



# The birds and the bees

Macro photography is much like golf: as a beginner you can't expect to pick up the equipment and immediately take a winning shot. It requires correct technique, lots of practice and a certain degree of suppleness to be successful.

 **Picture of the month**



## Right in there

**Kiewiet van der Westhuizen**

Nikon D3200 with Micro-Nikkor 105 mm macro lens and SB910 flash (settings: F22, 1/60 sec, ISO 200)

"I've only recently started taking macro pictures. Without the help of a photographer friend in Cape Town, who is a master in macro photography, this picture would not have been possible.

"Our garden is a handy studio and I take a few macro pictures in it at least every second day. Bumble bees busy themselves on one particular plant every day and I took more than a hundred pictures to get this one.

"Macro photography is lots of fun and very good for my health (and limbs), because the positions from which I have to shoot can turn it into a sweaty business."

works differently with macro pictures, though. On such a small distance, a relatively low F-stop such as F5.6 or F8 is usually too low and far too little if the object is in focus.

Look at the example of a flower which was first taken on F2.8 (very shallow depth of field) and then on F18 (wider depth of field).



Kiewiet's picture also shows this up well: even though he shot at



F22 – a value we usually associate with something like a landscape picture where we want both the foreground and the background in focus – the entire bee is in focus, but the background is still blurred.

### So this is what you do...

Instead of shooting in Aperture Priority (Av/A), switch over to Manual (M) and select the aperture manually (a relatively high F-value) and shutter speed (fast enough for a sharp picture), and use your flash to supply the necessary light.

And next thing you know, your garden will become a photographer's treasure trove, just like Kiewiet's. 

### Villiers responds:

Kiewiet clearly listened to his photographer friend very carefully, because for someone who's only "recently" started taking macro pictures, this one is definitely not to be sneezed at.

Macro photography is higher-grade stuff, and without the correct equipment you can forget about taking pictures like this.

### Use a flower for the flowers

When taking macro pictures with a compact digital camera, you have to activate the macro setting. It's indicated with a symbol of a flower and allows you to get slightly closer

to smaller-than-usual objects when activated.

However, when you're using an SLR camera, you have to use a macro lens to take a picture like Kiewiet's. While a zoom lens allows you to get up close to a lion with a big mane, you won't be able to focus as closely on something like a bee or flower, because the lens has a minimum focus distance. For long lenses it's usually 1½m or more. With a macro lens, however, you can get in as close as 30cm.

### Keep still and shed light

When you're this close, the tiniest movement of the camera

can cause the wrong part of the object to be in focus. Use a tripod to keep the camera as still as possible.

It also helps to use a camera flash, because the more light you have, the faster you can set your shutter speed. Kiewiet used his Nikon SB910 flash very well here and even got a beautiful reflection on the bumblebee's right eye.

### Choose the right depth of field for SLR cameras

When taking animal portraits, we usually use low F-stops to ensure a shallow depth of field and blur the background. It