

# How to photograph wild birds

Mike Lane FRPS gives tips on how to snap three great species of British bird

**P**rovide food in your garden or local wood and you will soon play host to finches, tits and woodpeckers. But to turn this into a photographic opportunity, you need to think about the background, perches and light.

A perch needs to be worthy of a photograph itself. The background should be distant, out of focus and a pleasant colour, and the light should usually be coming from over your shoulder. Once you've nailed these, you can consider the bird itself.



## EQUIPMENT

You need long lenses for bird photography. Top-of-the-range 500mm lenses can be expensive, but good bird pictures can be obtained with shorter lenses when you have a way of getting closer, such as a hide (left).



## Stock dove

Stock doves are thirsty birds and need to drink regularly, so to make sure you get a decent shot, set yourself near some water. They will have a favourite spot to drink, so put your hide in place for a few days so they get used to it. The

most dramatic pictures are taken with the camera at ground level, which means lying down.

Try to get them as they take to the air. Shutter speeds of 1/4,000th of a second and upwards capture water droplets.



## Kingfisher

If you have spotted a kingfisher, provide a new perch for it where there are no overhanging branches – a five-foot-high post placed in the water, say. They can't resist a new perch and if they catch a fish from there, they will be back.

The hard part is finding a well-lit riverbank with no overhanging branches and a nice background. Once you have found it, the kingfisher is likely to cooperate. You will need to use a hide, but kingfishers will accept one readily.



## Great spotted woodpecker

The great spotted woodpecker is a species that poses very well on any prop provided. Make sure you find a pretty perch, such as a nice silver birch log with bracket fungi growing at just the right spot. The woodpecker can be encouraged to land in the right spot if you drill a small hole and press suet or peanuts into it.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mike Lane has been a full-time wildlife photographer since 1993. He has travelled extensively in pursuit of birds, but his favourite subject is British wildlife. During the winter, he does talks and workshops on wildlife photography.