



FINAL CLASS

PHOTO MASTERCLASS PART 21

THE WORLD IN OUR HANDS



Global warming, habitat destruction and exploitation of rare animals – these are just some of the major issues affecting the natural world today. Photography can highlight a crisis, document the damage it's causing and inspire us all to do something about it.

WITH WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER MARK CARWARDINE

IN THE FINAL INSTALMENT of our Photo Masterclass series, we'll be giving something back to the world that inspired us to take up photography in the first place. We'll discover ways of using what we've learnt over the past two years to help protect wildlife and wild places.

Photography plays a critical, though seldom recognised, role in conservation. By illustrating the beauty of the natural world, and the ways in which it is being damaged and destroyed, it is possible to touch people's hearts and change their minds in a way that words can't.

In 1968, during the first manned reconnaissance mission to the Moon, astronaut Colonel William Anders held his Hasselblad camera to the Apollo 8 window and took a picture of his home planet. Many attribute the

birth of the global ecology movement to that incredible image, which showed the beauty and fragility of the Earth for the very first time.

Much earlier, Yosemite National Park was preserved largely due to photography from the 1860s. During the 1930s, Ansel Adams' beautifully crafted images persuaded President Roosevelt to establish King's Canyon National Park. And most recently, *National Geographic* photographer Michael 'Nick' Nichols teamed up with ecologist Mike Fay for a 2,000-mile trek across the Congo Basin, leading to new protected areas there.

We can all help to document problems and progress, demonstrate issues and inspire conservation action by taking photographs with a mission.

▲ Mark Edwards' striking image of a young boy with arms stretched across an old ironwood tree in Nigeria raises many questions. The contrast of the old and dead with the young and alive is stark, but the obvious question is: what will happen to the boy now that his environment has been destroyed?

MEET THE EXPERT...

Every issue, our world famous photographers share their knowledge and skills.

MARK EDWARDS UK

Mark Edwards won a UN award for environmental achievement in 1990. After decades of work, his latest book, *Hard Rain: Our headlong collision with nature*, was published in 2006.



As the Apollo 11 astronauts were approaching the Moon in 1969, Mark Edwards was lost in the Sahara Desert. He was rescued by a Tuareg nomad who made a fire, produced a cassette player and proceeded to play Bob Dylan. As the Tuareg prepared for the night, Mark listened to *A Hard Rain's a-gonna Fall* and was inspired to illustrate the song by photographing our headlong collision with nature.

Mark has achieved his ambition with images from nearly 150 countries to create *Hard Rain*, a powerful exhibition exploring the issues that will define the 21st century. "It took Dylan 30 minutes to write those prophetic lyrics," laughs Mark. "It's taken me nearly three decades to illustrate them."

"Photography has a crucial role to play in conservation," he continues. "Our visual memories consist mainly of pictures rather than moving images. When we think about major events in history – the first man on the Moon for instance, or the destruction of the Twin Towers – it's the still images that we recall most readily."

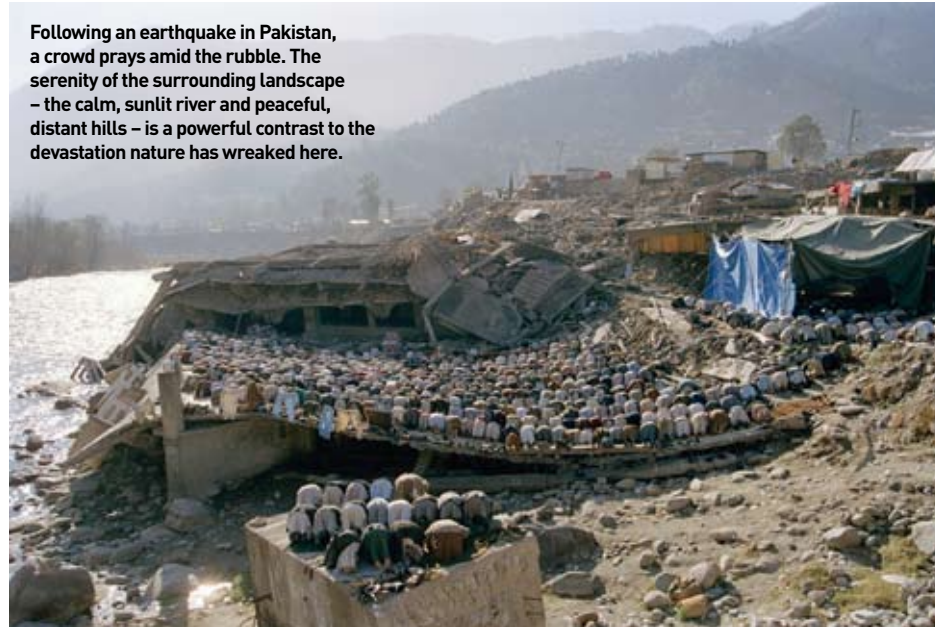
"Extra energy comes from a genuine passion for your subject."

Mark has resisted pressure to turn digital and still uses film. "I like the honesty of film," he explains. "And I'd rather be out there taking pictures than learning about new technology." He takes lots of photos, but is a very tough editor of his own work. "You need an extra level of energy to get truly great images. And that extra energy comes from a genuine passion for your subject."

Hard Rain (see Editor's choice, September) is an ongoing environmental campaign. For more information, visit www.hardrainproject.com

Mark Edwards' top tips for taking pictures with meaning

Following an earthquake in Pakistan, a crowd prays amid the rubble. The serenity of the surrounding landscape – the calm, sunlit river and peaceful, distant hills – is a powerful contrast to the devastation nature has wreaked here.



1 Keep your eye moving

There's a big difference between the image you see in the viewfinder (when your eye tends to zoom in on the central subject) and the one you see in the final print (when the outer edge is an equally powerful part of the composition). Mark checks the edges through his viewfinder so carefully that he has only ever cropped a couple of his pictures.



A spontaneous display of affection between children in a Mexico City slum. You need to act fast to catch moments like this on film.

2 Perfect your technique

"There aren't many truly great moments when you're taking pictures," says Mark, "and it would be awful to miss them because you're too busy fumbling with your camera controls." It's crucial to make sure that using your equipment becomes second nature, so that you can leave yourself open to chance encounters, safe in the knowledge that you'll be able to react quickly.

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE...

Mark Carwardine shows you how to apply the theory to get the perfect picture.

1 TELL A STORY



- » **Try to capture the essence** of a conservation issue in a single photo. A strong image of one subject can have a greater impact than a series of different pictures.
- » **Research the issue carefully** and decide what needs to be included in your composition before you start shooting.
- » **This picture shows** the discarded head of a dusky dolphin killed by fishermen in Peru. The decapitated animal, lying in a pool of its own blood, summarises the issue without showing the actual slaughter. It was used in a campaign to make the hunt illegal.

2 SHOW CONSERVATION IN ACTION



- » **Take photos of people** studying, rescuing and protecting wildlife. People are fundamental to any conservation effort and pictures of them can make stories more 'real' and easier to understand.
- » **Get the people in your images involved** and explain what you are trying to achieve. Give them copies of the photos afterwards as a thank you.
- » **This picture shows** an anti-poaching patrol in Bokor National Park, Cambodia. The fact that it has been taken at night adds drama and gives the image greater impact.

3 SHOOT SYMBOLICALLY



- » **Try to be more imaginative** in your approach to conservation photography. Shoot symbolically. Find ways of representing an issue with an abstract or artistic approach.
- » **Try to identify something iconic** – tackle your photography in the same way a writer might approach their subject by editing it down to one or two key points.
- » **This picture shows** the horns of a black rhino close-up. It reveals neither the rhino itself nor any poachers, but uses the most valuable part of the animal to illustrate a well-known conservation problem.

4 TRY TO INSPIRE



- » **Learn from Ansel Adams** and try to capture the beauty and majesty of wildlife and wild places. Don't just take beautiful pictures – include them in your conservation portfolio.
- » **Help conservation groups.** Share your images to inspire and move people enough for them to want to take action.
- » **This picture shows** a group of humpback whales feeding in south-east Alaska. The rugged mountains in the background give a sense of place. The picture could be used to illustrate either the whales themselves or their wilderness home.



ESSENTIAL KIT... DIGITAL COMPACT

Many environmental photographers carry digital compact cameras with them at all times, because good pictures often present themselves when least expected (and when the main 'kit' is safely packed away at home). A digital compact does have limitations – the lens is not interchangeable and the quality of the images is rarely as good as those taken with more expensive D-SLRs. But you don't need to remortgage the house to buy one and it's small enough to carry in your pocket.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- » **Zoom lens capabilities** – a good optical zoom range is important (ignore digital zoom – it's the same as cropping on the computer afterwards).
- » **Image size** – 8 megapixels or more is preferable for publication purposes.
- » **Ease of use** – make sure all the controls are easy to access and understand.
- » **Features** – there should be sufficient manual override for serious photography.

CHEAPER ALTERNATIVES:

- » **Older models** – with technology developing so quickly, the fastest and most efficient model today will soon be replaced by something new. Keep an eye out for otherwise decent cameras that have recently been discontinued – you can get a real bargain if you time it right.

DOS & DON'TS

- » **DO research and understand** the issues to tell an accurate story.
- » **DO study magazines** and newsletters published by conservation organisations to identify the kind of pictures being used to illustrate their issues and campaigns.
- » **DO try to show the positive aspects** of conservation as well as negative ones.
- » **DON'T ever digitally manipulate** environmental images – they must always be true and trustworthy.

MASTERCLASS CHALLENGE UK...



Photographer **DAVID WOODFALL** explains how you can use your photography to help conserve local wildlife and natural havens.

Use counterpoint

Wherever you live, things are changing. This is your chance to be a documentary photographer. Consult your local planning authority and listen to rumours and campaign groups. For an impactful image, balance the destructive activity – here building on a floodplain – with a symbolic feature, such as this spire. This is counterpoint.



Target people in power

Do you have wildlife or wild places in your area that matter to you? If so, use your photography to send simple but strong messages to the people in power whose decisions affect nature in your neighbourhood. Email pictures of places where you engage with nature, or species you would hate to lose, to your local mayor, councillor or MEP with a brief message.



Document positive action

There are thousands of volunteers helping to manage land for conservation throughout the UK. Why not help to document their excellent work with your photographs? Contact organisations such as the BTCV, National Trust and local authorities to find out what's happening near you and join in. Planting trees gives good opportunities.



Bring litter to light

One of the biggest problems affecting wildlife and green spaces is litter – it is everywhere! Look for images to illustrate this problem in retail and car parks, on beaches and streets and at the edge of landfill sites. Document its impact on wildlife – many small mammals die in discarded bottles – or ruining the appearance of an ancient tree or beautiful scenery.



MASTERCLASS READER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

This is your last chance to enter our Photo Masterclass. Apply all our experts' hints and tips to take photos of British conservation issues. Upload your images on our website and the winning shot will be published in *BBC Wildlife*. Thanks to everyone who has entered over the past two years – we've enjoyed your images each month.

HOW TO ENTER

Log on to www.bbcwildlifemagazine.com and click on Photo Masterclass, then follow the instructions to upload your images. Closing date: Wednesday 24 Oct.

RULES 1) The contest is open to amateurs only. 2) Up to 8 entries per person. 3) Entry of a picture constitutes a grant to BBC Worldwide to publish it in all media. 4) Entries will be judged by *BBC Wildlife*. 5) The winning image will be published in the December issue. 6) No correspondence will be entered into and winners will not be notified. 7) Entries will not be accepted by post or email. 8) Image file names must include your full name.



'EXTREME CLOSE-UP' WINNER: MAGGIE MANSON
Using a low angle, Maggie has created an intimate portrait of a shieldbug. You can clearly see the detail of its eyes, legs and carapace, complemented by the diffuse backdrop. You feel like you're part of its world – it's not often you look such a tiny insect in the eye.