

Wildlife Photography

By Jan Latta



Above: Gerenuk always stand up to eat.



Right: Three menacing buffalos - they are very dangerous.

And sound is also important. Animals will react if a predator is close. Impalas point in the direction of the hunter and make a barking sound and monkeys give a warning screech. Elephants have different sounds for their moods – from a gentle rumble to a loud trumpeting. I had my first frightening experience when a 6 tonne bull elephant charged the jeep. But, it was only a mock charge and I felt safe with my African guide.

The most important lesson is patience. Waiting for hours and hours to get that magic shot. I searched for three weeks in India before I could photograph a tiger, and over ten years to photograph the elusive leopard. Never use flash in the wild. One, you will surprise the animal and it might attack and two, it'll run away and you won't be able to continue taking photographs.

Ammann has won the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the year award in 'The World in your Hands' section, five years in a row. He uses his photographic skills to show the world what is happening to the environment and the horror of the bush meat trade. Photographs can be shocking sometimes but they tell a vital story.

I have been so lucky to spend time with Kathy and Karl Ammann in their home in East Africa with their rescued chimps and cheetahs. I have walked with lions in Zambia, played with pandas in the mountains of China, rode elephants in India photographing tigers, and been groomed by Mzee, my favourite chimp. Such wonderful experiences!

I was inspired to become a wildlife photographer when I came face-to-face with a mountain gorilla in Rwanda. The experience changed my life. Coming down the mountain I asked my guide how many mountain gorillas were left in the world. He said less than 600. I thought that was very sad. So I decided to create books for children so they could learn about endangered animals. But first, I had to learn wildlife photography.

I joined Karl Ammann, a great wildlife photographer, on safaris. He said, "you must learn about the animals you will encounter in the wild. Do your homework on their eating habits, where they drink, and what predators hunt animals at waterholes. Look for pug marks and dung droppings, and that will tell you about the animal".

I felt a bit silly examining poo, but a necessary knowledge of being a wildlife photographer. Broken branches and leaves are also important. The elegant Gerenuk always stand up to eat, so when I see a tree with the leaves nibbled at one level, I know gerenuk are in the area.



The most magic moment of my life with two cheetahs.



I'm nervously crawling up to photograph a rhino.

If you want to become a photographer learn technique first. Get to know your camera and experiment with light, design and cropping. Research the 'subject' to be photographed. Google photographic schools and institutes for information.

If you can become an assistant to a photographer, this is a good way to learn.

Wildlife photography is the most exciting, adventurous profession. It is very expensive and often dangerous, but so rewarding.

For people interested in wildlife photography, you can learn more in a week with a professional

photographer in the wild, than a year at a photographic school. I recommend - www.jonathanangelascott.com

Jan Latta is an author, wildlife photographer and publisher of a series of ten 'True to Life Books' on endangered animals and author of 'Diary of a Wildlife Photographer'.

Jan is a guest speaker at schools and festivals in Australia and Asia.

More Information

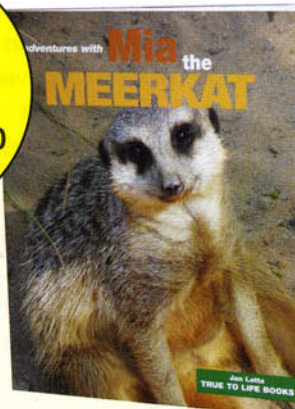
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Adventures with Mia the Meerkat

Author: Jan Latta

This great true to life tale of Mia the Meerkat and her family-what they eat, sleep, hunt for food and where they live. The photographs are extraordinary and the interesting facts about meerkats grab and hold attention throughout. I kept saying to my staff-did you know that meerkats had windscreens over their eyes-eat scorpions and many other similar remarks! Read it to your kids and become more knowledgeable on meerkats



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