

*You won't find many wildlife images in the rarified area of fine art photography, but **David Lloyd** has found a way to make it pay. He tells **Keith Wilson** how he switched from graphic design to photography*

**A** career as a graphic designer in the advertising industry wasn't enough to satisfy David Lloyd's creative instincts. Photography was always a big interest too, something nurtured when he was a boy growing up in New Zealand by his father, a keen amateur. A subscription to *National Geographic* introduced David to the work of Frans Lanting, Jim Brandenburg and Michael Nichols. His transformation into a fine art wildlife photographer was only a matter of time...

**How has your graphic design experience influenced the way you photograph?**

It's nothing to do with training, it's just down to my own tastes, and I like to keep things really simple. If I were to design something I would have one typeface on one side, one style, one size, and wouldn't be afraid of white space. Just keep things simple with straight lines and strong shapes. It was never a deliberate thing to go for; it's just what I favoured. That's come through subconsciously to my photography. Some years ago someone was looking through my pictures on Flickr and that person pointed it out to me. He said, 'I like your pictures because of the simple strong lines and shapes'. It hadn't occurred to me.

**What triggered your interest in wildlife?**

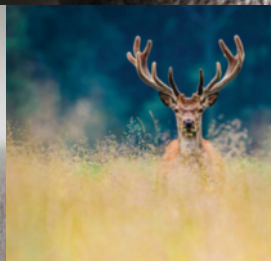
There was a magazine that came out years ago, one of those weekly magazines that built up like an encyclopaedia. You bought the binders, but very rarely did anyone get the full set, but I did! Everyone has an interest and wildlife was one of mine.

**You cite Brandenburg, Nichols and Lanting as major influences. Those three names keep coming up for many photographers. Why is that you think?**

They were all active around the same time when I was at an impressionable age. You see, I saw them always in *National Geographic*. They were always featured in those. I had a *National Geographic* special with all of Brandenburg's wolves in it and I've lost it, which is annoying. ▶


**CLOSE-UP**

**DAVID  
LLOYD**







 WINDSWEEP LION  
Nikon D300, Nikon AF-S 200-400mm  
f/4G ED VR II, 1/750 sec, f/5.6, ISO200







**WILDEBEEST SILHOUETTES**  
Nikon D800e, Nikon AF-S 400mm  
f/2.8G ED VR, 1/500 sec, f/4, ISO360

**TUSK**  
Nikon D3s, Nikon AF-S 400mm f/2.8G ED VR,  
1/1000 sec, f/8, ISO4000, 1.4x teleconverter

### Who else has influenced your photographic style, particularly with your black-and-white images?

Bob Carlos Clarke. It was the style of his darkroom work, where he used Agfa Record Rapid paper and selenium toning, which I've tried, nowhere near as successfully as him! It made me more aware of split toning or duo toning, and that's come through. It's not just black-and-white. I think I have only one picture that's

straight black-and-white. Everything else has elements of split toning involved. I was trying to emulate him – and never did!

### Was it your dad who introduced you to the darkroom?

Yeah, he did. Whether I would have done it without him, I don't know. He got me into it when I was nine. The important thing was learning what it took to produce a black-and-white picture. It wasn't just a case of putting the negative into the enlarger and then exposing onto the paper. That was straight away as important as shutter speeds and f-stops.

**How long have you been using Nikons?**  
More than 20 years, nearly 26 years.

### So what did you start with?

My first Nikon was an F-801s. Before that was a Pentax, before that a Fujica.

### Which Nikons have you owned?

I always wanted an Olympus OM-1, then I wanted a Minolta 303, then I just liked Nikon. I just picked up a Nikon in the shop and I liked it. That was the F-801s. They had just brought out the F4, which was cool. I had a couple of those for some years. I think the next one was an F90, and I didn't do any photography for about 10 years, so I didn't use it much. Then I got a D70s.

### How did you find switching from film?

It was cool. It was more immediate for me as I had a digital background from





**GIRAFFES**  
Nikon D800e, Nikon AF-S 400mm  
f/2.8G ED VR, 1/1000 sec, f/3.2, ISO100

working in advertising. The D70s was my first digital SLR. I used my 180mm f/2.8 lens on that. Then I got the D200 and with that I had a Sigma 100-300mm, which is an absolutely fantastic lens. There's nothing else quite like it, I don't know why they don't still make it. I sold that and got a 70-200mm, then I got a D300. It was the perfect 'gorilla camera' because I was doing the gorilla trips at the time, and it was really good in low light. It came out at the same time as the D3 but I couldn't afford the D3. No way. The D300 was perfect. I still wish I had it. A lot of my best-selling ►

## PROFILE

***Since switching careers, David's made a big impact on the world of wildlife photography***

■ Born in New Zealand, David Lloyd came to the UK in 1989 and worked as a graphic designer before becoming a full-time photographer three years ago.

■ He leads photographic safaris to the Masai Mara in Kenya every year, plus photo tours to other African locations,

including to Rwanda for the mountain gorillas.

■ Since 2010, David has been a finalist or award winner in the Nature's Best, Wildlife Photographer of the Year and Africa Photographic Awards.

■ In October, David's first book



of fine art wildlife photography will be launched at the annual Wild Photos festival in London.



## BROUGHT TO BOOK

*This year David Lloyd will be launching his first book. Just don't call it a coffee table book...*

**Your first book is coming out later this year.**

**What can we expect?**

■ There will be a lot of the Masai Mara in there, but also a bit of Amboseli. It's mostly Kenya.

**What's the title?**

■ It's a secret at the moment. I have a working title of 'Natural Selection', but I've got a title that I think is really cool.

**Being a graphic designer, are you also doing the layout as well as choosing the pictures?**

■ Well, the funny thing is ever since childhood I wanted to do my own book, but I didn't know then that it would be on wildlife photography. I've done the design, the images, the type and I'm pleased with that. I'd like someone else to write the foreword. I've got a couple of people in mind. I'm lucky that I can do the layout. It's going to be a coffee table book, but then I don't want it to be yet another coffee table book! What I have in mind will be a bit special, with a limited edition and a regular edition as well.



**LONE ELEPHANT**  
Nikon D300, Nikon 12-24mm f/4, 1/180 sec, f/11, ISO500

pictures, like the lion in the wind, were taken on the D300. But I was keen to move to full frame.

**What was your first FX digital Nikon?**

The D700. It was the same as the D300, but full frame. But it was the tonal thing, going from light to dark – that was smooth. Then

“ If I'm really honest about why people book with me it's because they really like my pictures. It delights me, that ”

David Lloyd *Wildlife photographer*



**FELINE CANINES**  
Nikon D800E, Nikon AF-S 400mm f/2.8E ED VR, 1/500 sec, f/8, ISO1400, 2x teleconverter

I got irresponsible and got a D3s, which was really good, especially in low light.

**A lot of photographers have hung on to the D3s, rather than buy a D4...**

Yes, I have. The D4 wasn't worth the extra money. Okay, you get a few more megapixels, but that's not the be-all-and-end-all. I sold my D3s in the end because I already had a D800E and found I wasn't using the D3s any more. I've always had this plan of having two identical cameras because that takes away decisions about which lens to use. I had two F-801s for the

same reason, so I sold the D3s and got a second D800E.

**What's your desert island lens?**

It's got to be the Nikkor 400mm f/2.8. The Sigma 35mm f/1.4 would be next.

**That's quite a difference!**

Yeah, but I know of another photographer who likes either getting up close or going out wide and I find myself doing that more.

**How did you get into leading photographic safaris to Kenya?**

I was a guest of a South African crowd and at the time I didn't think this was my thing, but the camp owner asked if I could bring six people down, and I said I'd see what





**HIPPOS**  
Nikon D300, Nikon AF-S 200-400mm  
f/4G ED VR II, 1/250 sec, f/8, ISO200

I could do. And that's what I did. I offer Lightroom tuition as well.

**So after the day spent shooting you teach people to use Lightroom?**

Yes, or in the middle of the day it's too hot. I don't like calling it a workshop, that's too formal. There's no set time, we just talk about what we're going to do, a lot more laid back. What I'll do is I'll pick out an image or two, a colour one and a black-and-white one, say, and I'll just show them how I'd do it. That works quite well.

It's informal, but I'll do a couple of presentations at the beginning to say 'This is what we can expect out of the week'. It's about trying to offer something that's unique, but if I'm really honest about why

people book with me it's because they really like my pictures. It delights me, that.

**You also do a lot of photography in London's Richmond Park. Is there a lesson to be learnt from shooting locally?**

Put it this way: when I haven't used my camera for a while, I need to warm up, and Richmond Park is ideal for getting warmed up. I like to try out new things and you can get some really nice pictures. One of them was in the first edition of *N-Photo*.

**How did the idea of photographing wildlife in black-and-white come about?**

One day, I had this idea for black-and-white wildlife photography. I liked black-and-white but you didn't see any monochrome

**ZEBRA (TOP LEFT)**  
Nikon D800, Nikon AF-S 400mm f/2.8G ED VR,  
1/500 sec, f/5.6, ISO2000, 2x teleconverter

**VULTURE (TOP RIGHT)**  
Nikon D200, Sigma 100-300mm f/4,  
1/640 sec, f/4, ISO640

wildlife photography – even 15 years ago. I had images in my head that I could achieve for exhibitions. Then one day I saw a book on black and white-wildlife photography. Someone had stolen my thunder. All credit to him: it was Nick Brandt!

**What defines a fine art wildlife photo? Is it more than just being in monochrome?**

If it looks good on a wall. No, let's make it simpler: if it looks good on my wall! I'm ►





**DAVID'S FAVOURITE**  
Nikon D3s, Nikon AF-S 200-400mm f/4G  
ED VR II, 1/500 sec, f/5.6, ISO400

still taking pictures for myself, so if it looks good on my wall, hopefully it will look good on somebody else's.

**What proportion of your fine art images are in colour?**

It's changing actually. I had a lot more, and better, pictures in black-and-white than

“ I'm still taking pictures for myself, so if it looks good on my wall, hopefully it will look good on somebody else's ”

David Lloyd *Wildlife photographer*

colour three years ago, but now it's half and half. I'll always do black-and-white, but I'm enjoying colour a lot more.

**If you had to pick one to shoot exclusively from now on, would you choose colour or black-and-white?**

It would probably be black-and-white. It's more creative. It's more creative when you're taking the picture, it's more creative when you're processing it too. Colour obviously still is creative. A question I keep being asked is, 'What is the appeal of black-and-white?' You know, to be honest I don't know, because I don't ever find myself questioning it. It's not something I worry about. If this photo looks better than that one, I'm happy with that.

**What's your favourite image of your own?**

I'll tell you, but tomorrow I might change my mind! For now, the leopard with the band of light across its eyes is one of the most satisfying ones. I didn't notice that light beam until I got home. I didn't know what was going on at the time. I do like the way a cat looks back on itself.

**Where was that?**

In the Masai Mara. It was early in the morning and it was near one of the camps, under a bush. It was looking ahead, but then something got its attention so it looked back on itself. I've always looked out for that shape. I always look out for certain things that might happen, so I catch it when it happens. I took three pictures





quickly and in one of them the tail curled up in the right place making a circle.

Sometimes things work out. But I've got a saying that I often use, which is: "Luck is what happens when opportunity meets preparedness." Seneca. I think that's true. You always have an image in your mind of what you want to achieve and when you see those elements coming together and recognise what's happening, then you can get yourself into a position to make the picture. Even before I saw my first mountain gorilla I always imagined getting a picture of a gorilla looking at me, covered in rain. Then, when I was in that situation, a gorilla turned to me and it was raining. Because I knew what was coming I was able to do something about it. But if I didn't

**MIGRATION (TOP)**  
Nikon D700, Nikon AF-S 70-200mm  
f/2.8G ED VR II, 1/350 sec, f/5.6, ISO400

**GORILLA IN THE RAIN (BOTTOM)**  
Nikon D300, Nikon AF-S 70-200mm  
f/2.8G ED VR II, 1/125 sec, f/3.3, ISO1250

have that image in mind, I wouldn't have known what to do. I have lots of images in my head that haven't happened yet.

#### From where do you derive your photographic inspiration?

I think the biggest source of inspiration I have is the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year Portfolio* yearbooks. I've bought them off the shelf since the first one came out in 1991. When I first saw those in ▶

## BUILDING A FOLLOWING

*Many professional photographers use social media for marketing, but David has succeeded better than most. He reveals his tips...*

You have built up quite a following on Facebook – more than 120,000 likes in just four years. What's your advice?

■ You need to be proactive. It's not just being liked, it's about engagement. I post three or four times a week, pictures and other titbits. I see the same people coming back. You can get the followers, but the catch is you've got to get the right kind of followers. I sell tours through it. I do British wildlife workshops and if I post a date for the next one on my page I sell out in a day. Some people say it's too much work, but I say it's 20 minutes a week. I've never had to advertise. At the moment it's working, but I'm also aware that Facebook may not last forever.







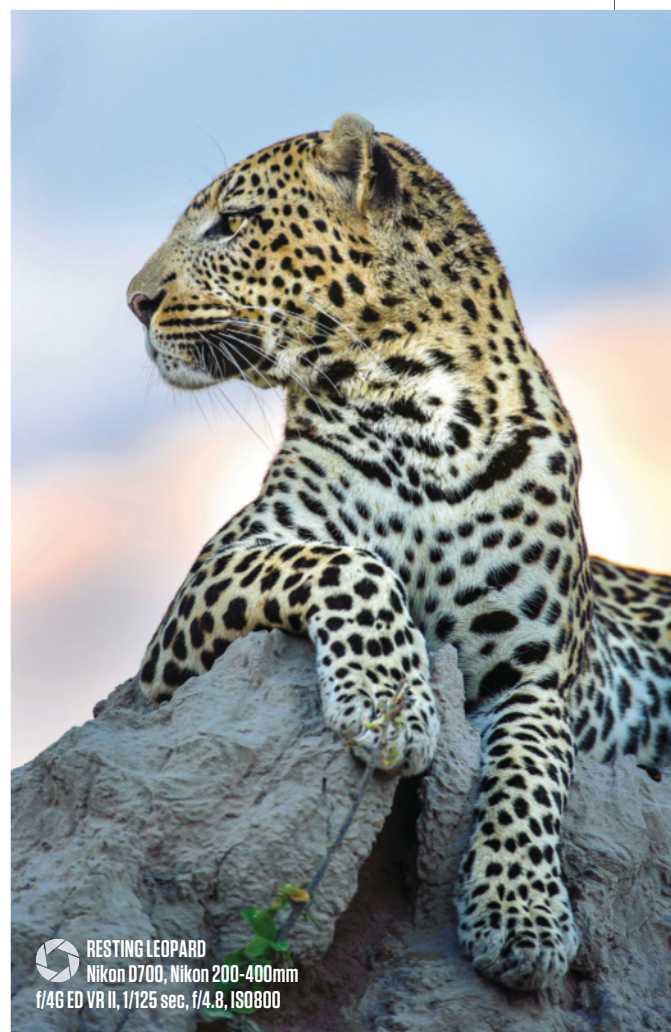
**FAMILY ON THE MOVE (ABOVE)**  
Nikon D200, Nikon 70-200mm  
f/2.8G ED VR II, 1/250 sec, f/8, ISO100

**WILDEBEEST RUNNING (LEFT)**  
Nikon D800e, Nikon AF-S 400mm  
f/2.8G ED VR, 1/6 sec, f/22, ISO100

the bookshop I thought, 'This is the best collection of wildlife photography I have ever seen.' After I'd got the first five, I thought, 'It would be really cool to be included in this.' Then, in 2011, it was my picture they used on the cover!

**What has been the most memorable moment in your photography career?**  
Well, I can't take away the cover of *Wildlife Photographer of the Year: Portfolio 21*.





RESTING LEOPARD  
Nikon D700, Nikon 200-400mm  
f/4G ED VR II, 1/125 sec, f/4.8, ISO800

“ Show your pictures to as many people as possible and only show your best. That’s what I did. They’re no good stuck on your hard drive ”

David Lloyd *Wildlife photographer*

That whole week was special. The awards dinner, the exhibition opening, the Natural History Museum, that whole week was something really special. It’s great. You’re in this room filled with all these people that you have been inspired by.

**And what’s been the most embarrassing photographic moment?!**

It’s got nothing to do with wildlife, but I was in Turkey in 1990 taking a picture of a Turkish family, and I had to take a few steps back, while asking them to smile. They started to laugh. What I didn’t realise was that there was a ten-foot hole behind me – and I went down! But it was slightly sloped, so I was okay. I was wondering why they looked very happy all of a sudden!

**If you were starting out again, is there anything else you would do differently?**

I could always say I could have started earlier, but most people would say that. It’s better to say it doesn’t matter because I’m doing it now anyway. If I’d started 20 years ago I could have made a lot of money doing stock, but you can’t do that any more. I don’t think I made the wrong decision. I won’t be looking back at 75 and saying, ‘I wish I’d done that’, because I’ve done it. No, I don’t have any regrets.

**So, if someone was starting out today wanting to be a wildlife photographer, what’s the best advice you could give?**

It’s just one piece of advice, which would be to show your photographs to as many

people as possible and only show your best. That’s what I did. They’re no good stuck in your hard drive. What am I taking pictures for? I put them on Facebook, Flickr, created my own website. It makes sense to also send them off to editors. If they’re good, people will come knocking, but you’ve still got to initiate it.

Some people say it’s important to develop a personal style, which I’ve never really subscribed to. I think you’ve just got to do what comes naturally.

• See more of David’s photos and find out about his forthcoming photo safaris and UK-based workshops on his website at [www.davidlloyd.net](http://www.davidlloyd.net)