

Coombe Bissett Down



Nature Photography Guide

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<http://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/>

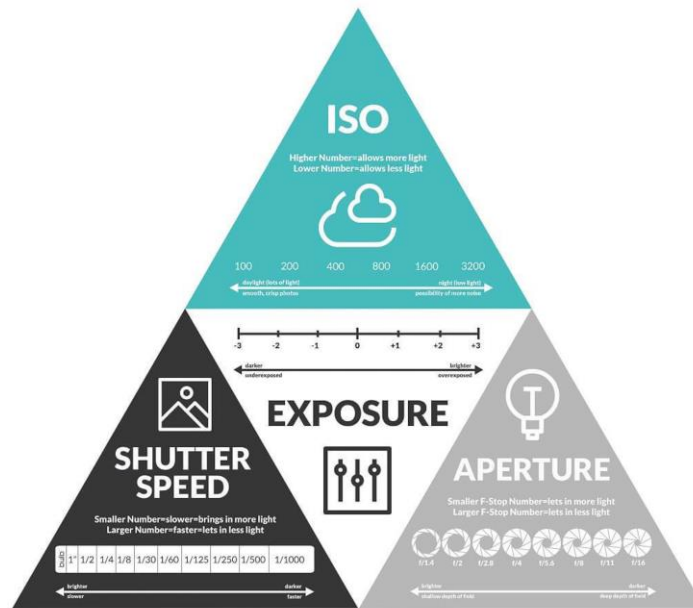
Introduction

Nature Photography is a popular and accessible field of photography. Wiltshire is a relatively wildlife rich County, though it has not escaped the impact of intensive farming, or development pressures. This guide is meant as an introduction to the diversity of wildlife and habitats that can be found in Wiltshire with a focus on the Chalk Downland Landscapes and Ancient Meadow habitats that are so well represented on Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Reserves.



Coombe Bissett Down Nature Reserve. The use of a wide-angle lens (16-35mm) enables the inclusion of flowers, close-up in the foreground and a perspective which includes the wider habitat and landscape. **Lens 16-35 Zoom.**
Focal length 16mm, ISO 800, F16, 1/40 Sec Tripod

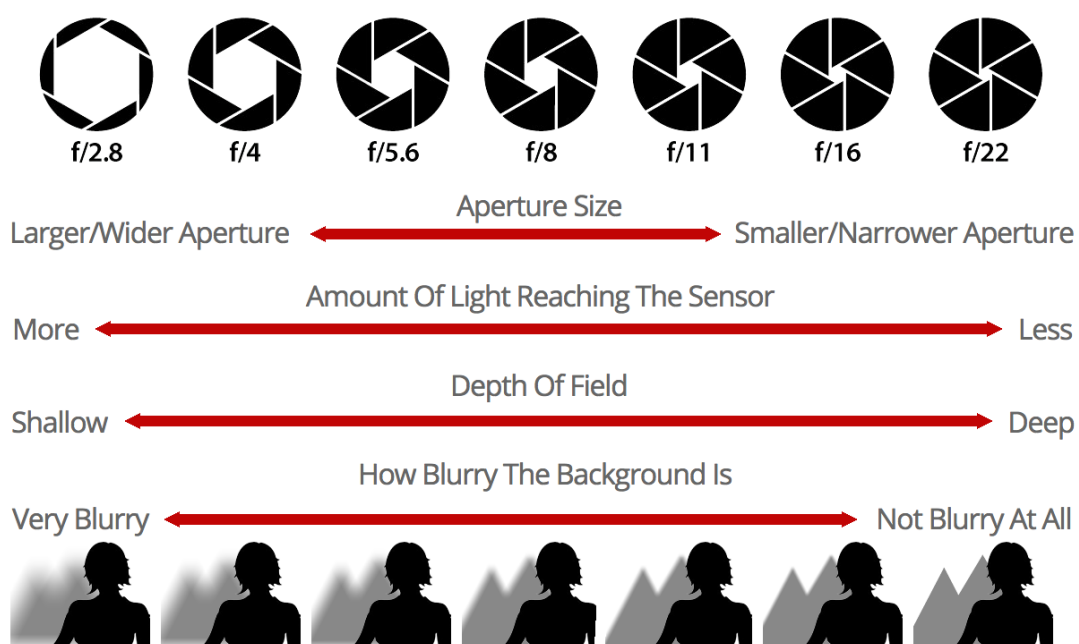
THE EXPOSURE TRIANGLE



<https://www.lightroompresets.com/blogs/pretty-presets-blog/exposure-triangle-how-iso-aperture-and-shutter-speed-work-together>

The Exposure Triangle. All photography is essentially about the capturing of light. With modern cameras an image of a subject is captured as a digital file made up of tens of thousands of pixels each representing a different colour value. A correctly balanced exposure is a combination of three things: **Shutter Speed**, **Aperture** and **ISO** setting (ISO being a measure of the sensitivity of the camera sensor to light). In most cameras all of these settings can be adjusted manually or set automatically. I always set the camera to **Aperture Priority** which gives me control over the **depth of field**, as it is the relative sharpness of the subject that I want to prioritize and have control over. Depending on the ambient light levels (dull or sunny), I will also adjust the **ISO** setting manually, which allows me to achieve a faster shutter speed while retaining the desired **Aperture** setting. This will depend on the depth of field that I want to achieve.

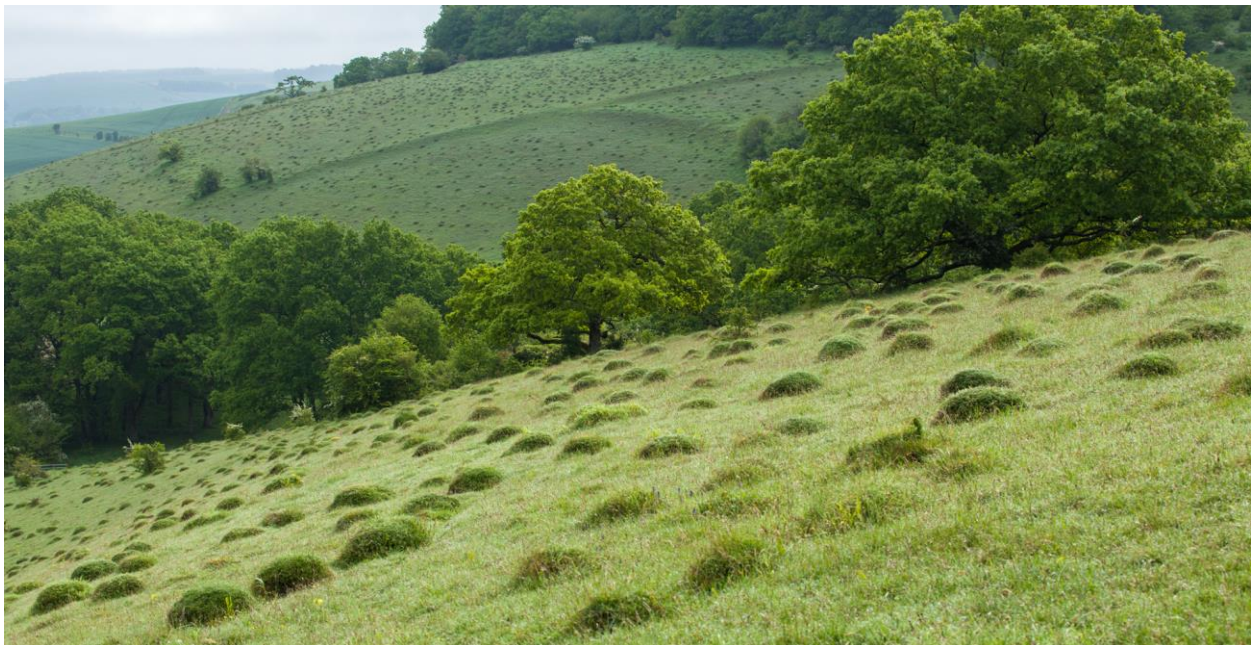
Diagram illustrating the effect of changing the Aperture; on the amount of light reaching the sensor; the Depth of Field; and how in focus (blurry) the background is.



<https://photographypro.com/aperture/>



Little Langford Down. Ant hill covered in **wild thyme** and **common rock rose**. A wide-angle lens (16-35 zoom) enables a strong foreground interest in this landscape image. It's helpful to have interest in the foreground, mid ground and background of an image. A small aperture (F22) enables the image to be sharp from the foreground to the background. **Lens 16-35 Zoom, Focal Length 16mm, ISO 200, F22, 1/8 Sec, Tripod.**



Little Langford Down looking across to **Perham Down**. Ant hills of the **yellow meadow ant** are indicative of chalk downland that has never been ploughed or agriculturally improved. Use of a zoom lens (70-300mm) helps with creating a pleasing composition. It also compresses the perspective bringing the background closer the foreground. A wide angle lens does the opposite, making the background more distant from the foreground. **Lens 70-300 Zoom, Focal Length 70mm, ISO 400, F8, 1/400 Sec, Tripod.**



View across to **Woodborough Hill** from **Pewsey Downs National Nature Reserve**. This image illustrates the wonderfully folded downland landscape so characteristic of the Wiltshire chalk. A strong foreground interest including the anthills, shows both ecological and geological interest expressed in one image. Salisbury Plain is in the distance.
Lens 24-105 Zoom, Focal Length 50mm, ISO 100, F11, 1/25 Sec, Tripod.



Strip lynchets on the **Mere Downs**, south Wiltshire. The chalk landscape of Wiltshire is full of ancient landscape features, such as hill forts, barrows and lynchets which add significant interest to landscape compositions. **Lens 24-105 Zoom. Focal Length 40m, ISO 100, F11, 1/60 Sec, Handheld.**



Orange tip male on **red campion** (left) and **Snakeshead fritillary** (right). On cool (but bright spring days) orange tip butterflies can be found at rest on flower heads when the sun is obscured by clouds. They can be approached (carefully). Selecting a clean background, and a medium aperture (f8) ensures a sharp subject against a soft out of focus background. Left, **Lens 100mm Macro USM, ISO 200, F8, 1/8 Sec, Tripod**. Right, **Lens 100mm Macro USM, ISO 400, F8, 1/40 Sec, Tripod**.



Orange Tip Female on **Hedge garlic** (one of the butterfly's foodplants). Keeping the plane of focus of the lens parallel to the butterfly's wings ensures the butterfly is sharp from wing tip to wing tip. Photographing butterflies basking in weak overcast light helps avoid harsh shadows in the background. **Lens 100mm Macro, Focal Length 100mm, ISO 400, F8, 1/500 Sec, Handheld**.



Marsh Fritillary female. The female is slightly larger than the male and has a more rounded swollen abdomen, full of eggs which are laid in a large batch on the underside of a **Devil's bit scabious** leaf. On cool but bright days butterflies can be approached as they bask in the sun to warm up. Using a sufficiently high ISO setting (800) enables you to handhold the camera without the need to use a tripod. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F8, 1/160 Sec, Handheld.**



Marsh Fritillary pair mating. The female (left) is slightly larger than the male (right). When paired it's possible to approach (with care) and compose without the butterflies flying away. Using a sufficiently high ISO setting (800) enables you to handhold the camera without the need to use a tripod. It is important to ensure that you keep the camera's plane of focus parallel to the butterfly's wings. In this case lying on my stomach on the short downland turf. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F8, 1/125 Sec, Handheld.**



Male (left) and Female (right) Brimstone butterflies. The male is a bright yellow while the female is a light pale green. The female lays her eggs on the chalk shrub **Purging Buckthorn**. Brimstone butterfly's always hold their wings closed together and can be approached when nectaring on flowers heads. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 100, F8, 1/200 Sec, Handheld.**



Small Copper (left) butterflies breed on sheep's sorrel. A delightful little butterfly, they often perch basking head down with their wings held open at an angle. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F8, 1/80 Sec, Tripod.** **Small Blue (right),** our smallest butterfly, breeds on **Kidney vetch** a common chalk downland plant. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F6.3, 1/100 Sec, Tripod.**



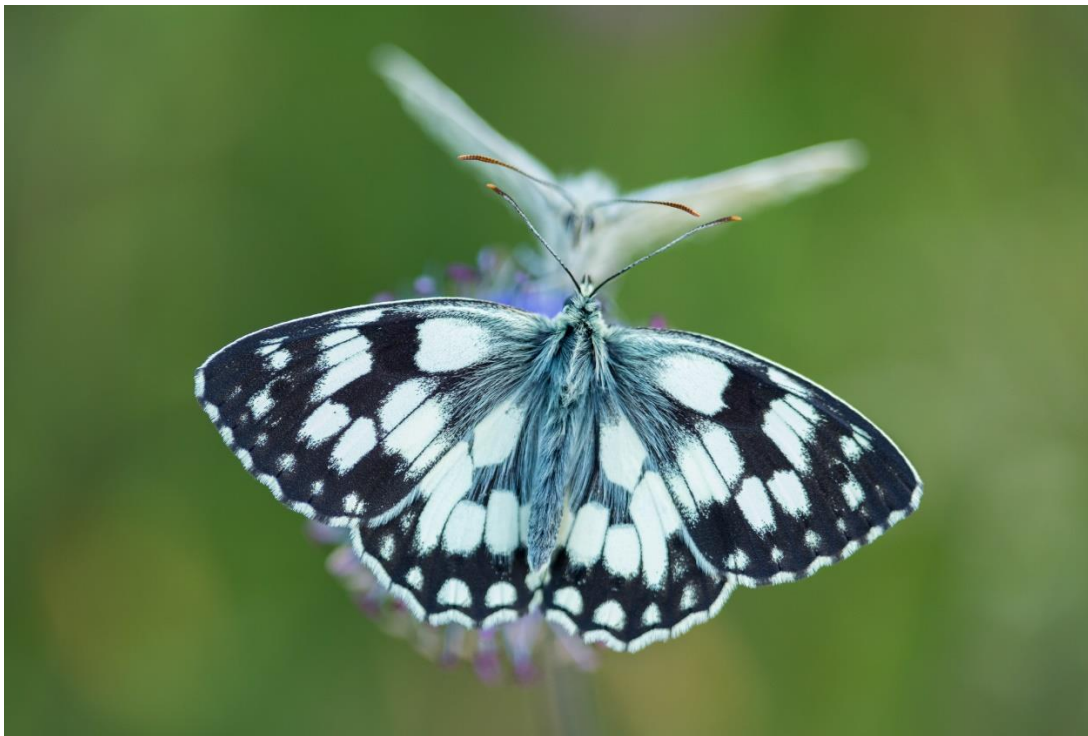
Marbled White male. It's often good to show a butterfly as a relatively small subject in the frame, illustrating the habitat context of the butterfly. This marbled white is captured basking in weak light early in the morning. Butterflies bask as a means to warm up before taking their first flight of the morning. Marbled whites are one of the easier butterflies to approach and photograph when the morning air is cool. I have deliberately used a wide aperture (f5.6) to ensure the background is soft and out of focus. Note also the high ISO setting (1600) due to the lower light levels in early morning, allowing me to retain a high shutter speed (1/250 sec). **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 1600, F5.6, 1/250 Sec, Tripod.**



Marbled White male. A simple change of perspective, photographing the butterfly from the opposite side. In the above image the background is in shade providing an evenly lit cool tone to the background. In this image early morning light lights up the background providing brighter, warmer tones to the background. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, 1/80 sec, F8, Tripod.** Note the additional light levels mean I've been able to lower the ISO (800) while also reducing the aperture (F8).



Marbled white butterflies often roost overnight close together amongst grasses or on sheltered flower stems, in this case on **Devil's bit scabious**. It's worth seeking these out as it can result in some interesting opportunities. I have concentrated on ensuring the plane of focus is parallel to the wings of the butterfly on the left of the frame. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 1600, F5.6, 1/400 Sec, Tripod.**



Marbled white butterflies. In this case I have moved around by ninety degrees, photographing the same pair of butterflies. The plane of focus is absolutely parallel with the butterfly's wings, which has opened its wings wide to bask compared to the previous image. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F2.8, 1/320 Sec, Tripod.**



Dark Green Fritillary male, basking. **Roundway Down Devizes**. Dark green fritillary males are very active, usually flying rapidly low down across grassland in search of emerging females. Males will bask in weak sunlight to warm up, often on an area of bare ground. Note the high ISO setting (800) ensuring I can still retain a high shutter speed (1/400) at the desired aperture (f8), while handholding the camera. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F8, 1/400 Sec, Handheld.**



Dark Green Fritillary male, underside. **Roundway Down Devizes**. It was essential to have the plane of focus parallel to the wings of the butterfly. This meant lying flat on my stomach as the butterfly was resting low down on a patch of **wild thyme**. When hand holding the camera for butterfly photography it is very important to use a fast shutter speed (eg. 1/200 sec or higher) to avoid any obvious camera shake, while trying to hold the camera as steady as possible. This is ensured by using a high ISO setting (800 or above depending on the ambient light levels). **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F7.1, 1/200 Sec, Handheld.**



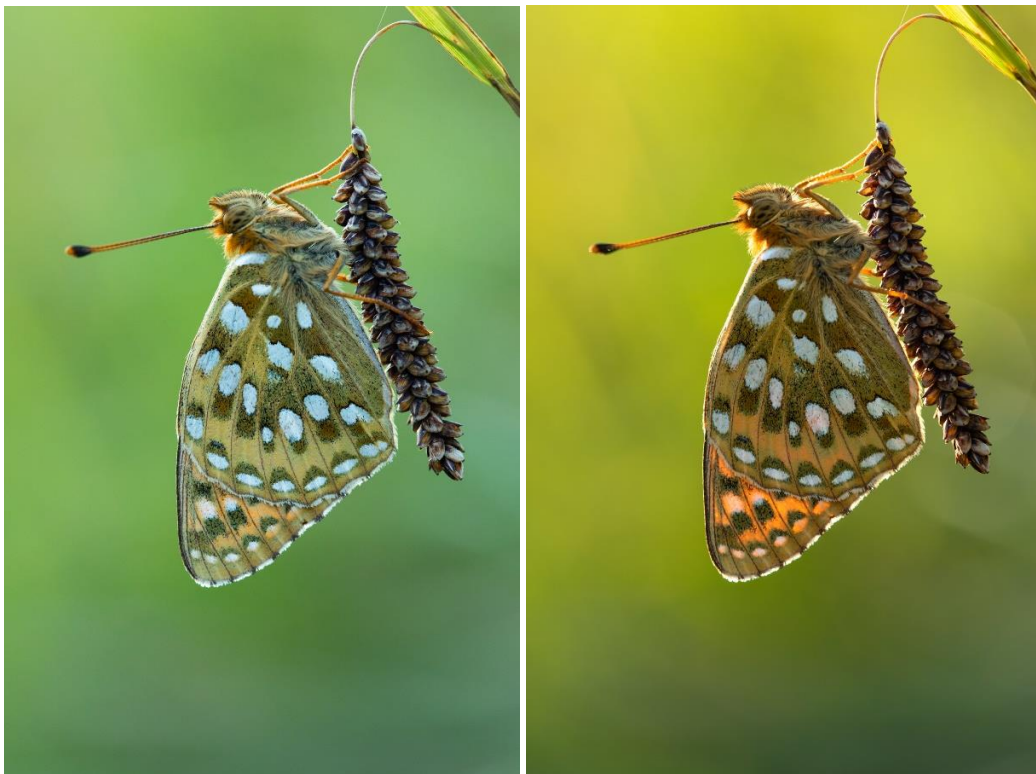
Chalkhill Blue Male. **Left Underside.** Chalkhill blue butterflies can be found at rest on flower heads on cool but bright days. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F5.6, 1/40 Sec, Tripod.** **Right.** The male is a striking chalky blue colour. With care they can be approached as they open their wings and bask. This is most possible in early morning before the sun warms the air temperature too much and they take flight. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F8, 1/800 Sec, Handheld.** For maximum sharpness it is important to ensure that the butterfly's wings are parallel to the camera's plane of focus.



Grizzled Skipper. The Grizzled skipper is a small butterfly. Males are very territorial and often bask on a leaf or grass stem waiting for a female. Keeping the plane of focus parallel to the butterfly's wings, along with a relatively wide aperture (f6.3) ensures the butterfly is separated from a soft background. The **100mm Macro** lens is very close focusing and allows for 1:1 reproduction of the subject. That is if the subject is 2cm across, then it will appear as an image on the sensor 2cm across at maximum magnification. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F6.3, 1/250 Sec, Handheld.**



Adonis Blue female. The **Adonis Blue** breeds on **Horseshoe Vetch**, which is also a common nectar source. They can be found at rest early in the morning on flower heads or grass stems. Shaded overcast light (**left**) and direct sunlight (**right**) change the feeling of the image. Overcast conditions help remove the harsh shadows and highlights. **Left, Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 200, F6.3, 1/40 Sec, Tripod.** **Right, Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 200, F6.3, 1/200 Sec, Tripod.**



Dark Green Fritillary Male. The same image but lit in the first instance by reflected light from the sky before sunrise (**left**), then secondly backlit by the rising sun (**right**). Search for butterflies roosting before the sun warms the air. This allows for time to compose using a tripod. **Left, Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 1250, F5.6, 1/160 Sec, Tripod.** **Right, Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F5.6, 1/200 Sec, Tripod.** Note the high ISO settings which enable a fast a faster shutter speed, important as the butterfly was very slightly swaying in the gentle breeze. The faster shutter speed helps freeze movement.



Chalkhill blue male. Three different images of the same butterfly, illustrating different composition techniques. **(Left)** Firstly before sunrise on a still morning before the butterfly becomes active. Note the dew on the butterfly's wings. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F7.1, 1/60 Sec, Tripod.** **(Right)** Just as the sun rises providing an attractive back lighting. Keeping the butterfly small in the frame can still make for a pleasing image. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F5.6, 1/400 Sec, Tripod.** Chalkhill blue butterflies always bask head down on grass stems before the first flight of the day, taken after they are warmed by the sun.



Chalkhill Blue male. Search for butterflies at rest, just before they open their wings. This maximises the chances of capturing the butterfly as it basks in the sun before taking flight. Be careful not to cast your shadow onto the butterfly, it will most likely fly off. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F7.1, 1/640 Sec, Tripod.**



Small Tortoiseshell butterfly. **Top Left,** Chrysalis suspended on a nettle stem. **Top right,** before emerging the Chrysalis colours up and the butterfly can be seen through the now transparent membrane of the chrysalis. **Bottom,** after emerging the butterfly hangs at rest on the empty chrysalis drying its wings before taking its first flight. It is fascinating to observe the life cycle of butterflies. Tortoiseshell caterpillars can be easily collected and raised at home on nettles before releasing back into the wild.

Top Left, Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, f16, 1/8 sec, Tripod. Top Right, Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, f13, 1/20 sec, Tripod. Bottom, Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, f8, 1/60 sec, Tripod.



Five spot burnet moth, mating pair (Left). Pewsey Downs NNR. Using a tripod enables you to fine tune the composition and the depth of focus ensuring that the principal subject that you want to be sharp is in focus. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 200, F6.3, 1/60 Sec, Tripod .** (Right). **Speckled bush cricket on pyramidal orchid.** Roundway Down, Devizes. When a subject has more depth (ie. it's more three dimensional, from back to front) it's helpful to spend more time concentrating on the desired depth of field. Using a tripod helps this process, especially if the subject is stationary, helped by a cool morning. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F9, 1/60 Sec, Tripod.**



Yellow Shell moth, Pewsey Downs NNR. Some moths are day flying just like butterflies. This beautiful Yellow shell moth is basking on an area of bare chalk. Placing the moth on a diagonal, and off-centre in the frame creates a more interesting composition. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 1000, F8, 1/125 Sec, Tripod.**

Chalk Downland



Field scabious and wild carrot, Coombe Bissett Down Nature Reserve. Always try and get low to the ground (avoid the standing position) when using a wide angle lens. This enables you to illustrate the habitat and the landscape context of the subject. Note the use of a small aperture (f22) to show maximum depth of field from the foreground flowers to the background. **Lens 16-35 Zoom Lens, Focal Length 20mm. ISO 200, F22, 1/15 Sec, Handheld.**



Field scabious and wild carrot, Coombe Bissett Down Nature Reserve. Using a long telephoto zoom (70-300mm) enables you to focus on one part of the scene. The zoom also has the effect of compressing the perspective showing a few flowers in sharp focus against a pleasing out of focus background. **Lens 70-300 Zoom Lens, Focal Length 300mm, ISO 200, F8, 1/800 Sec, Handheld.**



Downland flowers, Small scabious, Wild Carrot, Red Clover, Autumn Hawkbit, Morgan's Hill Nature Reserve. The wonderful spectacle of chalk downland flowers is emphasised by using a telephoto lens (70-300 zoom), which compresses the perspective, and by shooting from a low perspective (kneeling down), through flowers in the foreground. Use of a medium aperture (f8) enables sharp focus in the middle ground and soft focus in the distant background. **Lens 70-300 Zoom Lens, Focal Length 214mm, ISO 400, F8, 1/640 Sec, Handheld.** A medium ISO setting (400) enables a fast shutter speed on a breezy day while hand holding. Overcast but still bright lighting means there are no harsh shadows or bright highlights which would be distracting.



Common Harebell, Morgan's Hill Nature Reserve. One of the most delightful downland flowers the common harebell dances on the breeze. **Lens 70-300 Zoom, Focal Length 269mm, ISO 100, F5.6, 1/200 Sec, Tripod.** A wide aperture (f5.6) ensures a pleasing separation of the harebells from the out of focus background flowers (if they were sharp it would distract from the main subject, the hare bells). The resting grasshopper is a bonus!



Dropwort, Dunscombe Bottom Nature Reserve. It can be effective to shoot through flowers or foliage in the foreground while focusing on a small, limited area of the subject of interest, in this case the delicate dropwort flowers. Choosing a wide aperture (f5.6) ensures an equally out of focus background which provides separation between the main subject of interest and the background. A fast shutter speed (1/1600) ensures the main subject is frozen in motion on what was a blustery day. The use of a telephoto zoom lens helps compress the perspective. **Lens 70-300 Zoom Lens, Focal Length 229mm, ISO 200, F5.6, 1/1600 Sec, Handheld.**



Fragrant orchids, Pewsey Downs NNR. When using a wide-angle lens (16-35mm Zoom) it's important to get low to the ground and close to the subject. This enables you to show the main subject in its wider habitat and landscape context. **Lens 16-35 Zoom Lens, Focal Length 16mm, ISO 400, F16, 1/50 Sec, Handheld.**

Orchids



Bee orchid. Cley Hill. Bee orchids are fascinating. They are famously **bumble bee mimics**, though in the UK they are not thought to be pollinated by insects but **self-pollinate**. This occurs when the yellow **pollinium** drops down and makes contact with the **stigma**, which is sticky. In these three images I have successively got closer increasing the magnification each time, while also altering the point of focus, and widening the aperture such that in the third image the lens is wide open (f2.8) and focused directly on the pollinium. Looked at in close up you can see the structure of the pollinium, made up of bundles of pollen grains. **Left, Lens 100mm Macro, Focal Length 100mm, ISO 200, F5.6, 1/60 Sec, Tripod. Centre Lens 100mm Macro, Focal Length 100mm, ISO 200, F8, 1/25 Sec Tripod. Right, Lens 100mm Macro, Focal Length 100mm, ISO 200, F2.8, 1/160 Sec, Tripod.**



Common spotted orchid portrait and close up. Lower Moor Farm Nature Reserve. Orchids (and most wildflowers) are best photographed in even, subdued lighting. This is most often achieved either early in the morning or on a day which is bright but when clouds obscure the sun. This means that harsh shadows, bright highlights, and areas of great contrast are avoided, particularly in the backgrounds of images. **Left. 100mm Macro Lens, Focal Length 100mm ISO 200, F5.6, 1/80 Sec, Tripod. Right. 100mm Macro Lens, Focal Length 100mm ISO 200, F5.6, 1/80 Sec, Tripod.**



Burnt Orchid. Left. Using a long telephoto lens and wide aperture (f5.6) I have focused on the orchids, shooting through some bird's foot trefoil flowers in the foreground. The wide aperture allows for the subject to stand out from the softly focused foreground and background. **100-300 Zoom Lens, Focal Length 236mm, ISO 200, F5.6, 1/250 Sec, Tripod. Right. Right. Burnt orchid.** The close focusing 100mm Macro lens allows for a high magnification to be achieved. The use of a tripod enables close attention to be paid to the area of sharp focus. Still calm conditions in the early morning also allow the setting of a low ISO (100) which supports maximum sharpness in the image. **100mm Macro Lens, ISO 400, F8, 1/80 Sec, Tripod.**



Left. Green Winged orchid, Woodborough Hill, Pewsey Vale. Long telephoto lenses can be used for closeup photography. In this case the long lens has the advantage of accentuating the subject against an out of focus background. **Lens 70-300mm Zoom Lens, Focal Length 300mm, ISO 100, F5.6, 1/250 Sec, Tripod.**

Right. Green winged orchid, Lower Moor Farm Nature Reserve. When looking for subjects, try and seek out the unusual. The Green-winged orchids at Lower Moor Farm often exhibit a great amount of genetic diversity, white forms occur as well as different shades of pink and purple. **Lens 100mm Macro Lens, ISO 400, F8, 1/80 Sec, Tripod.**



Lesser butterfly orchid, Pewsey Down NNR. Using a wide-angle lens and low viewpoint shows the subject in its habitat context **Left.** Lens 16-35 f4, Focal Length 22mm, ISO 400, F16, 1/50 Sec. Lesser (and greater) butterfly orchids are pollinated at night by hawk moths, such as the **large elephant hawk moth (right)** and **small elephant hawk moth**, which both have a very long proboscis. Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F8, 1/50 Sec, Tripod.



Marsh Helleborine, Morgans Hill Nature Reserve. These two images illustrate the difference between a small aperture (f8, **left**) and a wide aperture (f2.8 **right**). **Left,** 100mm Macro Lens, ISO 100, F8, 1/50 Sec, Tripod. **Right,** 100mm Macro Lens, ISO 100, F2.8, 1/400 Sec, Tripod.

Meadows



Meadow Sweet, Cloatley Meadows Nature Reserve. A wide-angle lens enables you to capture the full spread and abundance of the meadow flowers. Be sure to position the camera close to the flowers in the foreground and use a small aperture to maintain depth of focus from foreground to background. **Lens 16-35mm zoom, Focal Length 16mm, ISO 1250, F22, 1/60 Sec, Handheld.**



Dyers Greenweed and Devil's bit scabious. Distillery Meadows Nature Reserve. Getting very low down with a wide-angle lens enables you to illustrate the habitat and plant communities of the meadow. It's helpful to just include a hint of the sky rather than too much. **Lens 16-35mm zoom, Focal Length 16mm, ISO 1250, F16, 1/250 Sec, Handheld.**



Snakeshead Fritillary, Lower Moor Farm. Getting low to the ground and shooting through some flowers in the foreground helps emphasize the impact of the sharp elements in the frame. Using an ISO of 800 also allows a fast shutter speed (1/500 sec) to freeze the motion of the flowers during what was a breezy evening. The pollinating bumble bee was a complete stroke of luck! **Lens 70-300, Focal Length 252mm, ISO 100, F5.6, 1/400 Sec, Tripod.**



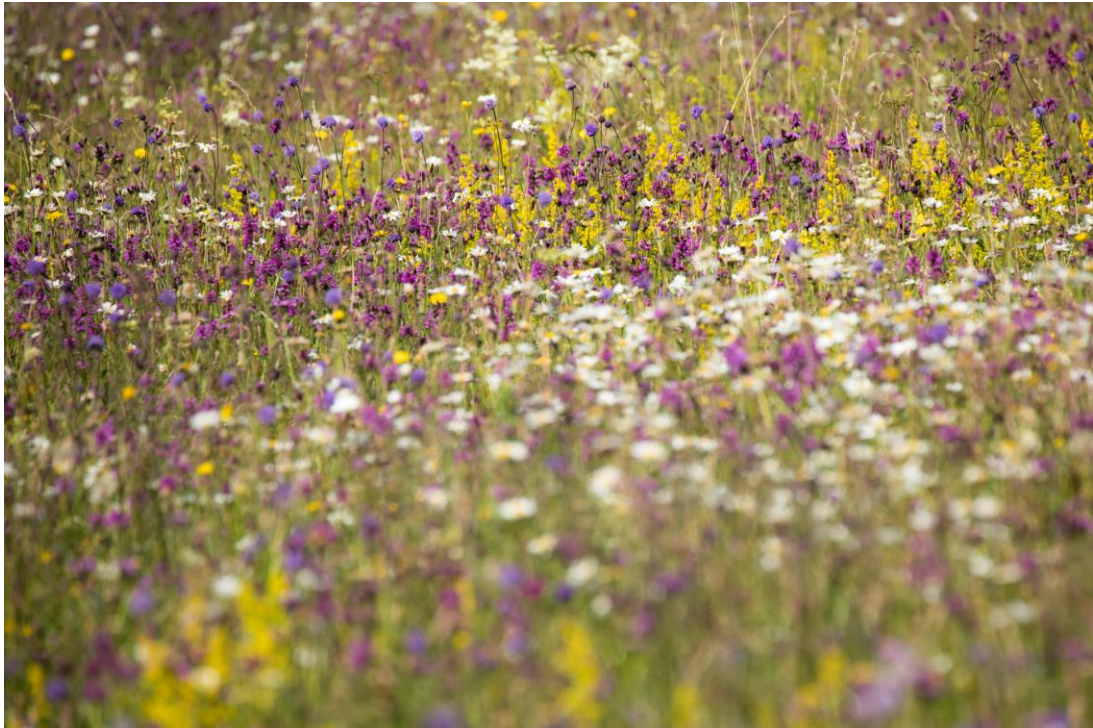
Snakeshead Fritillary, Lower Moor Farm. Two different close-up images of this delightful flower, early morning (**left**) and early evening (**right**). In both cases the use of a wide aperture (f5.6) separates the main subject from the out of focus background. Use of a long zoom lens enhances the soft background. Morning, (**Left**) **Lens 70-300, Focal Length 252mm, ISO 100, F5.6, 1/400 Sec, Tripod.** Evening, (**Right**) **Lens 70-300, Focal Length 300mm, ISO 100, F5.6, 1/60 Sec, Tripod.**



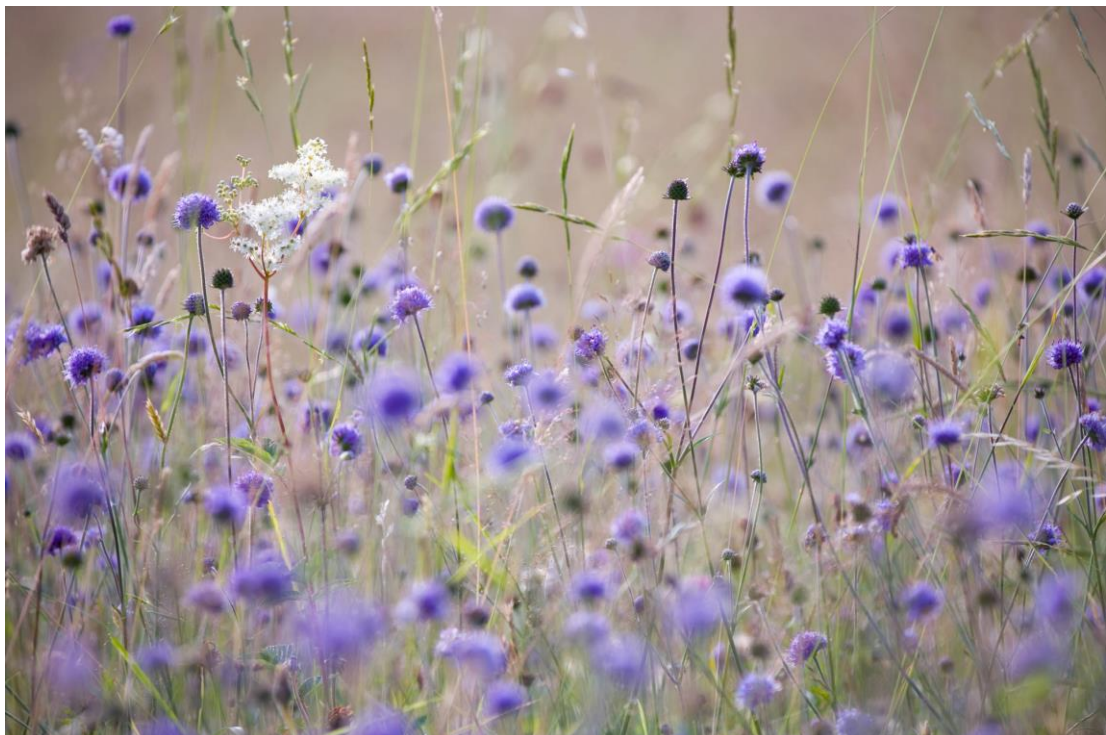
Snakeshead Fritillary, Upper Waterhay Nature Reserve. In contrast to **Lower Moor Farm**, eighty per cent of the fritillaries at Upper Waterhay are of the white form of this beautiful flower. I have deliberately adopted a low perspective shooting through the dew covered grass in the foreground. With a wide aperture (f5.6) this has created a very pleasing effect. Also choosing to selectively focus on one group of flowers creates an interesting focal point. **Lens 70-300 Zoom, Focal Length 269mm, ISO 200, F5.6, 1/320 Sec, Tripod.**



Lower Moor Farm Nature Reserve Meadow scene. Very early in the morning is the best time to capture the beautiful light cast across the wonderful wildflower meadows of Lower Moor Farm. Choosing a wide aperture (f5.6) and long zoom lens enables a sharp point of focus to stand out from a softer out of focus foreground and background. **Lens Canon 70-300, Focal Length 269mm, ISO 400, F5.6, 1/500 Sec, Tripod.**



Echo Lodge Meadows Nature Reserve. The abundance of wild flowers at Echo Lodge is emphasized by using a long zoom lens (70-300mm). I often try to create an impressionistic feel by adopting a low shooting perspective and shooting through some flowers in the foreground, with a clear point of focus in the middle distance, just above the centre of the frame. **Lens 70-300 Zoom, Focal Length 300mm, ISO 200, F5.6, 1/800 Sec, Tripod.**



Devil's bit scabious and meadowsweet, Lower Moor Farm Nature Reserve. Using a longer zoom lens (70-300mm) allows you to select a small section of a meadow scene. Soft overcast but bright conditions really help as there are no harsh shadows or highlights in the image. Focusing through some flowerheads in the foreground adds interest. **Lens 70-300, Focal Length 300mm, ISO 100, F5.6, 1/250 Sec, Tripod.**



Lady's bedstraw and betony, Morningside Meadows. A telephoto lens (70-300mm) can be used to great effect helping compress the perspective, and helping to isolate the foreground flowers from a soft out of focus background. Lens 70-300 Zoom, Focal Length 135mm, ISO 200, f5.6, 1/640ec.



Lady's bedstraw and betony, Morningside Meadows. A wide-angle lens (16-35mm) can be used to give emphasis to flowers in the foreground when placed very close to flowers. A small aperture (f22) ensures that the image retains focus from foreground to background. A high ISO setting of 800 allows me to retain a high shutter speed (1/200 sec) at this small aperture (f22) in good light. Lens 16-35mm Zoom, Focal Length 16mm, ISO 800, F22, 1/200 Sec, Handheld.



Common darter dragonfly, Morningside Meadows Nature Reserve. Dragonflies can be found early in the morning roosting on strong stems such as rushes. On cool nights their wings collect dew, making them fabulous (but tricky) subjects to photograph. It's essential to ensure that the plane of focus is parallel with the dragonfly's wings. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F8, 1/100 Sec, Tripod.**



Common darter dragonfly, Morningside Meadows Nature Reserve. **Left,** I have chosen an aperture of f5.6 to ensure a soft out of focus background, while focusing directly on the eye of the dragonfly, which is also in the same plane of focus as the central portion of the wings. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F5.6, 1/100 Sec, Tripod.**

Right. I have focused in from the closest possible distance capable with the lens (100mm Macro). I have also chosen a wide aperture (f5.6) focusing again on the eye of the dragonfly. This perspective often feels more dramatic than having the whole subject in sharp focus. The eye is drawn to the remarkable structure of the dragonfly's eye magnified by the dew drops. Completely calm wind conditions are essential for this sort of photography. This often occurs just before dawn. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 400, F5.6, 1/40 Sec, Tripod.**



Common darter dragonfly, Lower Moor Farm Nature Reserve. Backlit against the rising morning sun, dew sparkles on the dragonfly's wings. It's important to act quickly as the sun rapidly warms the dragonfly and it will fly off. It's best to set up your composition before the sun strikes the dragonfly so you are ready to release the shutter as soon as the sun catches the wings. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 200, F5.6, 1/200 Sec, Tripod.**



Common darter dragonfly, Lower Moor Farm Nature Reserve. Two different views of the same dragonfly achieved by simply altering the aperture and point of focus. **Left**, I have chosen an aperture of f8 while focusing directly on the eye of the dragonfly. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F8, 1/50 Sec, Tripod.**

Right. I have chosen a more abstract approach by selecting the widest aperture (f2.8) and focusing on the wing tips in the foreground. I love the effect such a narrow plane of focus has on the light on the dew drops looking like the reflections from the facets of jewels. **Lens 100mm Macro, ISO 800, F2.8, 1/400 Sec, Tripod.**

My Equipment

Canon EOS 5D MK IV Camera, Full Frame Digital SLR.

Canon EOS 16-35 f4L IS USM Zoom Lens

Canon EOS 24-105 f5.6L IS USM Zoom Lens

Canon EOS EF 100mm f2.8 Macro

Canon EOS 70-300 f5.6L IS USM

Useful tips

1. Equipment is important, but it is not the most important thing.
2. The most important thing is to get outside, immerse yourself in nature and enjoy your photography.
3. The best light and calmest conditions are most often found at the beginning of the day. You can catch up on sleep on another day!
4. Soft even lighting conditions that occur on overcast but bright days are preferable to bright sunlight.
5. Fieldcraft and observation are essential. Observe when and where certain species occur and how they behave in different weather conditions, seasons and times of day.

<http://www.stephendavisphotography.com>



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