

Zooming in on Cede Prudente

This month, we speak to Sabah's wildlife photographer extraordinaire, Cede Prudente. His work is often seen in various publications including 'Sabah Colour Guide: Kinabatangan' (Natural History Publications) and 'The National Parks and other Wild Places of Malaysia' (New Holland, UK). The award-winning photographer and conservationist shares with us his life and love for the lens:

Tell us about your family and background.

Sandakan is our lovely home. My wife, Carol, and I are blessed with three beautiful girls Alexandra, Vanessa Jane and Abigail.

When and how did your love for photography start to blossom?

It was in the early 90s when I purchased my first Nikon FM2 SLR and 80mm-200mm lens, working as Nature Guide in Sandakan for a travel company. On my daily 'tour of duty', I often had the great opportunity to observe wildlife behaviour, particularly the bizarre Proboscis Monkeys and the Orang Utans. Following the day to day events in the rainforest is an interesting experience; it can showcase a dramatic sunrise, a gloomy day or a fantastic sunset. So, the combination of my first camera equipment and the beautiful surroundings produced great results. This became an inspiration for me to pursue wildlife photography and obtain stunning images.

You photograph a variety of subjects but wildlife seems to be your forte. What is it about photographing wildlife that you love most?

Borneo's wildlife is secretive and mysterious, little is known about many of our species. We have recorded 46 endemic birds and almost 90 percent of our mammals are nocturnal or active at night so searching for them in daylight is hard work! Once spotted, the challenge is capturing them at the right moment and trying to get that perfect shot. Although, I believe there will never be a perfect shot! I also think that Sabah's natural heritage is so diverse that there are great subjects of interest to wildlife photography.

Tell us about your 'weapons of choice': Your equipment. Any preference?

I use a Nikon system. In my bag, I have a few DSLR bodies, the D700, D90 and D500, some are lenses 14-24mm, 24-70mm, 70-200mm but my work-horse is the 500mm lens. The newer DSLR bodies offer video capture capabilities which add a little dimension to photography and videography.

What are the challenges you face in your line of work?

In wildlife photography, it's all a waiting game. In one situation, a large herd of elephants along the Kinabatangan river was moving as they would during a traditional migration. That afternoon, it seemed that a family had settled and was feeding along the river. So I took many shots, then after 3 hours, there were some bathing activity among the young and adult elephants. I predicted a major event of swimming and crossing that mighty river and immediately an image was painted at my head, in which I pictured a group crossing river and with the forest in the background, it would make a stunning shot. However, as dusk approached, rain poured heavily, wetting all available gear in my boat! Suddenly, the elephants made their exodus, exactly as I had imagined. And fortunately despite the sudden rain, I managed to get that shot!

What are the best things about being a professional nature photographer?



It's all about documenting the existence of our natural environment and living to tell stories. With strong images, it creates greater awareness to safeguarding and appreciating the wonders of Mother Nature. The last thing we need is the loss of a species from this planet. Wildlife photographers can play a big role in delaying the disappearance of these species. They are the 'ambassadors' to all wildlife.

What do you think are the key qualities in being a wildlife photographer?

'Passion' is the key word to any work you do. A love for nature is the element to achieve this, understanding wildlife behaviour and being out there in the field to capture the 'moment' when it happens. You've got to be there!

What has been your favourite shoot location in Sabah to date?

There are many stunning locations in Sabah, scenic places at Maliau Basin, Danum Valley and Crocker Range. There is also good birding photography to be experienced at Tabin, Sepilok forest and Kinabalu Park. For wildlife, Danum and Kinabatangan produce some outstanding images.

What is your advice to budding wildlife photographers?

Get your equipment right, begin with good a DSLR body and 70-300mm or 100-400mm telephoto lens, go out there and understand wildlife behaviour. Shoot great moments as they happen!

And finally, what are your hopes and plans for the future?

I'm really hoping to showcase more lovely images of Sabah and creating greater appreciation to its wildlife whilst supporting the conservation of our nature.

Check out Cede's images in our 'Through the Lens' section this month. For more information on his work, visit the website www.cedepudente.com. You can also view his collection at the Borneo Images Gallery, Tanjung Aru Plaza, Kota Kinabalu. Contact Cede Prudente at tel.no 089-235525.