

How to be a junior wildlife photographer

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Wildlife lover McKinley Moens is a talent with camera in hand. The 15-year-old nature photographer from Springwood in NSW has shot a series of candid and close-up images of wildlife in their natural habitats.

“I got my first camera when I was three years old and have spent hours observing our wildlife,” she said. “I hope to become a professional nature photographer and ornithologist.”

McKinley has been recognised in a number of photography competitions, including being named a finalist in the 2020 BirdLife Australia Photography Awards.

“Animals are so fascinating and we still don’t know nearly enough about them, even the common species,” she said.

“The wildlife available to me in our garden includes 94 species of birds. We also have mammals, amphibians, reptiles — and of course loads of insects and arachnids.”

For those looking to take up wildlife photography, McKinley recommended being mindful, having common sense and showing respect for the wildlife being photographed. “An animal’s welfare is the absolute top priority,” she said. “Try to be at eye level and avoid using flash if you are in close proximity.

“Animals think of humans as predators too, so educate yourself about the natural behaviour of your subject and learn to recognise when it’s time to back off and give the animal some more room.”

Mum Veronica said: “Interest in our environment, our wildlife and conservation is more than just a hobby for us — it’s our way of life.

“Photography is a great opportunity to learn patience and persistence.”

McKinley's Wildlife Photography Tips

- An animal's welfare is the absolute top priority! The most important tip I can give is how important the ethics of wildlife photography are.
- Give animals the room to behave naturally and let them go about their business. Animals think of humans as predators too, so educate yourself about the natural behaviour of your subject and learn to recognise when it is time to back off and give the animal some more room.
- Don't alter an animal's habitat for a better scene. For example, don't remove plants if they are in your way; move yourself to a better position.
- It's all about the eyes. Try to be at eye level with the animal and make sure the eyes are in focus over other parts of the animal.
- Avoid using flash if you are close to an animal (if you don't like having a flash in your face, then animals won't appreciate it either).
- Find your own style of photography. Personally, I love macro photography because it shows a viewpoint that we don't always get to see.

<https://www.kidsnews.com.au/animals/how-to-be-a-junior-wildlife-photographer/news-story/7e7ad3a95ea2d8db84eaf59cf7e6d9b>