

Fungi talk
Queensland Mycological Society
8 April 2014

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Giving a talk to a group of mycologists is a tad daunting when you know next to nothing about fungi. However, Vanessa talked me into this, and she's promised me you'll go easy on my mycological ignorance.

I asked my 13 year old son what approach he thought I should take when crafting a talk about a subject of which I'm largely ignorant, and his helpful input was to say that "Dad, they'll all be a bunch of fun-guys Get it?" Very helpful indeed.

I am a keen photographer, with a general interest in natural history. I've been messing about with cameras now for a few decades. I have long been interested in photographing the world of **small things** in nature, which has included fungi.

Tonight I'll talk a little about my **journeys into photographing nature**, and some of the trials and joys this has involved. I'll show some of **very dodgy fungi photos**. I'll talk a bit about some of the **techniques** I use, but I won't get too photo-nerdy about gear — feel free to questions during the talk.

I am aware that **many, if not all of you here, would be keen photographers of fungi**, as photographs are of course a terrific tool in helping to identify what fungi you have discovered and in keeping records of what's been seen. And, as I've come to realise, every person photographs things in their own way, and **develops their own approaches to photography**, and there is always something new to learn from how other people approach photographing something — so **feel free to share any thoughts** of your own on photographing these wonderful subjects.

Photographic gear has changed — have photographers?

A.R. Dugmore, Africa, 1908

It has not always been easy to take photographs out-doors. This reminds of how fortunate I am to have access to such great photographic gear, but it also reminds me that great photos can be taken with any kind of camera.

George Schillings 1904 Photographing animals at night ...

The magnesium flash powder, which Schillings had to mix in a mortar immediately before use — a very risky operation — was ruined by rain and dew when not properly protected; mongooses stole the aluminium photographic-plate holders and carried them down their burrows. The cameras themselves were not entirely lightproof and could only be set up at dusk. Finding it impossible to sit up night after night, Schillings arranged his flashlight device with a trip-wire so that it was released by the animals themselves. Flashes in the middle of the night again and again raised high hopes, but when the plates were developed nothing could be seen, some night bird, bat or large beetle having touched the trip wire and set off the magnesium powder. Particles of cloth used to protect the apparatus against humidity were sometimes torn off by the force of the explosion and set alight in front of the lens, ruining what might have been a perfect picture. If the flash did not go off during the

night, the plate-holders had to be removed before dawn to prevent the plates from fogging from light leakage.

While the gear has changed over the years, the excitement of photography remains. I started taking photos as a kid with an old Yashica twin-lens reflex film camera, 120mm film. Changing pace of camera technology is dazzling. Making the equipment serve your vision, not the other way round. Maintaining the enjoyment and excitement of photography. Mucking about with interpreting the rules.

My sorts of photos?

Getting up close to things, illuminating them, taking a close look, a whole new world opens up down on their level.

Also, showing these **things within their habitat, a sense of where they belong, their world.**

A quick look at the sorts of things I like photographing

Apart from small things, the unusual forms of life, or species that people don't usually like much.

My photography has **developed hand-in-hand with an interest in exploring the natural world**, and a camera of some sort has always been in my backpack. I find that time spent exploring the natural world with a camera, whether it is the local patch or a distant reserve, always helps me cope with life back in the world of humans.

I have found that the camera has **helped me to slow down and look closer at things**. I use digital gear today, but lots of hours wrestling with slow, expensive **slide film has taught me some lessons about the need to take your time with photography** — still a good idea even with today's digital cameras.

A few places and sorts of photos.

The modern city ... is a zoopolis, with an overlap of human and animal geographies, where a keen-eyed and patient naturalist can find endless opportunities to stimulate the mind and feed the soul. - Lyanda Lynn Haupt — Crow Planet, Essential wisdom from the urban wilderness.

FUNGI IMAGES

Like many other photographers I have come to appreciate the sublime wonders of the world of fungi, and have tackled the frustrating but rewarding possible the task of trying to capture half-decent images of fungi whenever possible.

Fungi — beautiful and diverse. Appreciated on an aesthetic level. Difficult task to master identification.

Artist Patricia Negus, in her book "The magical world of fungi", talks about being hooked by fungi:

Over the next three months I did not go for a single walk, or even a five minute ramble, without finding at least one if not many species, new to me, I was simply amazed at what I found; shapes, so aesthetic and sensual; colours, every rainbow hue; sizes some huge, some tiny, textures just as varied, from rough to smooth, scaly to slimy... what surprised me most was how easy they were to find; they were there for everyone to see. To me it is a mystery that so few people know anything about them, except perhaps to kick them as they walk by.

Fungi are hard to photograph well. Why? Low light, down among other things.

Situations to just try and photograph them. Taking the time.

Some situations.

Toowoomba Queens Park after rain.

Good opportunity to try some effects.

The type of shot you are after — record for ID, something more aesthetic.

The situation — events, places, diffuse light, rain — fungi are not there all the time as you'd know, seizing the moment.

How much time you spend, the gear you use, effort put in.

Woolli 2009 — recovery after fires, fungi in burn zone nearly a year later.

Local unusual sightings Fly Agaric, *Amanita muscaria*, Toowoomba, 1 June 2009

Low light photography has always been an interest of mine. Ghost Fungus (*Omphalotus nidiformis*).

Techniques?

A bit about what has worked for me, many approaches.

My first shots — flash from above.

Record shots.

Getting in close, trying various angles.

Wide angle and up close, or telephoto for a narrower depth of field to isolate the subject.

Lighting — use flash or natural light?

How much time do you have? Is there interesting ambient light?

Dedicated macro lens, or telephoto if back a bit.

Macro setting on compact cameras and wide angle.

Flash or natural light?

Main light source? Colour balance?

Torch or LED light – reflectors.

Flash – off camera cord, multiple flash. Fill flash. Moving subject.

FILL FLASH?

Natural light – long shutter speeds = movement of subject. Movement of camera.

How to overcome blur from moving camera movement?

- Raise ISO to get quicker shutter speeds.
- Use image stabilising
- Higher ISO = more noise (more noise on smaller sensors)
- Use something to keep camera STEADY?
- Tripod, bean bag

- Cable release or 2 sec timer. Mirror lock.
- Tripod more necessary with smaller camera rather than large.

EXPERIMENTING WITH DEPTH OF FIELD?

- depth of field GOVERNED BY f stop
- large aperture (SMALL f NUMBER) = to isolate subject.
- small aperture = large dof = long exposure.

FOCUS – small errors are crucial.

<http://www.cambridgeincolour.com/tutorials/macro-photography-intro.htm>