the Fotos app. Personally, I'm happiest when shooting in the gorgeous black-and-white mode from which the unedited JPEGs are stunning.



CFexpress card slot, along with one for UHS-II SD cards. Some might prefer an all-in approach, with dual CFexpress cards to deliver the highest possible speed and buffering, rather than there being a performance difference with the slower SD format; however, many workflows will make use of the still-dominant SD cards.

Despite the faster memory format, Continuous shooting has taken a bit of a hit from the Leica SL2, down from a maximum burst of 20fps to a top speed of 15fps – and that's without autofocus. If you want AF while shooting, the burst speed is limited to 5fps. Arguably a resolution-oriented camera isn't designed for fast action,



MIRRORLESS CAMERA TEST LEICA SL3



but the Sony A7R V manages 10fps with full autofocus.

Speaking of AF, the introduction of phase detection is an absolute revelation. The old contrast-based system could be glacially slow, and was frequently inaccurate in challenging light, drastically reducing its practicality. The new system, however, instantly springboards the SL3 up the rankings when it comes to AF performance – particularly with the promise of the new subject-recognition algorithms.

The Leica SL3 is a beautiful camera, yet its mesmerising combination of curves and hard lines aren't just pretty to look at; they sit effortlessly in the hand and provide comfortable ergonomics. The SL3 is both lighter and subtly smaller than the SL2, but for me personally,

the biggest improvements come in the form of two particular physical redesigns. First off, the SL3 replaces its predecessor's fixed screen with a tilting touchscreen – which turns the camera from a viewfinder-only device to one that's instantly more formidable and versatile for low-angle and high-angle shooting.

The weather-sealing deserves a particular shoutout. Not only is the Leica SL3 certified to the IP54 standard (offering protection from dust ingress and water splashing from any direction), but it's also guaranteed to work in temperatures from -10C (14F) to 40C (104F). More than that, though, Leica says the camera has actually been tested to tolerances of -40C (-40F) to 70°C (158°F) and it still works.

The Leica SL3 is not without a few

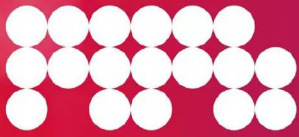
foibles – the battery life is pretty miserly, and the AF isn't quite as reliable as I'd like – but it's so good that this is the first Leica camera I would personally buy.

James Artaius

VERDICT

With a 60.3MP sensor that delivers truly gorgeous stills and supports 8K 30p video, this is the best mirrorless Leica has ever made. It packs so much firepower that it's become the ultimate realisation of the L-Mount system





mpb.com



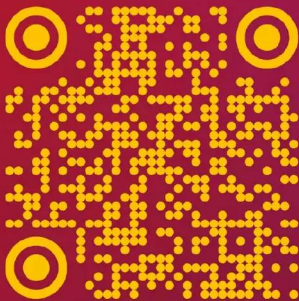
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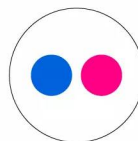
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ADVERTISING

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matt.bailey@futurenet.com

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Head of Acquisitions

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LICENSING

International

Licensing Director

Rachel Shaw

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Editor Jeff Meyer

jeff.meyer@futurenet.com

Art Editor

Alvin Weetman

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Mike McNally

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Gareth Bevan

Lab Manager

Ben Andrews

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS

Mike Harris, Marcus Hawkins,

Rod Lawton, James Paterson,

Matthew Richards

SENIOR CREATIVE TEAM

Content Director

Chris George

chris.george@futurenet.com

Senior Art Editor

Warren Brown

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

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