

It's not enough to have a technically sound photograph with the right focus and exposure. We looked at the technical do's and don'ts in the last issue of SWARA.

Composition – the way things are laid out in your image – is vital to get the viewer interested in what you have collected.

Let's look at shooting positions first of all: If you take a picture from the closest possible position to the subject's line of sight the result will be more natural and alive. Eyes are the windows of the soul. So try to link your lens to the subject's eye-line.

For example: If I take a picture of a tortoise, I lie down flat on the grass.

If I photograph a zebra from my car, the camera rests on the window.

If I photograph a giraffe I rotate the camera 90 degrees and try to position the animal's head in the upper part of the frame where our eyes are naturally drawn.

We've all seen platoons of tourists lining up on the roof of tour vans shooting endless bursts of photographs. But those pictures, taken from the top downwards, will only

result in images of wildlife flat on the ground with no depth or natural "feel."

Sometimes even moving the camera higher or lower can make the winning difference between a Delete Bin snap and a real photograph.

Don't forget the background either. Of course we concentrate on the subject, but the backdrop is a critical part of the composition too. How often have you downloaded images to the computer only to find subjects framed in leaning plains, dipping oceans or with branches or something else coming out of the subjects' head, giving them horns that nature never did?

Always take a look beyond the subject and try to marry the subject and background.

Some suggestions:

Avoid having the horizon split your subject into two equal but different backgrounds.

Try to balance the strong points of your image equally in the frame. Don't let one part enrich the image too much. The result is the same as a painting hung crooked on a wall.

Light coming in from the side creates shadows and light-plays, often with a spectacular result

Just a small shift in your shooting position will make a huge difference to the result.

Then there was LIGHT!

Light is everything. It gives the image life and renders it unique and unrepeatable. It's what stimulates the photographer's imagination and sense of creativity.

The best results are obtained with the subtle and magical light of the dawn, or with the warm light of the evening.

Shooting with the light behind you is the easiest way, as we know. But light coming in from the side creates shadows and light-plays, often with a spectacular result.

When you start out try shooting the same subject with *different apertures* and you will soon get the hang of how to maximise use of the light.

Last of all, and most importantly:

Try to have your subject **DOING SOMETHING!** For example, a picture of my cat playing with a ball of wool is much more interesting than one of a "ferocious" lion sleeping in the grass. Try it and see.

In my next class I shall be sharing Photographer's Secrets – how to get the animals' most interesting moments in the frame. ●

– Paolo Torchio

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