



Rod Morris

My interest in photographing animals started when I was twelve. I had saved my pocket money and bought a roll of black and white film to use in dad's box brownie on a trip to Auckland Zoo. It was not an auspicious start - no photos were actually taken - the animals wouldn't come close enough to fill frame, and I went home and began to read photography books on how to get closer to animals.

My first camera was a Kodak Instamatic 100 with a popup flash. I experimented with slide photography, 'knocking back' the flash with tissue paper and handkerchiefs to try and get the right balance between daylight and flash, my subjects were mainly found along hedgerows – mallard ducks, young blackbirds and thrushes, rabbits and hedgehogs - I still have many of those early slides, and many years later one was published in a Craig Potton calendar..

By the time I joined the Wildlife Service as a young man in the seventies my fascination had shifted to the photography of endangered birds and I was entering competitions.

My photos were beginning to win medals in New Zealand in the eighties, and so I entered one of the early BBC 'Wildlife Photographer of the Year' competitions. I won a trip to Britain for my wife and I for ten days - I met and talked with my childhood heroes at that ceremony - people like Sir David Attenborough, and the late Sir Peter Scott. At the after dinner function David agreed to write the forward to the (first) book I was working on at the time, with the writer Hal Smith - it was to be called 'Wild South: Saving New Zealand's Endangered Birds'.

All in all, that trip to England was most fortuitous - especially when you consider that first prize that year was actually a trip to New Zealand!

With the success of the Wild South book, I moved away from photo competitions, and immersed myself in producing wildlife documentaries and writing nature books.

In more recent times I have returned to competitions as a judge, for the NZ Photographic Society, for the Otago Museum Wildlife Photography Competition, the Treenea Packer Salver Award for the Nature Photography Society, and the Botanical Society of Otago. "