

Top Tips for Taking Great Wildlife videos

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Camera and lens choices



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Take into consideration the following factors:

- DX or FX: the full-frame FX format size offers the ability to maximize beautiful shallow depth of field to isolate a subject from its background when using a short telephoto lens, while also enabling epic landscapes with a wideangle zoom such as the 17-35mm f/2.8D IF-ED. Alternatively, the smaller sized DX sensor boasts a crop advantage, so if your preferred subjects (e.g. birds) are often framed with longer lenses, then using a DX sensor with its 1.5x crop gives you extra reach with no compromise to resolution.
- Size and handling: a more compact camera body like the new D850 or D7500 will be easier to transport and handle, while the articulated screens on the D5600 and D5500 allow you to capture low-level angles without having to get your eye down to that level.
- Budget: a higher priced camera generally offers more manual control. More manual control gives you a wider range of ways to capture, but you may not need this, especially if your preference is to shoot in an automated mode.
- Resolution: which is better for your workflow?

36MP or 24MP still images? Resolution will be important if you plan on creating time-lapse sequences.

- Lenses: something like the 28-300mm f/3.5-5.6G ED VR or the new 180-400mm f/4E VR will allow you to shoot a quickly moving subject without the need to break and change lenses. AF-P NIKKORs such as the 10-20mm, 18-55mm or 70-300mm keep focus noise to a minimum when zooming, thanks to their built-in Stepping Motor.

Additional key kit

- Invest in a steady tripod and head: a good quality fluid head with the ability to pan and tilt so you can follow your subject smoothly is a must.
- Attach a variable ND filter set in the middle of its range to your lens, then during capture you can smoothly vary the amount of light that enters the lens by rotating the filter, meaning you don't have to stop recording to make exposure changes. Keeping the camera going is essential in wildlife shooting. You don't want to miss a crucial bit of action.
- When shooting video you're working in Live View mode, which can be challenging, especially in bright conditions, so invest in a lens shade, loupe or preferably an external monitor/electronic viewfinder (EVF), which is a much better way to judge composition, exposure and focus.
- Sound is just as evocative as an image. The camera's built-in microphones may pick up handling noises like focus or exposure change and even the sound of your breathing, so using an external microphone such as the wireless Nikon ME-W1 helps ensure you get better audio.

The power of manual focus



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One of the most challenging aspects to shooting wildlife footage is achieving focus. Most professionals don't use autofocus, not least because it will seek the object as you pan. With a moving animal you may move across foreground elements like a tree that can fool even the most intelligent AF system. Think about what happens when you're following a subject as it's walking through a forest – one moment the focus area is on the subject, then it passes over the trunk of a tree, then back onto the animal. Shooting manually gives you full control to place and keep the focus where you want it.

Manual focus also enables you to pull focus from one picture element to another – perhaps from an inanimate object such as a tree or rock, to the animal you want to introduce.

Whatever you select, remember that the biggest part of getting great wildlife footage is placing yourself in the action in the first place. Anticipate patiently and endure the conditions

and all ranges of weather until opportunities present themselves. Why not start experimenting by capturing the wildlife in your area? You never know what you may find.

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