

## **Teesdale U3A – Monthly Meeting Report**

### **Wildlife Photographer - What a funny way to make a living**

The speaker at the November meeting was Michael Leach. Michael is a zoologist and he has travelled throughout the world as a wildlife cameraman. Wildlife was the inspiration for writing books and Michael has written 36, which have been translated into many different languages. He has worked with the prominent personalities of the time including David Attenborough, David Bellamy and many others and he is still involved in making wildlife films.

Michael explained the importance of being in the right place at the right time and how difficult and time consuming that could be. As an example, he said that a 52-minute film could take as much as 2 years to produce, reflecting the time it might take to find the animal in the first place and then film the behaviour which was being looked for. It was tempting and perhaps necessary on occasions to improvise and use footage from elsewhere to show situations more accurately. He referred to a well-known shot of David Bellamy pointing to and describing a woodpecker when the woodpecker shown was taken from somewhere else. Michael's view was that if the final result was an accurate description then the use of material from other sources was justified. He also explained that wildlife filming could cost as much as £4000 per day in view of the number of people who needed to be employed.

Some of the most undisturbed areas for observing wildlife were motorway verges and David told an amusing story of having to peg out a rabbit carcass onto a verge as foxes were wily enough to remove the carcass before it could be filmed. Which animals can count? Certainly, the raven can, and experiments have shown that they can count at least to 9. This can be important when filming birds from a hide. If people enter a hide observed by a bird, then some birds can count how many people enter and then subsequently leave and will know if there are any left inside. Other tactics were often used to attract wildlife e.g. a mixture of raspberry jam and sultanas had proved very effective with certain animals.

This was a fascinating talk from an internationally recognised photographer who was relaxed about giving away some of the tricks of the trade. In future we will all be looking at wildlife films from a different perspective. The vote of thanks was given by Ian Hodgson.

The next monthly meeting will be held on 23rd January when John and Sheila Moreels will be presenting 'Nostalgic Views of the North' from their photo memory archive.

For more information about U3A look at [teesdaleu3a.org.uk](http://teesdaleu3a.org.uk) or contact Ian Reid tel: 01833 631304

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