

THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING DIGITAL PHOTO MAGAZINE

18-24 APRIL 2024 ISSUE 604

# Photography Week



INSPIRATION | IDEAS | IN-DEPTH REVIEWS



REVIEW: CANON RF  
24-105MM F/2.8L IS USM Z  
CANON REINVENTS THE  
STANDARD ZOOM



# SPRING INTO ACTION

30 TIPS FOR STUNNING WILDLIFE AND NATURE SHOTS

W E L C O M E

# Photography Week



## JOIN THE CLUB...



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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We're more than just a magazine – read on and discover the many ways you can interact with and enjoy *Photography Week*



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© Simon Roy



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Cover image © Getty

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## WHAT'S HOT

THE WEEK'S TOP HEADLINES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

## AKASO LAUNCHES AFFORDABLE BRAVE 8 LITE ACTION CAMERA

Budget model arrives with new features include HDR and Hindsight modes



© Akaso

**A** kaso has announced a new budget action camera, the Brave 8 Lite. It's a stripped back version of the Brave 8, and is equipped with an Amba chip and 7G lens, which Akaso says should produce clearer imaging and truer colours, with video up to 4K60 fps and 20MP photos.

The Brave 8 Lite is slightly smaller than the Brave 8, and has a 1/2.3-inch Sony sensor compared to the Brave 8's 1/2-inch Sony sensor. However, the pixel density on the Brave 8 Lite's sensor is lower, which should mean the pixels are larger, which should in theory enable

decent low-light performance.

The Brave 8 Lite utilises Akaso's latest intelligent stabilisation algorithm for smooth video. Other key video features include a 4K HDR mode that brings out more of the detail in highlights and shadows, which should help when shooting in challenging conditions.

Vertical Shooting allows the Brave 8 Lite to easily flip into vertical orientation using the in-built gyroscope to capture phone-ready content without any additional editing. Also new is HindSight, which when turned on can save up to 15 seconds of footage before you start

recording, just in case your finger was a little too slow to capture the action.

With a 1550mAh battery, Akaso claims the camera can shoot 4K for up to 90 minutes, and two batteries come in the box, so you can extend that to around three hours of shooting. The camera also comes with an assortment of mounts, straps, and adhesive pads for mounting onto helmets, bikes, and more. The Brave 8 Lite is IPX8 water-resistant, which means it should be able to survive up to 10 meters.

The Akaso Brave 8 Lite is available now, priced at £189 / \$199.

# F E A T U R E



## SWOOPING OWL

This stunning shot of a barn owl hunting in a meadow after sunrise was captured with a super-telephoto 500mm lens and a fast shutter speed.

Shot from a distance, the sunlight shining on the owl's wings against the dark backdrop creates a strong image



# 30

© Simon Roy

## TIPS FOR SHOOTING SUPER SHOTS THIS SPRING

Pro photographer Simon Roy reveals his key techniques

**S**pring is a time of new beginnings as nature slowly awakens. As the temperature rises, seeds and bulbs that have been buried for months appear as flecks of green shoots and buds, while in the animal kingdom, courtship gets underway, and old partnerships and rivalries are resumed.

For me, this is the best time of year to be out with a camera; a chance to reflect and refresh, to rekindle old projects or begin new ones, and to remedy

mistakes or build upon successes. It can be demanding, too, as the days and the foliage get longer; we can spend hours walking, stalking, or just waiting.

Spring has all the ingredients needed for dramatic, engaging, commercial, and even award-winning images. Courtship displays, territorial disputes, sibling rivalries, nest building, parenting, predation, tenderness, aggression, birth and death... it's all here, and with forethought and persistence, this can

be the most rewarding season for a wildlife photographer.

Rising early is essential if you want to catch the best of a spring day – to glimpse a barn owl as it ghosts over a meadow, or watch the sunrise through cobwebs laced with dew, or stand alone in woodland with just the sound of a dawn chorus and the fresh scent of a new day – these moments are the essence of spring, and in these feature we'll show you how to capture them.



# FEATURE

## PART 1 START EARLY

Plan ahead, and get up before sunrise to make the most of nature's calendar

**M**any of my spring projects are conceived over the winter when I find myself looking forward to warmer days. By planning ahead, I hope to take advantage of the conditions and maximise opportunities. As part of the process, I make a detailed list of shots, with notes on the subject, location, light, backgrounds, time of day, composition, aperture, shutter speed and white balance. I also consider safety, ethics, access and consent.

### Follow nature's calendar

Many of spring's highlights are spread throughout the season, allowing me to create a timeline and work through it systematically. During early spring, I often walk along small rivers, hoping to see a white-throated dipper, an aquatic songbird with a preference for clean, fast-flowing upland streams. These beautiful wooded valleys are best visited before deciduous trees put on their summer coats.

Mid-spring is all about bluebell habitats and the wildlife they sustain. These flowers thrive in ancient woodland and appear in April and May, but they're only in peak condition for a few weeks, so there's a small window of opportunity. The later part of spring sees wildflower meadows brimming with insects and blooming



A roe doe walking through spring bluebells. Taken with a Canon EOS 7D Mark II and Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM.

© Simon Roy

flowers. Butterflies are cold-blooded and rely on thermal energy to heat their flight muscles, so the best times to photograph them are at the beginning

and end of the day. Mornings are more productive, as you can arrive early and find the best specimens before the temperature rises.

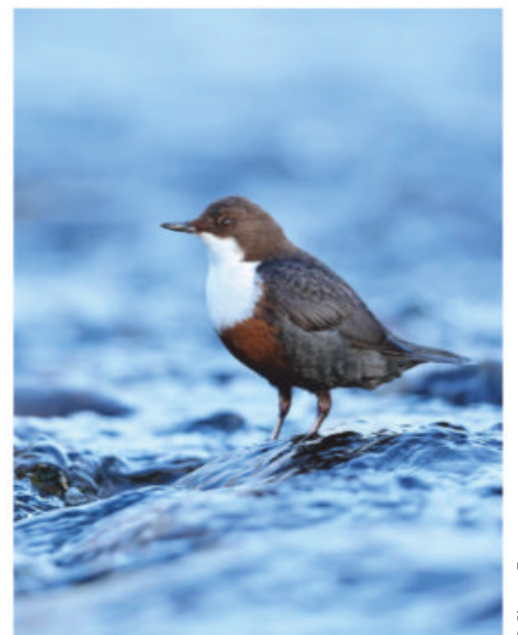
### 01 KIT TIP SUPER-TELEPHOTO

This image on the right was captured with a Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II, a pro-grade lens that allows me to work from a distance that won't disturb subjects.



### 02 WHAT TO LOOK FOR THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING TO SEE IN SPRING

Walk by a river to enjoy the sound of running water and the sight of a white-throated dipper bobbing up and down on a rock or plunging into the flow. Explore farmland to see boxing brown hares, and roadside meadows for bunnies and butterflies. Or visit a woodland from April to late May, and witness the magic of bluebells in bloom up and down the country.



A white-throated dipper on a rock in a fast-flowing upland stream. Canon EOS R6 and Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM, 1/640 sec at f/4 and ISO1000

© Simon Roy



# PART 1 START EARLY CONTINUED

## SPRING PROJECT IDEAS

Here are three examples of projects that can be planned over the course of the spring season. This is a great way to build a varied portfolio of different species, colours and techniques. I like to focus on one subject at a time, and be patient until I get the desired light and weather conditions



© Simon Roy



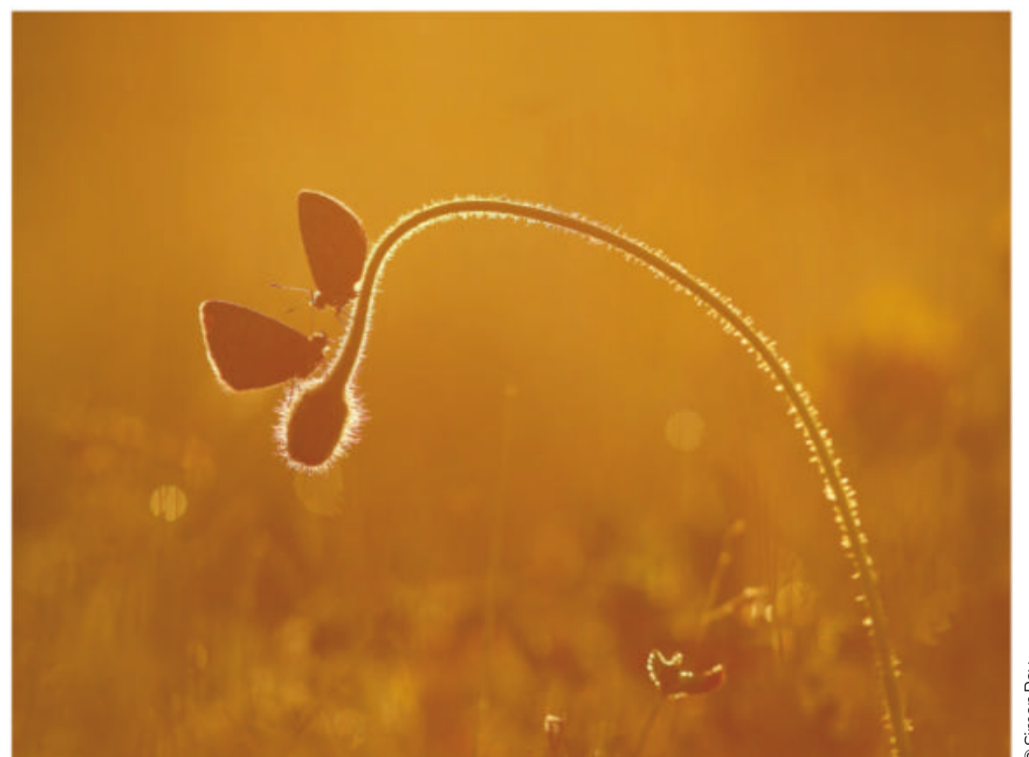
© Simon Roy

### 03 IN APRIL... SHOOT BIRDS IN BLOSSOM

A handsome male greenfinch amongst blackthorn blossom. I tempted the bird into position by placing a feeder of sunflower hearts nearby but just out of shot. I had pre-composed the scene using a single AF point; thankfully the greenfinch landed in exactly the right place. It was purposely framed to include the foreground foliage, with a relatively wide aperture to isolate the main subject. **Camera:** Canon EOS 5D Mark III and Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM. **Exposure:** 1/250 sec at f/5.6, ISO100.



© Simon Roy



© Simon Roy

### 04 IN MAY... FOCUS ON BLUEBELLS IN BLOOM

A single bluebell flower photographed just after sunrise in the long grass at the edge of a woodland path. I composed this scene using the rule of thirds, and shot from a low perspective to include the drops of backlit dew. This was taken using a 300mm lens, with a wide aperture to make the flower pop and enhance the background bokeh. **Camera:** Canon EOS 5D Mark III and Canon EF 300mm f/4L IS USM. **Exposure:** 1/250 sec at f/4.5, ISO160.

### 05 IN JUNE... BUTTERFLIES AT DAWN

A pair of common blue butterflies resting in a roadside meadow, backlit by the rising sun. This was shot using a telephoto lens so that I could isolate the main subject and blur out the surrounding foliage. I also used a lens hood to help reduce glare, and a manual white balance of 6000K to boost the warm tones. **Camera:** Canon EOS 5D Mark III and Canon EF 300mm f/4L IS USM. **Exposure:** 1/1000 sec at f/4.5, ISO200.



# FEATURE

## PART 2 MAKE A PLAN

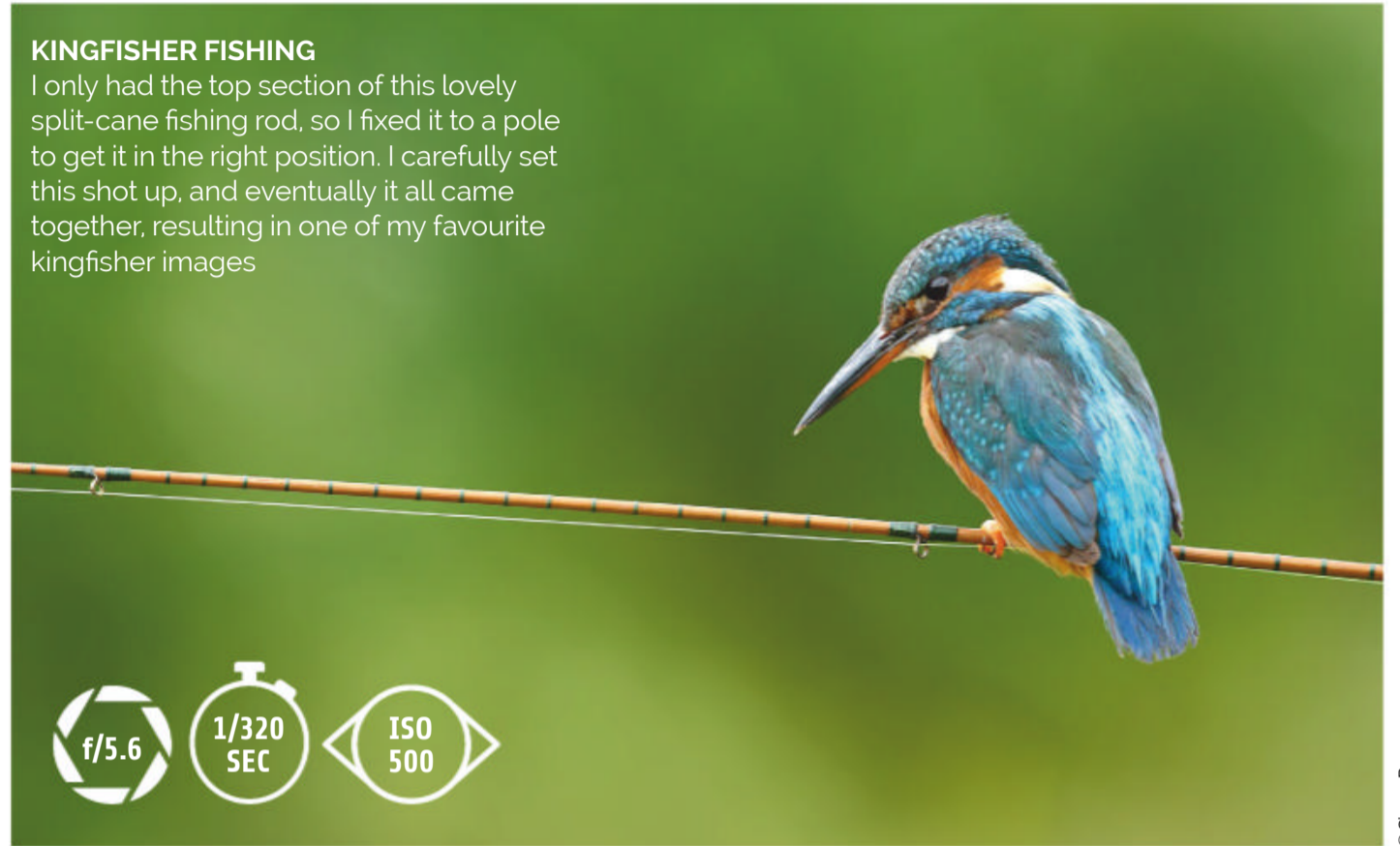
A behind-the-scenes look at some of my most successful spring images, and why they work

**M**any of the wildlife pictures featured in magazines or the final stages of photography competitions are the result of a well-executed plan. Even seemingly spontaneous moments are likely to have been achieved through patience and perseverance, rather than simply being a case of being in the right place at the right time.

For me, this planning stage is a fun and fundamental part of the picture-making process. It allows me to be more productive when I'm not behind the camera, and more effective when I am. Here, I showcase a few of my most successful spring images, and explain the stories behind them and the equipment I used.

### KINGFISHER FISHING

I only had the top section of this lovely split-cane fishing rod, so I fixed it to a pole to get it in the right position. I carefully set this shot up, and eventually it all came together, resulting in one of my favourite kingfisher images



### BEHIND THE LENS SIMON'S SUCCESSFUL SHOTS

Simon picks three of his favourite spring images, explaining his approach to capturing great shots and why these images work. Spring is the time to capture bright colours and brilliant behaviour, so add some pleasing depth of field and framing for highly commercial and potentially award-winning images



#### 06 MAKE THE MOST OF LIGHTER EVENINGS SPRING BUNNIES

The lighter evenings of late April are a great time to explore areas of grassland in search of juvenile rabbits. A few years ago, I discovered a site next to a small country lane. On my first few visits I spent some time watching the rabbits and clearing the area of dead leaves and litter, and this allowed me to capture the image I wanted of a pair of wild bunnies together. **Camera:** Canon EOS 7D Mark II and Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM. **Exposure:** 1/160 sec at f/5, ISO400. Gitzo Series 3 tripod, scrim net



#### 07 CONSIDER BACKGROUND COLOUR SINGING THE BLUES

I regularly visited this glade of bluebells in search of roe deer, and I often had a wren for company. It used a stem of dead bracken to perform a territorial display, and set against the sea of blue flowers I knew it would make a decent image, so I constructed a makeshift hide and returned the following day. The wren duly appeared, landing on its perch and bursting into song. **Camera:** Canon EOS 7D Mark II and Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM. **Exposure:** 1/160 sec at f/5.6, ISO320. Gitzo Series 3 tripod, scrim net



#### 08 SET UP A SCENE NO FISHING SIGN

I wanted this image to look as authentic as possible, so I decided to build the sign myself from old bits of wood and made a paper stencil to create the text; I even brushed some tea over the white paint to give the letters a more weathered appearance! I then spent all day in a hide waiting for the perfect moment: the kingfisher with her prize, facing into the frame, with everything on the same focal plane. **Camera:** Canon EOS 5D Mark III and Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM. **Exposure:** 1/640 sec at f/6.3, ISO400. Gitzo Series 3 tripod, wooden hide





# PART 2 MAKE A PLAN CONTINUED

## PRO KIT

**5 THINGS YOU NEED FOR A SPRING SHOOT** The essential camera gear for successful seasonal wildlife photography



© Simon Roy

© Simon Roy

**09 TRIPOD**  
I support my Canon EOS R6 and lens with a Gitzo GT3542LS Series 3 tripod, or a bean bag.

**10 BINOCULARS**  
My Vanguard Spirit ED 8x42 binoculars are useful when tracking animals such as roe deer.

**11 SPARE BATTERIES AND MEMORY CARDS**  
Invaluable accessories when I'm out in the field.

**12 CAMOUFLAGE COVERS AND CLOTHING**  
These are essential for photographing wary subjects in their habitats.

**13 A SUPER-TELEPHOTO LENS**  
I use a 500mm f/4 – it's a highly effective tool for all types of wildlife photography.



© Simon Roy



# PART 3 HOW TO USE FIELDCRAFT

How to track wary subjects, or capture more natural behaviour



## FOX CUB

This wild red fox cub among the bluebells of a woodland was captured with a Canon EF100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM lens. The encounter was the result of days of observation, planning and fieldcraft



© Simon Roy

**F**ieldcraft – the skills needed to find, approach and photograph subjects – is one of the most important tools in wildlife photography. It includes the ability to track animals in their natural habitat without them being aware of your presence. With mammals that have a superb sense of smell, such as red foxes, badgers and roe deer, I shower without shampoo,

and wear clothes that are clean but not freshly washed. I camouflage myself and my gear, using trees and foliage to blend in. A few years ago, I discovered a fox earth in a local woodland. I then spotted a dog fox with a large prey in its jaws, and followed him cautiously, staying downwind as he dropped the kill at the den. I saw some movement, and was amazed to see five cubs above

ground in broad daylight.

This area gave me the best chance of a good shot while maintaining a respectful distance. I returned a few days later, and moved as silently as possible to my chosen position. I waited for hours behind some dead bracken, then glimpsed a cub in front of me. I lined up a single focal point over the right eye, and captured one of my favourite images.

## 14 PRO ADVICE FIELDCRAFT BASICS

A little fieldcraft can make a big difference. Having a basic knowledge of fieldcraft will get you more opportunities for images, and better images. Always try to wear clothing that matches the environment you're working in; this includes gloves, a hat, and a cover for your face. Keep noise to a minimum and, as most mammals have a powerful sense of smell, avoid anything with a strong scent.



© Simon Roy



# PART 3 HOW TO USE FIELDCRAFT CONTINUED

## DISGUIISING THE HUMAN FORM

Many wild animals have an instinctive fear of humans, and even the very best camera and super-telephoto lens will be insufficient if the species you're trying to photograph feels threatened by you. Try to wear muted colours, move slowly, and be as quiet as possible. I also use a scrim net to fade my form, even in my garden where the birds are less wary



**15 STAY LOW** Stay low so you don't stand out against the skyline – animals regularly scan the horizon for signs of danger. This also ensures that you're at eye level with your subject, resulting in more intimate pictures.



**18 USE A HIDE** A hide allows you to capture images showing natural behaviour, with minimal disturbance to your subject. The main function of a hide is to disguise the human form, with shelter and comfort being secondary needs.



**19 BE CREATIVE** Often the best solution, especially in urban settings, is to conceal yourself in a building and shoot through an open door or window. You can also use a vehicle, which often makes an effective mobile hide.



**16 BLEND IN** Use camouflage such as lens covers and scrim nets to help you and your gear blend in with the surroundings. Covering your hands and face is also advisable for wary subjects.



**17 BE QUIET** Animals such as hares, rabbits and deer have superb hearing. Be as quiet as possible, and use sounds such as bird song, running water or even vehicle noise to mask your footfall.



**20 PAID HIDES** There are now many well-established hides available for hire, and these can be a great way to work with elusive species or fill gaps in your portfolio. Many RSPB centres and wetland centres also provide hides.



# PART 4 ACTION & BEHAVIOUR

Capture action and behaviour to give your images the wow factor



### SUBJECT INTERACTION

A pair of adult little owls greeting each other on an old wooden gate. This image was all about patience and perseverance; waiting for the moment when these two came together



© Simon Roy

If you want to have your shots published in magazines, or aim for success in competitions, then try to capture *moments* rather than just pictures. Dramatic images of common subjects will often surpass simple portraits of more exotic species.

Animal behaviour may be organic, such as sleeping, grooming or fighting, or it might be contrived by the photographer – for example, a squirrel jumping to reach inaccessible food. Investing time in a subject will increase your understanding of it, and the more at ease an animal is, the more likely it is to behave naturally.

One of my favourite behaviour images shows a pair of adult little owls greeting each other on an old wooden gate. The shot was taken from a hide from where I'd been feeding the owls, and although both birds visited regularly,

they rarely perched together, and I spent many days in the hide waiting for this moment. Occasionally, you get lucky and happen to be in the right place at the right time; however, an opportunity means nothing unless you take advantage of it.

Last spring I was photographing a pair of juvenile rabbits just outside their burrow. One of the kits became restless and dropped into an entrance hole, then almost immediately jumped back out, landing on its sibling before running away. Suddenly a stoat emerged from the same hole, glanced at me and then chased after the poor rabbits. I had a split second to focus and frame the shot.

Action photography often requires greater technical skill, but it can produce more dynamic images – a shot of a barn owl diving, for example, will typically be chosen over a shot of the same bird

perched. Many wildlife images that are commercially successful, or attract the attention of judges in contests, show animals interacting with man-made objects, or exhibiting anthropomorphic behaviour with human traits.

## 21 TOP TIP BE A NETWORKER!

Keep up with the latest sightings of spring wildlife by joining online photographic communities. You'll be able to meet like-minded photographers in your local area and beyond, which will give you the opportunity to develop your skills. Plus, you can follow wildlife, wetland and woodland centres on social media to get up to date information about what you can photograph and where.



# PART 4 ACTION & BEHAVIOUR CONTINUED

## HOW TO CAPTURE ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR

Capturing action and behaviour often requires greater technical skill and subject understanding. A mirrorless camera with its silent shutter, super-fast drive modes and autofocus capabilities is a huge advantage. For flight or other action shots, I tend to shoot wide open and aim for a shutter speed of around 1/3200, adjusting my ISO to achieve the desired exposure



© Simon Roy



© Simon Roy

### 22 SHOOTING ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY

A stunning barn owl diving for its breakfast at sunrise. I used a fast shutter speed and frame rate to freeze the action, I also underexposed to darken the tones, and composed with active space in front of the bird. The owl hovered for a moment, allowing me to anticipate the dive.

### 23 UNDERSTAND BEHAVIOUR

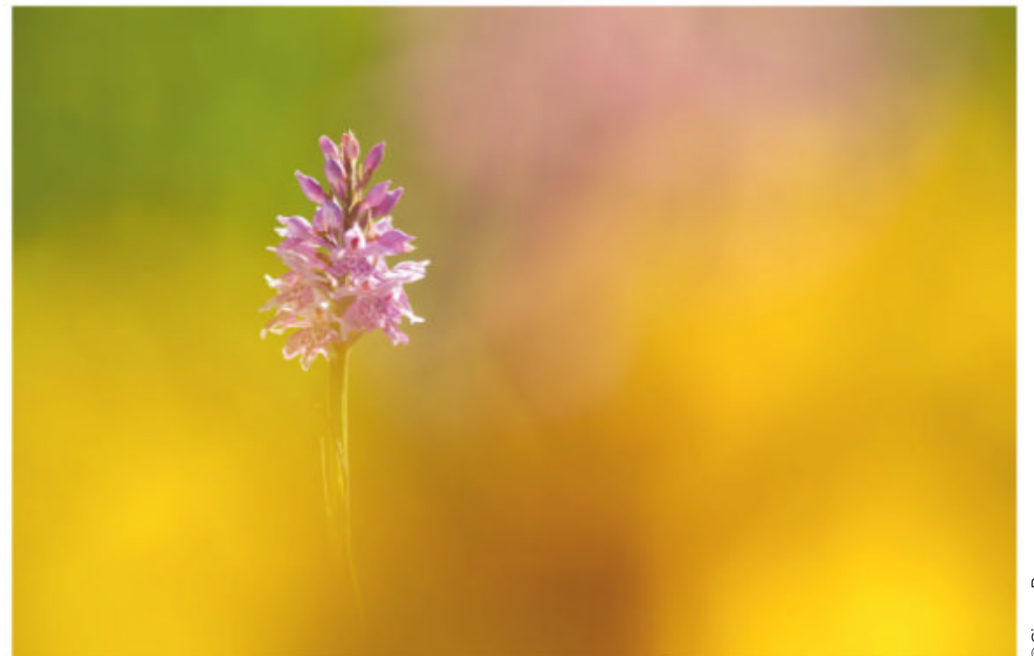
A handsome stoat emerging from a rabbit burrow. I was fortunate to witness this behaviour, and I only had a moment to react. The silent shutter and subject AF capabilities of my mirrorless camera helped me capture a moment I might otherwise have missed.

## HOW TO CAPTURE PLANTS CREATIVELY

Spring is a fabulous season for capturing plants. With the warmer weather and more sunlight, many plants are coming into bloom, adding some colour after the dreary winter months. You can check online and search locally to see what areas have an abundance of plants, such as bluebells in April. If it's breezy, check that you have an appropriate shutter speed for sharp shots



© Simon Roy



© Simon Roy

### 24 CAPTURE THE SURROUNDINGS

Don't always zoom in to take pictures of flowers or other plants – sometimes it can be good to step back and try to capture them in their surroundings, too. This capture of bluebells in the morning light, shot with a 300mm lens, really captures the mood.

### 25 CREATIVE DEPTH OF FIELD EFFECTS

You don't always need a macro lens to take 'close-ups' of flowers. I captured this wild orchid with a telephoto lens and a wider aperture, which produced a fantastic depth of field effect that makes the orchid stand out against its surroundings.



# FEATURE

## PART 5 CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

How to add some creativity to your spring wildlife portfolio

**H**aving a good understanding of your camera and the basic elements of photography is fundamental for shooting more creative images. Controlling the aperture is a great way to create drama, and I'll often use props to reinforce the narrative in my pictures.

At my old house, a family of bank voles was living in a flower bed beneath the bird feeders. By understanding the voles' routines, I was able to predict when they would come to feed, and this led to some great photographic opportunities. As is often the case with

wildlife photography, the challenge became how to capture my subject in an interesting way. I did this by using different props and backgrounds, and I found that the voles liked chopped hazelnuts, which became a vital ingredient in many of my successful images. Even in this shot of a vole feeding on discarded apples, the animal has been tempted into position using hidden treats.

### APPLE VOLE

A tiny wild bank vole feeding on discarded apples. Taken with my Canon EOS 5D Mark III and Canon EF 300mm f/4L IS USM



# PART 5 CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

## CONTINUED

### USE PROPS TO IMPROVE YOUR IMAGES

The creative use of props is a great way to strengthen the story in a photograph or even alter it completely. Here are some ideas for shots that can be achieved in spring



© Simon Roy

### 26 THINK ABOUT STORYTELLING

In this shot, called 'Blue', a blue tit lands on a clothes peg. Captured during lockdown, it took a week to get the shot. I wanted all the elements to be sharp, so they occupy the same focal plane.



© Simon Roy

### 27 TRY TO CREATE A HABITAT

A wild bank vole looks out from a pile of chopped larch. It took several hours to construct this habitat at a local woodland, and I shot the image in portrait format, as I felt it added to the sense of scale.

### UNDERSTANDING COLOUR AND LIGHT

Developing a good understanding of colour and light will enable you to capture more harmonious images. The two photos below were captured in my garden, and show a goldfinch amongst spring blossom. They illustrate how light, colour and contrast can influence the balance and harmony of an image. Many of my favourite photographs have quite neutral colours and tones, allowing the main subject to stand out



© Simon Roy

### 28 HARD LIGHT AND CONTRAST

For me, this image lacks subtlety, because the light is too harsh, and there's too much contrast between the pink flowers and the green background. It means the frame is too busy, and the bird is a bit lost.



© Simon Roy

### 29 SOFT LIGHT AND HARMONY

For this image, I created my own background by painting an old fence panel that was positioned behind the flowers. It was taken on a cloudy day, and the soft light complements the pink pastel colours.



# FEATURE

## PART 6 HOW TO EDIT YOUR SHOTS

Boost your spring captures with some quick editing tips in Photoshop

**I** am a huge fan of Photoshop – it's an important tool for any photographer. Having said that, I believe you should always try to make the best image possible in-camera, and only use editing software to enhance good shots, rather than to fix bad ones.

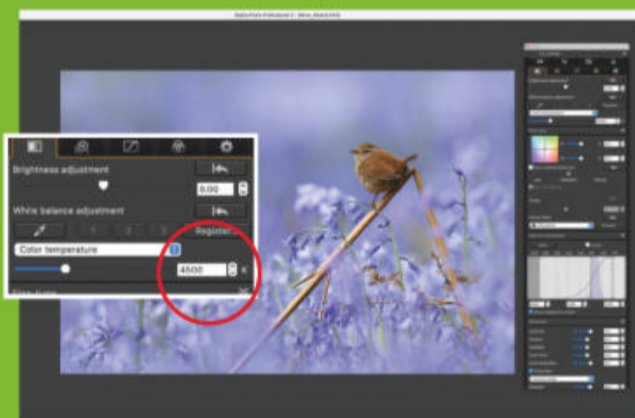
Take this strongly composed image of a wren sitting amongst bluebells, I had achieved most of what I wanted in-camera, but I felt the image could be improved with a quick edit. After some tweaks in Photoshop, the edited image is lighter, sharper, and more vibrant. Here, I'll show you how I achieved the look...



© Simon Roy

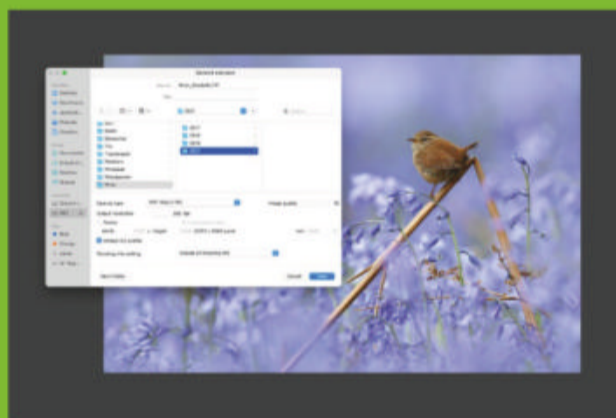
### 30 LIGHTEN SHADOWS AND ADD VIBRANCE

Six quick and easy steps using Photoshop to make your wildlife images stand out from the crowd



#### 1 ADJUST THE WHITE BALANCE

First, I opened the raw file in Canon DPP. The colour temperature was a little warm, so I adjusted the white balance to 4500K.



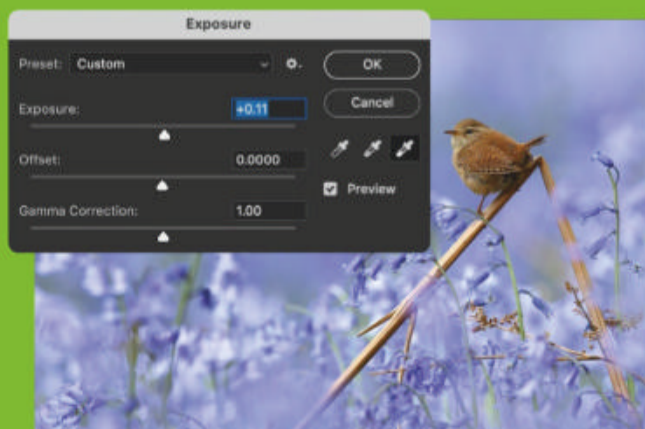
#### 2 CONVERT TO TIFF

Next I converted the raw file to a TIFF format ready for Photoshop. I always keep both raw and TIFF versions of my images.



#### 3 MAKE A SMALL CROP

Next, I opened the TIFF file in Photoshop and checked the framing. I only made a small crop to maintain the original 3x2 aspect ratio.



#### 4 EXPOSURE ADJUSTMENT

I was happy with the composition, but I felt that the image was a little darker than intended, so I adjusted the Exposure to lighten the scene.



#### 5 DODGE TOOL

My favourite tools for making exposure adjustments to specific areas are the Dodge and Burn tools. Here, I used the Dodge Tool to brighten around the bird's eye.



#### 6 SHARPEN UP

Although the image was already quite crisp, I wanted to add a bit more definition. I did this using the Unsharp Mask filter.



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G A L L E R Y

# XPOSURE

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## LINUS FEELS SASSY

**TERRY DONOVAN**

"I took this photo during volunteer goat-tending duties at Audubon Habitat in Belmont, Massachusetts. Linus is a Nigerian dwarf goat, and is quite a character. Behind him is Kudzu, of the same breed, who also has lots of personality. They live in an old greenhouse with five other goats during the winter, and in a nearby meadow the rest of the year."

<https://bit.ly/3PA93HA>

# G A L L E R Y

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## ABANDONED BOAT

**HOWARD PRATT**

"I shot this image with my Sony A7R II and FE 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 GM OSS lens. I added the infrared effect in post-processing."

<https://bit.ly/4agEY8E>

# GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## INNER COURTYARD OF THE CASTLE

**MARIO OTTAVIANI**

"This is the internal courtyard of the Piccolomini Castle in the town of Capestrano, in Italy's Abruzzo region."

<https://bit.ly/3Akm016>

# GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## THE MOTIVATIONAL COACH OF THE MIDWEST

**DOM HAUGHTON**

"The image was taken at the Arco de las Penitas on Fuerteventura, the second-largest of Spain's Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean. It's a place that puts me in mind of images I've seen from the midwest of the USA. I'd all but given up on getting here before dark, but my wife insisted on pushing on, and we managed to arrive at exactly the right time, just as the golden-hour light was glowing."

<https://bit.ly/3AtIfBe>



FACEBOOK

<http://bit.ly/39py9lg>



FLICKR

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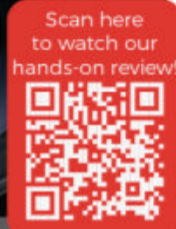
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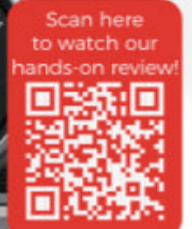
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I N S P I R A T I O N

# IT'S COOL, THAT

THE BEST THING WE'VE SEEN THIS WEEK



Min Liu, Champagne Taittinger Food for Celebration category



Konark Basu, Food for the Family category



Cao Ky Nhan, Food in the Field category



Heike Witzgall, Errazuriz Wine Photographer of the Year category

## THESE FOOD PHOTOS WILL MAKE YOUR MOUTH WATER

Pink Lady Food Photographer of the Year announces shortlist for 2024 contest

**P**ink Lady Food Photographer of the Year is one of our favourite photo competitions – as much for some of the mouth-watering subjects as for the outstanding quality of the featured images – and the shortlist for this year's contest has now been announced. The shortlisted photographers will now compete for prizes across 28 categories, and for the title of overall winner.

The competition features images that

capture every aspect of food production, preparation and consumption, from photos of fishing and farming through to elaborate images of restaurant dishes, and colourful shots of people around the world enjoying street food and celebratory feasts.

We've picked out a few of our favourite images above – click the link to see all the shortlisted images, and learn more about the competition, at the Food Photographer of the Year website.



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

S K I L L S

# CRASH COURSE

ESSENTIAL PHOTO SKILLS MADE EASY

CAMERA Nikon Z 5 LENS 35mm f/2 EXPOSURE 1/2 sec, f/22, ISO100

Chris swears by a sturdy tripod or beanbag to support his camera at slow shutter speeds.



## TRACKSIDE TIPS AND TRICKS

Chris Nevard explains how you can capture photo-realistic images of model railways on a budget

**M**y aim is to make model railway photos look as realistic as possible, and the process I use to shoot miniature worlds is very different to how I'd shoot real-life ones – and it has its challenges. You're limited as to where you can angle the camera to avoid including the real world beyond, and shooting close-ups means you'll be dealing with very shallow depths of field. Fortunately, you

have complete control of the weather and lighting, and nothing is moving, so you can shoot at slow shutter speeds and take the time to manage your scene. You can also achieve elevated, 'aerial views' without an expensive drone! And finally, expensive kit isn't a necessity – you don't need 20fps bursts or super-fast AF. In fact, I prefer manual focus, so you can even make use of vintage lenses if you like their 'look'.

### EXPERT TIP

Avoid framing the edges of the layout or any glimpses of the real world. A good workaround is to obscure such views with a miniature, such as a wagon, or even a piece of terrain. And, perhaps most importantly, remove any dust. Even the smallest amount will stand out and test your cloning skills; a sensor-dust blower is ideal.





# S K I L L S

## HOW TO SHOOT MODEL RAILWAYS



1

### CLOSE-FOCUSING LENS

You don't need fancy kit to capture miniatures, just a lens that will focus down to around 25cm. Most modern kit lenses are pretty good in this respect. For the image in this feature I used a Nikon AF 35mm f/2D. Most of my lenses are F mount, even though I mostly shoot on my Z 5, because I also like to shoot 35mm film.

2

### MAKING LIGHT WORK

Even though many model railways have lighting, it's not always suitable for photography. Additional lighting is always helpful, and many modern LED panels having variable colour temperature controls, which allows light sources to be matched. If you don't have any lights, you can always take your miniature outside.



3

### DEPTH OF FIELD

Shallow depths of field are exaggerated when shooting close-ups, even at wide angles and narrow apertures. I get around this by 'focus stacking'. I'll capture an identical frame several times, but with a different point of focus in each shot. I shoot from foreground to background, ensuring that the area of focus between images overlaps.



# S K I L L S

## HOW TO SHOOT MODEL RAILWAYS

4

### SUPER-SHARP

Focus stacking can be performed in Adobe Photoshop, but I favour Helicon Focus. Once your chosen frames are loaded, a simple click starts the stacking process. The software then picks out the sharpest sections from each file and merges them together to create an image with a broad depth of field.



5

### SKEWED SKIES

The 45-degree shooting angle made the clouds on this model railway's photographic backdrop look distorted, but Photoshop CC's Sky Replacement tool made replacing the sky a 10-second job. The tool comes with a library of stock skies, and you can also import your own.

E D I T I N G

# PHOTOSHOP

LEARN ESSENTIAL EDITING SKILLS FAST!



HOW TO...

## MASTER DODGING AND BURNING

James Paterson shows you how to use these essential tools for old-school darkroom-style image enhancements



**T**he Dodge and Burn tools are ideal for selective lightening and darkening in Photoshop. There are lots of other tools that do a similar job, but there's something about these two options that will keep you coming back to them, time and again.

Perhaps it's the darkroom connection. In the darkroom, areas of a print would be 'dodged' by shading some of the light from the enlarger bulb. A small disc on a piece of wire would often be used, an implement echoed in the Photoshop Dodge Tool icon. By contrast, other parts could be

'burned' by focusing extra light from the enlarger onto specific areas, resulting in darker tones. An 'OK' hand shape could be used for this, the hole between thumb and finger channelling a thin sliver of light onto the print, hence the hand-shaped icon for Photoshop's Burn Tool.

Of course, all this had to be done in the dark, without any feedback until the print was developed. It took patience, lots of skill and a good deal of trial and error to get right. Thankfully, it's much easier now. But, as you'll discover in this issue's video tutorial there's still great

skill in knowing where to dodge or burn, and how far to push it if you're going to achieve your best results.

### EXPERT TIP

There are other ways to lighten or darken parts of a photo. Perhaps the best are the masking tools in Camera Raw and Lightroom, which let you isolate areas to alter brightness, contrast and colour. Another great technique is to make a new empty layer, set the blending mode to Soft Light, and paint with white or black on the layer to lighten or darken it respectively.

G E A R

# LENS TEST

EXPERT OPINION ON THE LATEST KIT



## CANON RF 24-105MM F/2.8L IS USM Z

A standard lens is reborn

[www.canon.co.uk](http://www.canon.co.uk) [£3,440/\\$2,999](#)

Is there a more unexciting lens than a standard zoom? For years, we've been limited to a 24-105mm f/4 or 24-70mm f/2.8, but with only marginal improvements to each new generation it's hard to get too excited. Canon promised much when it launched the RF mount, with its RF 28-70mm f/2L USM being one of the few revolutionary standard zooms. Things then went quiet, but now we have the Canon RF 24-105mm f/2.8 IS USM Z...

### Key features

This is a 24-105mm lens with a constant f/2.8 aperture, which has

been the dream of many photographers. There's more to this lens, though; instead of being a photography lens that's also good for video, Canon has made a true hybrid lens. The company says it's intended to be the first in a new line of hybrid lenses, but also says these shouldn't be referred to as Z-line or Z lenses. The Z in the name stands for 'zoom', or rather 'power zoom', but isn't to be confused with other PZ or PTZ cameras. The lens doesn't have power zoom built in, however, and requires a Power Zoom Adapter for any assisted zooming functions – and Canon has you covered here, also announcing

1 The focus ring has been moved up front, with a wider texture.

2 There's a switch for selecting static, panning or general OIS.

3 The Z stands for 'zoom' but there's no built-in power zoom.

the PZ-E2 (with USB-C input) and the PZ-E2B, with an extra 20-pin connector for additional accessories. It seems that this lens is trying to offer a lot, then – but is it a jack of all trades and master of none?



## LENS TEST CANON RF 24-105MM F/2.8L IS USM Z



Centre sharpness is outstanding throughout the zoom range, but corner softness becomes increasingly apparent towards the 105mm end. Barrel distortion is pronounced, and like many modern lenses the RF 24-105mm f/2.8 relies on in-camera corrections

### Build and handling

There's no getting around the fact that the Canon RF 24-105mm f/2.8 IS USM Z is a big lens, making the Canon RF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM look almost compact in comparison. It's designed as a hybrid lens to straddle the world of stills lenses and cine lenses, and stills-only photographers might find the length surprising. Shooting out and about with this lens, I couldn't help feeling a little awkward when taking 24mm landscape shots – it may even be too big for photographers.

While the 24-105mm f/2.8 is long, it doesn't have much more girth to it than Canon's other lenses. Due to its extended length and intended hybrid

use, the RF 24-105mm f/2.8 comes with a tripod foot as standard, which was perfectly balanced with the Canon EOS R5 in testing. The extra size is not only to accommodate the wider aperture but also to fit in the new focus and aperture rings. The focus ring on the 24-105mm f/2.8 has been moved up front, with a wider texture that's slightly different from Canon's other RF L-series lenses.

The lens also packs in optical image stabilisation of up to five stops, going up to a combined eight stops when used with a compatible camera with in-body image stabilisation. The lens offers some additional control over the optical image stabilisation in

the same way as Canon's telephoto lenses, with a switch to select static, panning or general-purpose OIS.

The new aperture ring currently only works for video. It's silent, and there is no switch to turn the clicks on and off. The aperture ring turns smoothly, although a touch too easily. However, in stills mode, no matter what position the ring is in, the aperture is controlled by the camera dials.

### Performance

The 24-105mm range is the standard for many kit lenses, covering everything most photographers need from wide landscapes at 24mm through to a mid-telephoto length for portraits. Usually, this focal length range is perfect for travel or reportage photographers who need to capture a range of subjects without carrying multiple lenses, although the size of this lens means I'm not sure it fulfils that purpose.

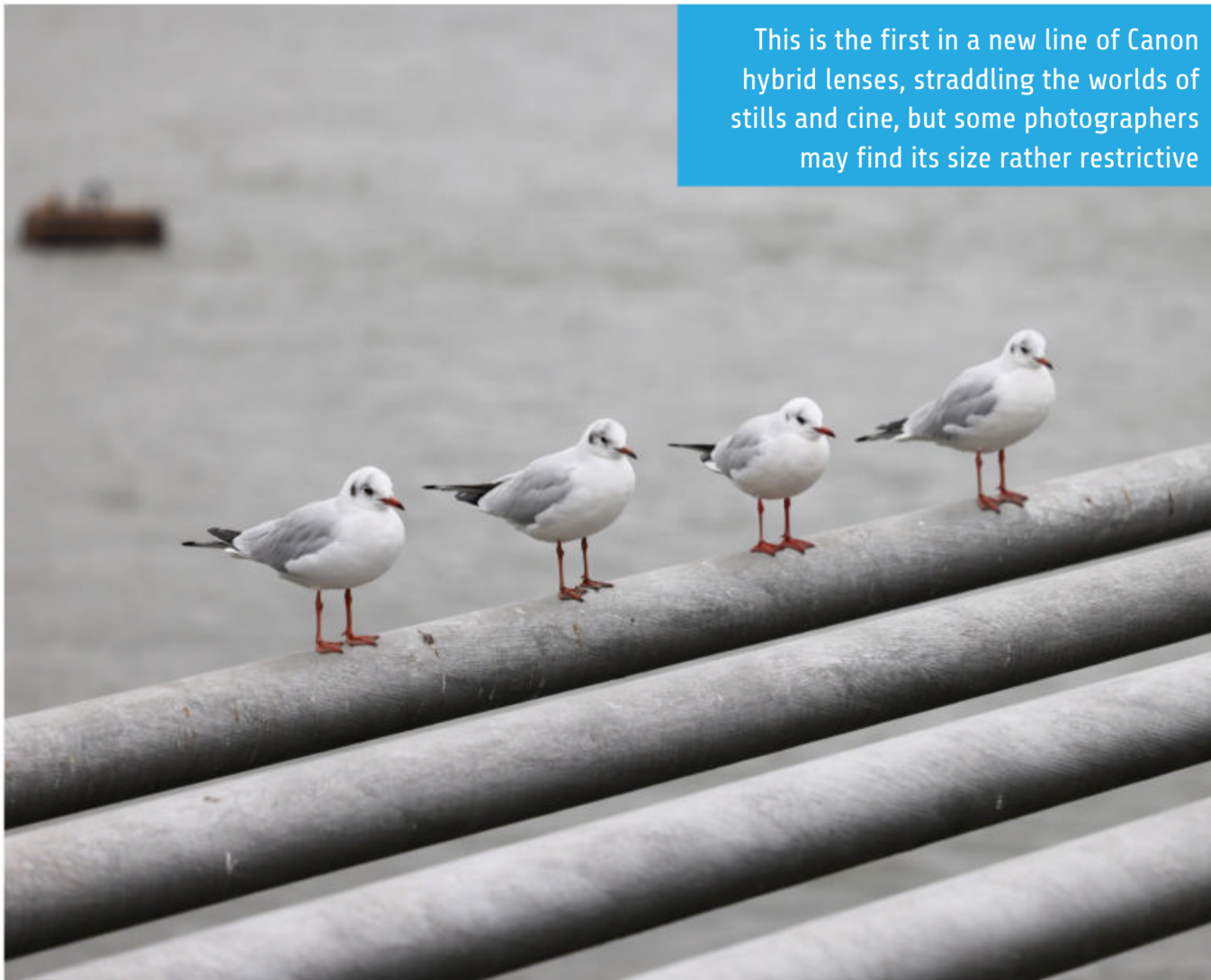
Sharpness is outstanding throughout the zoom range, with near-perfect results in the centre of the frame at every aperture. In the corners, the lens is excellent at apertures of around f/4 and above and, even at f/2.8, it produces impressive results – only the 105mm end shows some softness in the corners. There is some minor vignetting at the wide end, although this doesn't affect the telephoto end, and is nothing that can't be easily fixed in post.

For photographers, the big selling point is the availability of the f/2.8 aperture at the long end of the zoom range. This aperture is less prominent at wide angles for background separation, but makes for a more effective lens in low-light situations, allowing two more stops than the equivalent Canon RF 24-105mm f/4 lens. Zoom through the focal range and the maximum aperture begins to make a difference to the look of your images, with subject isolation that will make any portrait pop.

Canon's Nano USM autofocus system has proved itself many times, but it's worth repeating how silent and fast it is. With a Canon EOS R5,



LENS TEST CANON RF 24-105MM F/2.8L IS USM Z



This is the first in a new line of Canon hybrid lenses, straddling the worlds of stills and cine, but some photographers may find its size rather restrictive

focusing was speedy, with the AF snapping onto focus points quickly. Testing the camera and lens subject recognition on birds and animals, the lens autofocus keeps up. Image stabilisation was also rock-steady: when shooting static subjects in low light, I was able to drop the shutter speed at least five or six stops lower than anything I'd attempt without IS and still get a lot of usable shots.

As the first lens in Canon's new hybrid Z range, there are high expectations for video performance and, for anyone who's serious about video production, this is a fantastic lens. Image quality is as good as

S P E C S

**MOUNT:** CANON RF **FULL-FRAME:** YES  
**LENS CONSTRUCTION:** 23 ELEMENTS IN 18 GROUPS **AUTOFOCUS:** DUAL NANO USM  
**IMAGE STABILISATION:** 5.5 STOPS (OIS), 8 STOPS (OIS + IBIS) **MAX APERTURE:** F/2.8 **MIN APERTURE:** F/22 **DIAPHRAGM BLADES:** 11 **MIN FOCUS DISTANCE:** 45CM  
**MAX MAGNIFICATION:** 0.8X (24MM); 0.29X (105MM) **FILTER SIZE:** 82MM **SIZE (L X D):** 199 X 88.5MM **WEIGHT:** 1,350G



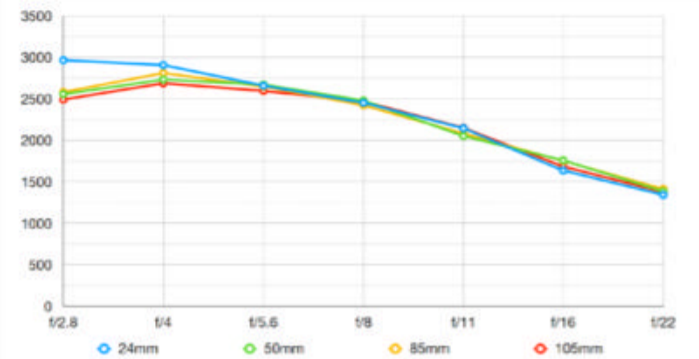
The 24-105mm range covers most photographers' needs, from wide landscapes at the 24mm end to a mid-telephoto length that's perfect for portraits

it is for stills, with the 4K footage I sampled using the EOS R5 looking clear and detailed. In my videos, panning and static shots handheld were smooth with few jitters. Focus breathing was also well-controlled.

Holding the lens steady handheld is more of a challenge due to its size and weight – after a minute or two, your arms will feel the strain and you'll need to prop this lens onto a video tripod, and the tripod foot is perfectly balanced with an EOS R5 attached for smooth tilting and movements.

Gareth Bevan

SHARPNESS



Sharpness in the centre of the frame is superb for any lens, let alone a zoom, but corner sharpness is a mixed bag. It's good at shorter focal lengths, provided that you stop down to f/5.6, but corner sharpness never gets above average at longer focal lengths.

FRINGING

SHORT 1.76 LONG 1.03

Colour fringing is visible at all tested focal lengths and apertures, but is most noticeable at 24mm and 85mm. These results were obtained with in-camera corrections disabled, so are a 'worst-case' scenario.

DISTORTION

SHORT -9.12 LONG 2.73

With corrections disabled, barrel distortion is pronounced at 24mm, then becomes slight pincushion at 50mm, and more pronounced pincushion as the focal length increases. Like many modern mirrorless lenses, the RF 24-105mm f/2.8 IS USM Z relies on in-camera corrections.

VERDICT

The RF 24-105mm f/2.8 IS USM Z is a hybrid lens that's designed to cater to the needs of both stills and video photographers, and does a decent job for both. The lens is much larger than the 24-105mm f/4 and 24-70mm f/2.8 models, and stills photographers might be taken aback by its size. However, it delivers exceptional quality, producing sharp results throughout the zoom range with only minimal softness at the long end. However, that price tag will be a major hurdle for all but dedicated professionals.





mpb.com



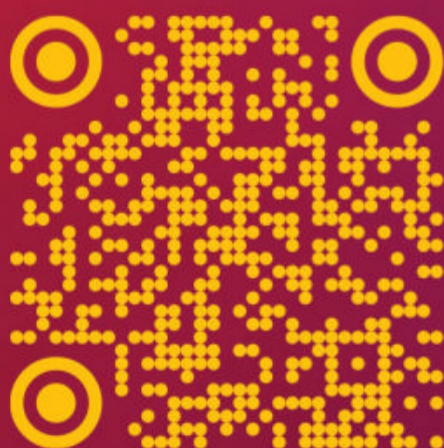
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