

DVD: Successful Wildlife Videography with Mike Linley

Producer: Generic Pool Productions

Reviewed by James MacGregor

Wildlife films have long been family favourites on TV, but the smooth and easy presentation of the earth's fauna on the box belies the infinite patience and dedicated professionalism of the men and women who set out to capture it on film. This special interest video DVD gives us the inside story. And for those who feel they would enjoy the challenge of making wildlife films, as much as watching them, this DVD not only gets you in the field, but makes sure you are equipped and prepared for the job.

Aimed at anyone with a yearning to write, film or produce wildlife films, this DVD will certainly improve the chances of success. Presenter Mike Linley is an experienced wildlife professional, with over 20 years as a filmmaker and as a producer with Anglia's Survival TV programme. The 140-minute long presentation starts from basic camera equipment and using it in wildlife shooting, through field craft to help you get your shots, to ordering those shots in post production to make effective screen narratives with your material. The DVD is interesting and varied enough to be able to watch right through at one sitting, but invariably, with this much information, it is conveniently divided into chapters. The chapter menu is three pages long, showing just how wide-ranging the instruction is but making it easy to locate specific topics for review whenever needed.

The technical stuff on cameras, lenses and matte boxes is detailed, though relating mostly to the JVC range of HDV cameras. Are no other cameras used for wildlife filmmaking? I doubt it. But there's also useful information on macro-photography using microscopes and peering down burrows with endoscopes, as well as prepping and shooting in studio tanks for detailed close-ups of some animals. Also covered in preparation time are things like clothing, outdoor hides and camouflage, food and drink and that one absolute, personal, hide essential, the bladder relief container!

In the field, the importance of wind direction is revealed and the need to approach any animal upwind, as well as the importance of not using deodorant, scent or aftershave if you wish to avoid detection by your target. All this information is smoothly delivered by Mike Linley who has a good clear broadcast voice and an engaging manner on screen, backed by lots of wildlife film. This was all shot in the UK, though some exotic animals were in wildlife parks rather than native habitat, but I would defy anyone to tell the difference in these shots. Avoiding the filming of fence posts, wire mesh and other containment fixtures which you may not want appearing in your wildlife film is also covered.

Plenty of advice is given on framing your target animals and on how to cope with each animal's "circle of fear" (which you should not breach) and how to make maximum use of natural light for backlighting subjects and the "magic hour" to get rich colour tones. Also covered is the creative use of filters for many shots to improve colour saturation to get a richer, better background for your subject, or for fish photography from above the waterline.

The DVD is clearly a must for anyone determined enough and patient enough to become a wildlife filmmaker. Studying it will equip you far better for shooting in the field and will help you to come up with creative programme ideas and tell your wildlife story well, as a narrative. If you haven't got the stamina and endurance needed to cover wildlife, studying this film will certainly help you discover if you should be focusing your efforts elsewhere. Many of the techniques revealed in this DVD are applicable in other areas of film work too, so whatever your ultimate destination, this is a worthwhile package to help get you there.

Price: ukp39.95 + ukp2.95 p&p

[www.wildlifefilmmaking.co.uk](http://www.wildlifefilmmaking.co.uk)