

INSPIRING AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS

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Presence

Ian Dodd

Action

Ryan Pierse

'Digital Dark Age' dilemma

How to preserve your
precious images

SHOOTING TIPS

- ▶ Big guns: longer telephoto lenses
- ▶ Planning an action shoot
- ▶ Shining light on the subject
- ▶ The real meaning of 'weather resistant'
- ▶ Flinders Ranges National Park

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Issue 64



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Olympus OM-D
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TAKING STOCK OF THE ACTION

The transition from snapping high school mates to being a sports photographer at the highest level has been a dream run for Ryan Pierse.

By Steve Packer

Steve Smith of Australia poses during a portrait session at Sydney Cricket Ground on 5 January, 2015.



‘Obviously, the bread and butter is getting the moment – getting the wicket, getting the gold, getting the celebration... But most of our photographers shoot with an artistic eye as well.’

As a senior sports photographer for Getty Images, Sydney-based Ryan Pierse is well used to dealing with the envy of his friends. ‘They say to me, “You get to go to all these big events and watch from the front row, or virtually on the pitch or the court or whatever.” I do, but it’s very different from being a spectator,’ he says.

For one thing, he can’t get emotionally involved in the moment or celebrate what happens. He has to keep his mind on the job and think about his next photo. At the same time, with technology and media competition being what they are these days, he has to download his photos to his laptop, crop and caption them, and send them off so picture editors all over the world have access to them within a few minutes of the action occurring.

For another thing, much of the time he doesn’t actually get to see the critical moments as they occur. He’s looking through a lens with the shutter up. ‘I wouldn’t say my memory of any event is a blur,’ he says, ‘but I remember the best pictures that came from them rather than the event itself.’

Still, he doesn’t take his enviable position for granted. He has always had a passion for sport, always wanted to be involved at the top level – ‘and if it wasn’t going to be as a player, then the media is the second-best thing.’

And if it’s going to be the media, it doesn’t get much better than Getty Images, the world’s leading visual communications company, headquartered in Seattle, Washington, with offices around the world. If it’s big in sport, a Getty Images team will be there. Pierse has worked at two summer Olympics and a winter Olympics, two Commonwealth Games, an Asian Games, two football World Cups, a Rugby World Cup, 15 Grand Slam tennis tournaments, 15 Formula One Grand Prix...

He has also been exclusively selected to shoot assignments for clients including Nike Global, the International Olympic Committee, FIFA, UEFA, the Laureus World Sport Awards, HBO television and Adidas Europe.

Since going on the 2013 Ashes tour to England, he has spent 80 per cent of his time photographing cricket. Which is fine with him, because he loves cricket (see boxed story).

Pierse is a self-taught photographer who got his start by taking pictures of his high school mates playing sport at lunchtime and on weekends. His first camera was his dad’s Nikon F50.

‘I stole it from him when I was about 15 and he never saw it again,’ he says. ‘My first sports lens was a Tamron 200-400mm f/5.6 zoom, which was good for what I needed at the time. Looking back, I’m glad I had an upbringing with basic manual focus, single-shot film cameras because, to an extent, the equipment these days does everything for you.’

By Year 12 Pierse was covering Aussie Rules, soccer, cricket and other sports for the local newspaper in the Essendon-Moonee Ponds area of Melbourne. He also developed and honed his skills by shooting ‘weird things’ such as adverts for car yards, Cash Converters and the like.

He says he learnt by making mistakes, plus picking up tips when working alongside experienced pros from the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* newspapers. ‘I used to learn something new every day, and I still do. I still enjoy making mistakes and learning from them.’

In 1999, when he was 19, he started working for the Essendon Football Club, covering all its games. As a massive Essendon fan, he thought he already had his dream job.

Around that time he started freelancing for Getty Images and after 18 months was offered a full-time job. ‘That first approach was a bit daunting. They like to throw people in at the

deep end, and they showed a lot of faith in me. Within a year or two, Getty Images gave me the opportunity to work from the United Kingdom office for four years, covering major sport in Europe. It was a completely different, super-competitive way of working, with five or 10 times the number of photographers at any event.’

If you’ve ever wondered what it’s like to be in one of those shoulder-to-shoulder clusters of photographers at a sports event, well, Pierse reveals that it’s ‘a strange little culture of its own’. You have your close mates and the colleagues you travel with, he says. ‘But on the whole, you’re in a pit with people you know by saying hello to them as you pass in the corridor. It’s quite weird working in such a close environment on that basis, and it’s very competitive. Everyone has their friends, but... there are people who aren’t so friendly as well.’

Pierse takes every opportunity to break away from the pack and look for a different shot, and being in a Getty Images team increases those opportunities. When a team is covering a lengthy event such as a cricket test or tennis tournament, it works to a daily roster that shares the shooting positions around. ‘It’s something that sets Getty Images apart,’ he says. ‘We can go to the less obvious positions, take a chance, and you sometimes get that one shot everyone’s looking for. And it also happens to be an exclusive.’

A case in point was a shot he got at the Australian Open in 2012. Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal battled it out in the final for more

David Warner of Australia celebrates after reaching his century on day three of the First Ashes Test match between Australia and England at The Gabba on 23 November, 2013 in Brisbane.



BIG GUNS

The uses, advantages and disadvantages of shooting with longer telephoto lenses.

Margaret Brown

Long telephoto lenses are most commonly used for sports and wildlife photography, although they can be used for many other applications. Unfortunately, they tend to be rather large, are often heavy and can be difficult to hold steady when framing shots.

Because distant objects cover much more of the lens's angle of view than they would with a wide-angle lens, subjects appear closer to the camera. This magnification also magnifies any camera shake that occurs during the exposure.

Tele lenses usually become longer, larger in diameter and heavier as their focal length increases. Beyond a certain point (which varies with the photographer's strength and experience), a lens becomes difficult to use hand-held.

Thanks to image stabilisation, hand-held shooting can be possible with some long lenses, particularly those in the 200mm to 400mm range. Beyond that point, even if stabilisation is available, longer lenses should be tripod mounted.

Choosing a long lens

Selecting a longer lens should be a matter of balancing lens speed against overall size and weight. Consumer tele lenses with focal lengths between 200mm and 500mm tend to have maximum apertures between f/4 and f/5.6, which isn't particularly fast.

Professional lenses are often a stop faster (which means they transmit twice as much light). However, with each increment of speed improvement, you can expect a large increase in the weight of the lens and its price tag. More glass is required to make faster lenses, which accounts for the increase in weight and price. Check out the comparison of three 400mm telephoto lenses for cameras with 36 x 24mm sensors in the table.

If lens speed isn't a prime factor, you can save money, reduce the carrying weight and obtain a telephoto zoom lens, which is likely to be more versatile and, thus, more convenient to



Fast telephoto lenses with focal lengths longer than 400mm are generally too large to use hand-held. A monopod (shown above) will provide some stability for photographers who need to shift shooting positions frequently – but a tripod will be more reliable.

	Weight	Diameter x length	Typical price tag
400mm f/5.6	1.25 kg	90 x 256.5 mm	< \$2000
400mm f/4	1.95 kg	128 x 233 mm	< \$8000
400mm f/2.8	3.85 kg	163 x 343 mm	< \$13,000

use. However, don't expect a fast lens with focal lengths of 400mm or more in 35mm format.

Third-party lens manufacturers like Tamron and Sigma have enjoyed considerable success with these lenses, with popular products at much lower prices. A few examples are listed below:

- Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 APO DG OS HSM lens sells for approximately \$1000 and weighs 1.91 kg.
- Sigma 150-600mm F5-6.3 DG OS HSM lens is priced at roughly \$2500. It weighs 2.86 kg and is 290mm long.

- Tamron SP AF 200-500mm F/5-6.3 Di lens weighs only 1.24 kg and is priced at around \$1600.
- Sigma 300-800mm f/5.6 APO EX DG HSM lens weighs a whopping 5.88 kg, is 544mm long and typically sells for around \$10,300.

Photographers who use cameras with smaller sensors can usually find smaller, lighter and cheaper lenses within the 300-600mm (35mm equivalent) focal length range. There aren't many prime lenses yet, but both Panasonic and Olympus produce zoom lenses that reach the

35mm equivalent focal length of 600mm. Both sell for well under \$750, the Panasonic Lumix G Vario 100-300mm f/4-5.6 MEGA OIS lens being slightly shorter and faster than the Olympus M.ZUIKO DIGITAL ED 75-300mm f/4.8-6.7 MkII lens. Olympus has a M.ZUIKO DIGITAL ED 300mm f/4 PRO lens under development; it's scheduled for release later in 2015 but no specifications are available yet.

Lenses for birding (and other wildlife)

Many wildlife photographers – particularly those specialising in bird photography – use cameras with smaller sensors, particularly cropped-sensor (APS-C) DSLRs, because they provide a greater 'reach' with a telephoto lens. For example, a 300mm lens on an APS-C body will have the

same angle of view as a 450mm lens on a 'full-frame' Nikon or Sony camera or 480mm on a Canon. The same focal length on a M4/3 camera becomes equivalent to 600mm in 35mm format due to the format's 2x crop factor.

Because their subjects are usually smaller and often more easily 'spooked', bird photographers have tighter requirements than photographers who shoot other wildlife. When shooting from hides, a focal length of at least 300mm (35mm equivalent) is the norm. Wider angles of view may be needed to capture birds in flight.

Lens speed is vital for shooting in low light levels but irrelevant when working in normal daylight. Zoom lenses can be useful, particularly if they include stabilisation and can focus quickly and accurately.



Even with smaller sensors, fast telephoto lenses are usually relatively large and heavy, as shown in this picture of a M4/3 camera with a 40-150mm f/2.8 zoom lens that covers the equivalent focal length range to 80-300mm in 35mm format. With the tripod mount, this lens weighs 880 grams, roughly double the weight of the camera body. (Source: Olympus.)



Cameras with smaller sensors provide an advantage for bird photographers. This shot was taken with a 75-300mm f/4.8-6.7 zoom lens on a M4/3 camera, using the 300mm focal length. The camera's EVF provided a bright view of the subject to make framing easy, while the background was far enough behind the subject to blur nicely, even with the relatively small f/6.7 maximum aperture.

Teleconverter (extender) lenses are popular with some photographers as a way to magnify subjects with existing lenses. But they reduce the amount of light entering the lens by the magnification factor and can make focusing difficult because the viewfinder becomes dimmer.

Lenses for Sport Photography

Choosing the right lens for photographing sport depends on how close you can get to the action and whether you want close-ups of participants or general views of the scene. Professional sports photographers gain access to the best vantage points at most organised sports. Consequently, when covering sports like football, tennis, basketball and cricket, they can shoot with full frame cameras and use shorter, faster telephoto lenses.

Photo enthusiasts who are forced to shoot from a grandstand can obtain worthwhile close-ups with telephoto lenses, particularly those longer than 400mm (35mm equivalent) – provided they use an APS-C or smaller format camera. The list below suggests 35mm equivalent focal

FLINDERS RANGES NATIONAL PARK

Less than a day's drive north of Adelaide, the Flinders Ranges is one of Australia's most inspiring and diverse landscapes.

Margaret Brown

Why visit?

Within reach of Adelaide and mostly accessible by two-wheel drive vehicles, the Flinders Ranges National Park presents an abundance of subjects for photographers, ranging from rugged mountains to spectacular gorges, tree-lined creeks and abundant wildlife. The area has great historical and geological significance and plenty of facilities for tourists, including guided tours, scenic flights and accommodation ranging from bush camping to four-star resorts.

This area has a rich cultural heritage, covering both Aboriginal and pastoral history. The Adnyamathanha people (meaning hills or rock people) are the traditional custodians of the land and their connections can be seen in ancient rock paintings and engravings at Arkaroo Rock, Sacred Canyon and Perawurtina Cultural Heritage Site.

European settlers came to the area in the 1850s. Remains of settlements and mines can be seen throughout the area, the most impressive being the restored Old Wilpena Station inside Wilpena Pound.

The Flinders Ranges provide plenty of scenic bushwalking tracks, with four walks and 14 hikes catering for people of different interests and abilities. Passing through the area is the Heysen Trail, a long distance walking trail that extends 1200 kilometres from Cape Jervis on the Fleurieu Peninsula to Parachilna Gorge, just north of the park.

Wildlife photographers can expect to find plenty of subjects, including the rare Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby, which can be seen in Brachina and Wilkawillina gorges. In spring, wildflowers are abundant, bringing in a variety of colourful birds. Emus and kangaroos are often seen near camping areas and in gorges.

When to go

Visitors can travel to the area almost any time of the year, although the middle of summer can be very hot and night temperatures often dip below freezing during winter. Campfires are prohibited during the summer; usually between late October and mid-April.

The best time to visit is between April and October, when daytime temperatures are comfortable for walking and cycling. Some walking trails may be closed when the risk of fires is very high.

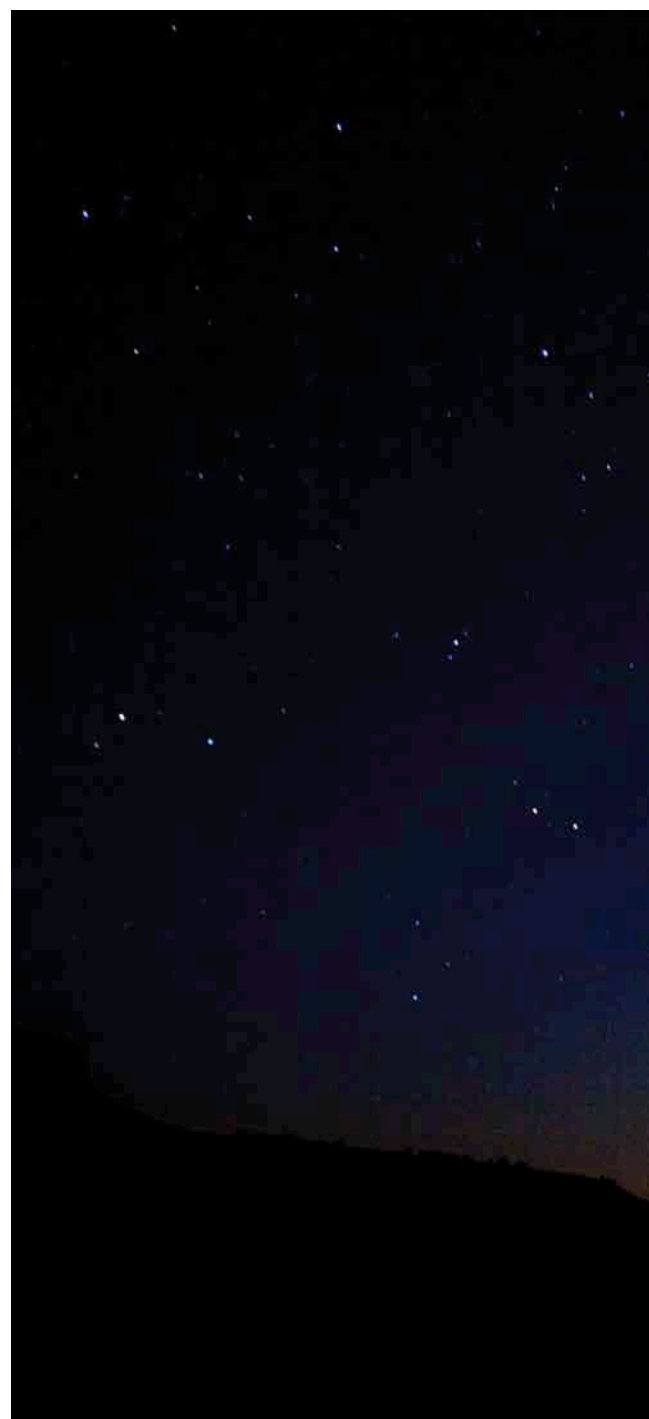
Rainfall is usually low throughout the year, but is most likely in the cooler months. When it rains, it is often the result of storms and flooding can occur, resulting in some road closures.

Getting there/ getting around

Most people drive to the area, either north from Adelaide, south from Leigh Creek or west from Broken Hill. Access roads are generally well signposted. From Adelaide, there are several routes to Hawker, the closest town to the park, which is reached by following the signs to Wilpena.

If travelling south from Leigh Creek, visitors can travel to Parachilna and then either enter the park from the north or west, or head east from Leigh Creek towards Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park, and then follow the signs south to the park. If approaching from Broken Hill, turn north at Yunta on the Arkaroola Road and follow signs to Blinman.

The main road through the park and into Wilpena Pound is sealed. Most other roads are unsealed and, although accessible by two-wheel drive vehicles, can be affected by weather conditions and vary in quality. Careful driving is essential.



Right: Night skies present a multitude of stars. This 30-second exposure was taken just as the moon was rising over Rawnsley Bluff on the outer edge of the Wilpena Pound.



IMAGE REVIEW



Catching a wave

By Graeme Edwards

Canon EOS 400D; EF-S 18-55mm @ 18mm; 0.5s; f/18; ISO 400

Adjustments in Lightroom for clarity, cropping, contrast, vignette, and toning.

It was Merimbula NSW on a very cold morning, waiting for the sunrise when a couple of surfers arrived. The wind was blowing but I waded to a rocky outcrop with my tripod. Even with waves around my knees I managed some good shots and kept my camera dry.

👉 Don's response

You don't need to be a surfer to appreciate just how challenging the conditions are for the subject of Graeme Edwards' 'Catching a Wave'. In fact I should imagine many non-surfers would wonder what on earth this chap is thinking given that glowering sky and those menacing rocks being pounded by great green-faced waves.



Silveryeye

By Jason Anderson

Nikon D700; Tokina 300mm; f/4

The little but beautiful Silveryeye. I love how this image came out and one day I would love to be a pro nature/wildlife photographer. In short, I love animals and nature and I love photographing them.

Don's response

Jason Anderson's study of a Silveryeye perched on a Grevillea would make a fine bird guide or textbook illustration. The composition is balanced and the subject is at just the right angle to see the key details of its plumage. Focus, ever a challenge with bird photography, is just about perfect and the soft light (a cloudy day perhaps) delivers studio-grade modeling. Add in a delicately modulated background and only the most minimal out of focus foreground elements, and I think there's much to admire in the craft of this image.

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