



Ornithologist Mark Anderson developed his love of birds on family farms he visited as a child on the Limpopo River, in Magoebaskloof and in the Lowveld.

"I was fortunate to make my hobby my career, and my wife tells me that there is no clear distinction between my work time and my private time.

"Much of my photography is done from small, portable bird hides, which I place close to waterholes or other places frequented by birds.

"It's amazing how quickly the birds become used to the hide, behaving as if I was not there. I've learnt so much while photographing them.

"I'm fortunate to be able to travel, not just in southern Africa but also to other parts of the world. My photographic gear always goes along, but some airlines are not too happy about the size of my camera bag that I take as hand luggage!"

See more of Mark's photos at www.andersonafrica.co.za.

▶ YOUNG 'UN

Lesser flamingos, Kamfers Dam, Kimberley

"Until recently, lesser flamingos had only three breeding places in Africa – at Sua Pan in Botswana, Etosha Pan in Namibia and Lake Natron in Tanzania. That changed last summer when these birds bred on an S-shaped artificial island at Kamfers Dam near Kimberley, built especially for this purpose. The brown bird in

WHY BIRDS? "I'm too young to play bowls and too poor to play golf. Bird photography was the natural progression from my career in ornithology and conservation."

YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE? "I prefer deserts to forests, plains to mountains, and ephemeral pans to the ocean. The Richtersveld, Kgalagadi, Makgadikgadi Pan, Ngorongoro and Masai Mara are all exciting places, but my absolute favourite place is the piece of paradise we own in the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve in the Lowveld."

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS? "From a small hide, a few metres from a nest in the Karoo, I observed a pair of blue cranes going about their incubation duties and courtship displays. I was oblivious to the searing heat!"

ADVICE FOR BEGINNERS? "Be in the field before sunrise, put in lots of time, and get to know your subject.

"If you have limited funds, invest in a good lens before you buy a good camera."

this image is one of the 9 000 chicks that hatched during the breeding season.

"I photograph the birds from a small portable hide. They're usually unaware of my presence, and it's a privilege to be able to witness their private lives."

HOW? Canon 1D Mark III, 500 mm lens, 1.4x converter, aperture f6.3, shutter speed 1/2 500 second, ISO 250.



View from a bird hide

▶ WATER BALLET

Dancing lesser flamingo, Kamfers Dam

"I usually try to be in my portable hide before dawn, so that I enter in the dark and avoid disturbing the birds I plan to photograph. This also gives me time to work in the magical early-morning light.

"Flamingos are up and about early, and much of their feeding is done in the morning. As the sun rose on this particular day, the colour of the water was a golden-orange and the flamingos seemed to dance on the water as they heralded the start of another magnificent day in the Northern Cape."

HOW? Canon 1D Mark III, 500 mm lens, 1.4x converter, aperture f5.6, shutter speed 1/250 second, ISO 800.

◀ MIRROR, MIRROR...

Bathing lesser flamingo, Kamfers Dam, Kimberley

"The adult lesser flamingos often bathe, either by submersing their body in the water or by splashing their head in the water.

"Although as a scientist I shouldn't ascribe human qualities to animals or birds, I could not stop myself from thinking that this bird was admiring its reflection in the water as it carried out its preening ritual."

HOW? Canon 1D Mark III, 500 mm lens, aperture f5.0, shutter speed 1/2 500 second, ISO 400.



▶ FLIGHT OF THE FLAMINGO

Lesser flamingos in flight, Kamfers Dam

"Lesser flamingos take to the sky in the early evening, often assembling in flocks of hundreds and even thousands of birds. After a short period of exercise and social interaction, they return to the water. Sometimes, perhaps triggered by distant rain, which signals the inundation of ephemeral wetlands, they fly off over the horizon.

"Lesser flamingos move

long distances only at night. Flying at speeds in excess of 60 km/h, they probably cover more than 500 km in a single night. Despite this flying endurance, there is still no evidence that lesser flamingos migrate between southern and east Africa, where an estimated two million of these birds live."

HOW? Canon 1D Mark III, 500 mm lens, aperture f6.3, shutter speed 1/125 second, ISO 400.





▲ WARM-UP EXERCISES *African purple swamphen, Sedgefield*

"The adult African purple swamphen is one of the most attractive rails found in our region. The young bird, however, lacks the purple underparts and turquoise

neck of the adult. "These swamphens are not as secretive as many of their rail cousins, and this young bird spent several minutes sunning itself and

stretching on a sandbank on the Swartvlei Lagoon."

HOW? Canon 1D Mark III, 500 mm lens, 1.4x converter, aperture f5.6, shutter speed 1/640 second, ISO 500.

▶ IT'S MINE!
Pied kingfishers, Klaserie Private Nature Reserve

"I had set up my hide on a large rock in the middle of the Klaserie River, with a 3 m crocodile nearby, when these two noisy pied kingfishers caught my eye.

"I could see from their single breast bands that both were females. I was not sure whether they were a mother and a daughter having a family squabble, or perhaps two adults disputing this prime fishing perch."

HOW? Canon 1D Mark III, 500 mm lens, 1.4x converter, aperture f5.6, shutter speed 1/800 second, ISO 400.



▶ DAINTY DANCER
White-winged tern, Warrenton, Northern Cape

"These terns breed in northern Europe and Asia, but migrate in their tens of thousands to sub-Saharan Africa during our summer months. Places such as Walvis Bay and Lake Kariba support more than 1 000 terns.

"I spent a morning at the Spitskop Dam, watching and photographing a small flock of white-winged terns silently skimming aquatic insects from the water surface."

HOW? Canon 1D Mark III, 500 mm lens, aperture f5.6, shutter speed 1/2 500 second, ISO 400.





▶ RINSE CYCLE

*Reed cormorant,
Cape Recife, Eastern Cape*

"The bird hide at one of the ponds at Cape Recife is a great place to watch and photograph waterbirds. One of the most common species is the reed cormorant.

"Although they usually perch lazily on a branch, individuals occasionally plunge into the water for a bath. They noisily flap their wings, repeatedly submerge themselves beneath the water, and then return to their perch where they preen themselves in the warm sun."

HOW? Canon 20D, 500 mm lens, 1.4x converter, aperture f5.6, shutter speed 1/1 600 second, ISO 400. 