



How to be a responsible wildlife filmmaker & photographer

Born Free is encouraging young people to get out into nature and document amazing species by entering our Youth Wildlife Filmmaker and Photographer of the Year competition 2021, Hope Springs Eternal.

But we want to ensure wild animals are protected from suffering and treated with compassion and respect. Please follow our helpful dos and don'ts whilst preparing your entry for the competition.

Don't:

X Get too close

This will ensure animals are not disturbed AND help protect you from any defensive behaviours. Please note it's against the law to interfere with or disturb an occupied animal home such as a badger sett or bird nest.

X Attract an animal using live bait, scents or artificial calls

This can change a wild animal's behaviour while providing no benefit to the individual. In addition, it might impact on welfare of bait species.

X Damage habitats

The animals you observe rely on this habitat for survival, so leave as you find it. Avoid walking over, trampling or damaging vegetation or any other aspect of the environment wherever possible.

X Get between an animal and its young

Animals can be incredibly unpredictable when caring for and protecting offspring. Some species, such as seals, may even abandon their young if disturbed, so keep your distance.

X Use flash unnecessarily

Some cameras are set up to automatically use flash which can disturb wildlife. Turn off flash in settings or, if you intend to use, check whether you need a licence¹.

¹ You will need a permit or licence to photograph some species using flash or to use drones when photographing: [Protected species: when to apply for a licence to survey, film or photograph them](#)

Do:

✓ Always put animal's welfare first

Whatever species you photograph, whether a spider or a fox, ensure you treat the animal with compassion and respect, and don't disturb or endanger the animal in any way.

✓ Use a telephoto lens, or zoom function

By using your camera zoom function you can still get a close shot, without disturbing wildlife.

✓ Watch from a distance

If you don't have a telephoto lens, try using a trail camera, or setting up your camera a distance away from yourself on a tripod and wait for an animal to move into the frame, using camera remote to capture your image.

✓ Use a hide

Hides allow you to observe wildlife without causing a disturbance. Always keep up to date with your current [COVID-19 guidelines](#), as some public hides may be shut, or have restricted access. You could always create a home-made hide in your own garden!

✓ Stick to paths and trails

Avoid damaging plant species by walking through and trampling habitats. The animals you observe rely on this habitat for survival, so leave as you find.

✓ Plan ahead

By planning what you want to photograph and how you to achieve the best shot/footage, you need to first decide where best to go, what to focus on and what equipment to take. But if you regularly carry around your camera (or phone) you could also achieve an unexpected shot.

✓ Make your own space for wildlife

You don't even need to have a garden! Even a window box of wildflowers or a bird feeder outside your window can support a whole host of incredible wild species for you to document!

