



Drive Out PHOTO MECHANIC

BY VILLIERS STEYN

Two are better than one

Take an attractive subject, repeat it, and you have an even more striking photo.



Photo of the month

Seeing double

Vince Aslett

Canon 7D camera and Canon 100–400 mm lens (settings: F5.6, 1/100 sec, ISO 200)

“We visit the Kruger National Park whenever we get a chance. I took this photograph during a morning game drive at Girivana Waterhole west of Satara. We stopped to take a photo of rollers, but the waterbuck caught my attention when they started to look around nervously. Maybe they got the scent of a leopard.

“I turned the mode dial to Av and selected a low F-number so the background would be hazy, but I have to admit I only saw on my computer afterwards how well the composition had worked.”



Villiers responds:

Usually, when I'm looking for photos for this column, I browse on the Kampvuur forum for an hour or two. In general, I like sunset and action photos, but if you want to get my attention show me a photo with repetition.

Creative work

The best way to focus attention on an animal in a photo is to blur the background. This you achieve by doing the following:

1. Ensure the background is far behind the animal. **2.** Ensure the background is uniform and not too busy. **3.** Zoom in as closely as possible. **4.** Use a shallow depth of field by selecting a large aperture (a low F-stop value), as Vince did.

Sometimes it helps to be creative with the composition during step 2, whether you're photographing blades of grass in the Drakensberg or waterbuck in the Kruger. When there is more than one subject, you

can heighten the impact of the photo by matching the one that is in focus in the foreground with another one that is out of focus in the background – like Vince did with the waterbuck cows.

This is easier said than done when you have waving grass and antelope with the shivers. Sometimes you have to find the right angle first by moving closer or farther away or by crouching until you have your subjects lined up.

Be patient

A shallow depth of field is not always necessary when you're using repetition. Take, for example, this photo of a herd of elephants drinking at a waterhole. Even though most of the elephants are in focus, the photo still stands out, mainly because a number of the animals have their trunks raised. The challenge here is not to blur the background but to get your timing right so that you can freeze the action at the right moment.

I activated continuous shooting so I could take a series of photos instead of one every time I pressed the shutter button. Only 30 or 40 photos later did I get this shot – proof that patience pays off when you're photographing wild animals.

