

The Knight and His Steed

by Nicolas Reusens

Nicolas Reusens discusses his Sony World Photography Award-winning chance shot. He talks to **Oliver Atwell**

When I was a child, I collected all kinds of insects. They fascinated me, particularly when I imagined them to be huge monsters, almost human size. Many years later, when I became a photographer and started to discover the world of macro photography, I had the opportunity to make that vision a little more of a reality.

The process of macro photography is a steep learning curve. I learned early on that I had to make my images stand out by taking an artistic approach. I base my style on the other art forms that I love, such as paintings or sculptures, or, in many cases, the work of other macro photographers. Light is perhaps the most important part of the process, closely followed by the colour and background. It's also vital to strive to get the protagonist of your shot in focus and nicely framed. When you have those skills in place, you can move on to the next phase: that something extra, such as in this shot taken in the rainforests in Central America.

I was lucky enough to capture this image quite by chance. I was in the middle of a shoot of the red-eyed tree frog (*Agalychnis callidryas*), the most photographed species of frog on

Earth. It also happens to be one of my favourite subjects.

During the shoot, my colleague came across a sleeping Hercules beetle (*Dynastes hercules*). He carefully picked it up and brought it over, thinking I could photograph it later. I told him to leave it on a nearby branch and I could get to it when I was done with the frog. I kept shooting the frog, but it became nervous and made an astonishing 1.5-metre jump. Not content with that distance, the frog took another half-a-metre jump and landed right next to the sleeping beetle.

Once I'd recovered from the shock of that, I began to worry that the Hercules beetle was suddenly going to wake up and vent its frustration on the frog. However, my colleague, who is also a herpetologist and a frog specialist, told me there was absolutely no way it was going to wake up any time soon.

I had to quickly readjust the settings on my camera as this new location was a little more shady than my original location. Once I'd fired off a few shots, the frog decided it wasn't content with its new location and climbed over the beetle to move further along the branch. I had the chance to take five shots and only three of those were in focus.



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Although I was there to shoot the tree frog, I'm very happy that I also managed to get an image with a Hercules beetle. These are the most famous and largest of the rhinoceros beetles. Their title is well deserved, with some able to lift more than 850 times (up to 8kg) their own weight, with some males reaching 17cm.

For this shot, I used my full-frame Canon EOS 5D Mark III with my trusty Canon 100mm f/2.8 macro lens. I love shooting in extreme low-light situations and the EOS 5D Mark III is a super camera for this. The fact that I can increase the ISO without noticing it too much after processing the picture is great. The camera

body is also built to last, which is a vital asset considering some of locations in which I shoot. Also bear in mind I'm working with creatures that can move as quick as lightning, so the fast focus is a godsend.

Something I am often asked about this shot is: 'How do you find the right exposure in just a few seconds?' My reply is: 'You

only need concentration, luck and patience.' If the situation takes seconds to occur, be prepared to shoot even faster. Always have your gear ready if you need to change some parameters. If you know what kind of events may occur, have a plan B so you can adjust your gear faster. Basically, always notice the light.

FOLLOWING THE RULES

It is important to develop and follow your instinct during your career. You have to learn how to quickly apply the rules of photography even when you're working on the fly. For example, here we can see the application of the rule of thirds – the guideline that states that an image should be imagined as divided into nine equal parts by two equally

spaced horizontal lines and two equally spaced vertical lines. The important compositional elements should be placed along these lines or their intersections. You can see that's what I've done here. In photography, this is almost always a must as it adds more interest and even tension to the composition. But that's not to say you can't break that rule.

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