



Panning photography of nature

TEXT AND IMAGES **MIKKEL DUE ANDERSEN**

My name is Mikkel Due Andersen. I am 43 years old and an all things nature photographer from Denmark. I live on the amazing rock island of Bornholm, where you can find the most diverse nature in the country with loads of beautiful landscapes. I work as a primary school teacher. I have always had a creative nerve, while playing music or as a photographer. I have a family with lots of kids and the best supportive wife. I think she knows that I have to be in nature to reload and create.

We used to travel a lot before the pandemic and really can't wait to visit rainforests and arctic areas again. But my local island is my favourite, even though it lacks a fair amount of the mammals found on the mainland. So much magic going on here that I haven't even been close to yet. The way that it's possible to know how the weather is best, how the season is changing, the routines of how nature and the light interacts is crucial for me to evolve as a photographer.

It all started when I got a Canon EOS 1000FN (EOS Rebel II in the US) when I was a teenager. All my savings were used to develop film and making prints of nature. Later in my youth, music took the first place as the creative platform in my life. When I returned to photography about ten years ago, it was the easiest choice to get a digital Canon SLR. I really can't say much negative about the Canon cameras. If it wasn't for one very crucial thing, I could still have been a Canon user.

I needed a 600mm F4. The Canon model is so expensive and huge. It takes everything about being portable out



Canon 5DS R
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @560mm
F/11.1/40" . ISO 100

Canon 5DS R
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @318mm
F/11 . 1/40" . ISO 100





Canon 5DS R
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @560mm
F/40 . 1/20" . ISO 100

“The way that it’s possible to know how the weather is best, how the season is changing, the routines of how nature and the light interacts is crucial for me to evolve as a photographer.”



Canon 5DS R
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @560mm
F/22 . 1/40" . ISO 100



Canon 5DS R
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 @400mm
F/5.6 . 1/6" . ISO 1600



Canon 5DS R
 Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @560mm
 F/9 . 1/40" . ISO 100

of the idea about my kit. My main setup is now 840mm f/5.6 (full-frame equivalent) and so light and small compared to a full-frame.

The full-frame mirrorless systems are getting a long way, but the lenses are still heavy, even more expensive and not portable as Olympus is. So I made the switch, selling my three Canon workhorses and all the lenses and began to build up the Olympus park. I only have very, very few things I miss, but so many features I now can't live without.

I really like to pursuit pictures that reveal a special scene, like the viewer actually being there and experiencing the moment. The best moments, for me, are always when the light is low and the fog is out, when the dusk is turning the day, and the cold dew is making my shoes wet. In that little light, I need a camera that can handle long exposures handheld. Somehow my melancholy nature and the birds and animals melt together with the possibilities of Olympus image stabilization.

I shoot a lot of landscapes, a bit of astro, semi macro, plants, trees, animals in all sizes, some underwater with an Outex system, and birds in flight with long exposures. I try really hard to keep the pictures real and unspoiled without the lighthouses, bridges and other human-made objects. As you can read, I need a light, compact, but very versatile setup:

●*M.Zuiko 8mm F1.8 Fisheye PRO for astro, ultra-wide shots and the special things a fisheye can do. It's so small, that it fits in a pocket.*



Canon 5DS R
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @560mm
F/9.1/20". ISO 100

**“I really like to pursuit pictures that reveal a special scene,
like the viewer actually being there and experiencing the
moment.”**



Canon 7D MK II
Canon EF 400mmF5.6
F/6.3 . 1/500" . ISO 160



Canon 5DS R
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @420mm
F/11 . 1/40" . ISO 100



Canon 7D MK II
Canon EF 400mmF5.6
F/18 .1/30" . ISO 100

- M.Zuiko 12-100mm F4 PRO, my main landscape and “carry-along” lens.
- M-Zuiko 25mm F1.2 PRO for the bokeh shots and family portraits. Amazing thing.
- M.Zuiko 40-150mm F2.8 PRO I use it a lot to photograph butterflies and other flying insects. Most of the time with the extender. It is also unbeatable in lowlight situations.
- M.Zuiko 300mm F4 PRO is the most used lens of mine. I use it for everything. Pseudo macro, wildlife, landscapes and bird hunting. Most of the time it's paired with the extender. Only in low light I use it without. It's a truly amazing lens.
- M.Zuiko MC-14 1.4x Teleconverter
- OM-D E-M1 Mark II
- OM-D E-M1 Mark III

I carry the two cameras most of the time, with the 12-100mm and the 300mm+1.4 on each shoulder. I dream about the 150-400mm instead, making it an even more perfect match for almost anything. For now, I'm waiting for it to be available in Denmark.

Unlike most other nature photographers, I use a shoulder bag as my primary bag. My *Think Tank Retrospective 7* can really hold a huge amount of M4/3 gear. I carry one camera with the 300mm F4 and a 1.4 extender on the other shoulder, so the weight is on both shoulders. Only when caught in heavy rain is it all in the bag. Travelling around the world is felt safe when the bag doesn't scream out “Expensive gear”.

I use Olympus Workspace to handle my RAW files, but all the post-production is mostly made in Affinity



Canon 7D MK II
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @560mm
F/8 . 1/200" . ISO 3200

Canon 7D MK II
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 @400mm
F/6.3 . 1/40" . ISO 3200



Canon 7D MK II
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @560mm
F/8 . 1/40" . ISO 320



Canon 7D MK II
Canon EF 100-400mmF4.5-5.6 +1.4x @560mm
F/8 . 1/30" . ISO 250



Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14 @420mm
F/16 . 1/50" . ISO 400

Photo. I sometimes use bits from Luminar and DxO Photolab 2. I also use Topaz Sharpen AI quite a lot at the end. It's mostly small corrections with curves, white balance, contrast, burn and dodge things, but I spend a lot of time trying to get the most out of the files without making it too photoshopped. After all, it is nature.

Panning birds

I'm not sure how the panning birds thing became my thing. I guess it grew on me. Instead of all the wonderful tack sharp photos of birds and nature, I find the blurry movement and melancholy shots of nature the most satisfying results. The longer exposures and in-camera movement (ICM) are slowly sneaking in on most of my wildlife photos. It opens so many doors when it suddenly is possible to use long exposures handheld.

I have programmed my cameras, so the features I use a lot are right at my fingertip.

For the longer exposure shots, I start at 1/50s for panning birds in flight. It works with the 300mm + 1.4 extender for most situations. I set it up as the C1 with the shutter priority, so that I easily can change the speed. My C2 setting is targeting sharp photos with aperture priority, so it will use the fastest shutter speed possible. I often end up at even longer exposures all the way down to about a second. I also like to take pictures of a still bird, but with the ocean or anything else getting blurry by the long exposure.



Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14
@420mm
F/6.3 . 1/50" . ISO 1000

Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14
@420mm
F/22 . 1/50" . ISO 125



The fabulous IS is so important as I almost never carry a tripod, unless it's for astro shots. I found out that different bird species are very different to photograph with the panning technique. Some, like starlings, are very easy when they levitate. While cormorants are much more difficult. They somehow move both their body, head and wings at the same time.

You really need to focus on your breathing and body to get the most out of handheld long exposures. I keep the ISO on Auto, but maximum 2500 and AF on tracking. Most of the time, I shoot in sequential high. Afterwards, I start up with deleting all the missed, out of focus and birds in too much movement pics before picking out the few that stands out.

It takes a lot of practice to learn the birds' behavior. When to expect the right light at the right space. For example, numerous flock of birds is fantastic as they go to their resting areas for the night, or leaving at sunrise for the day. Research and knowing your area is almost everything, so knowing when to be where. The rest is luck.

Last summer, I spent many hours trying to get the panning technique working with bats, and it almost did. I'm sure the summer of 2021 will be the summer where it happens. A hunting bat, all sharp against a blurry background.



Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14 @420mm
F/5.6 . 1/800" . ISO 400



Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 40-150mmF2.8 + MC-14
@210mm
F/22.1/50" . ISO 100

Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0
F/22 . 1/50" . ISO 100





Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14 @420mm
F/5.6 . 1/250" . ISO 500

Why Olympus matters

I really, really love the IS in the Olympus system. I can take sharp photos with the 300mm + 1.4 extender down to 1/8second handheld. No other brand can keep up with that. At the same time, it is so weather sealed that no weather in Denmark or anywhere else in the Arctic or rainforest can harm my gear - I have tried it. The ISO maybe isn't as great as I would like, but the IS makes up for it most of the time.

I think that Olympus has gone a long way to extend the sensor's capability. I use the handheld high resolution every day, and the results compare to my old Canon EOS 5DS R sensor. The Live ND filter, Live composite and Starry AF are other phenomenal things.

In the future, it's important to be able to compete with the large sensors, but not necessarily the common way. What if the future for Olympus could bring an "action" high-resolution mode so that it would work with moving objects? The price for producing small sensors - and the fitting lenses is so much less than the full-frame. Of course, ISO should also be better - but that might be possible in small sensors and better processors in the future. I edit the files on a Macbook Pro 16", and they are beautiful and sharp.

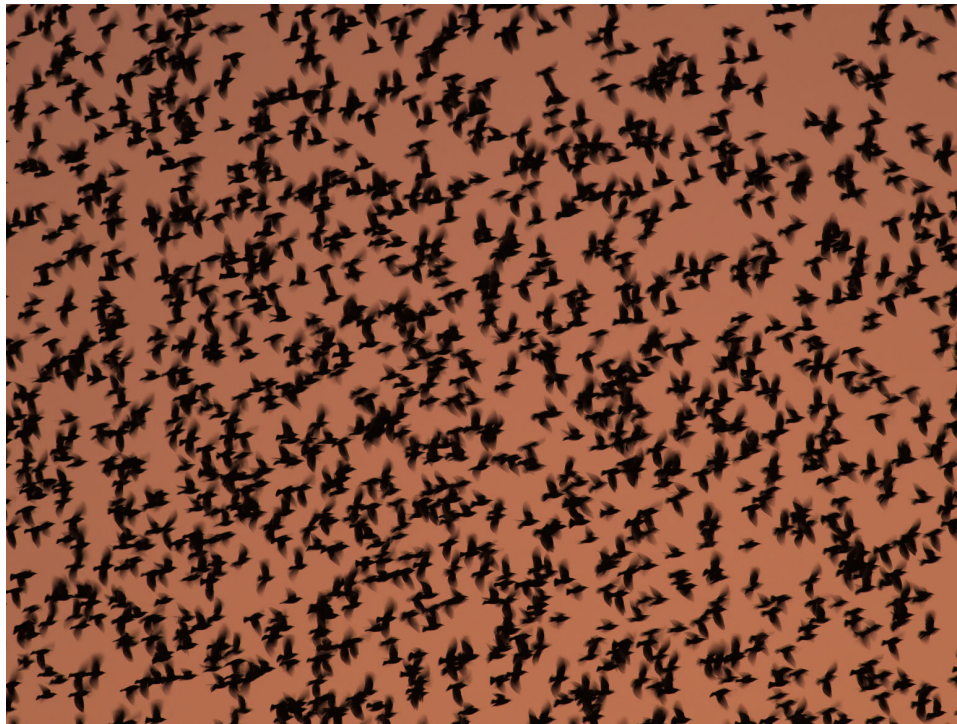
For the lenses, I think that the IS is a unique feature that should be incorporated in future lenses. I can see that many wildlife photographers are converting themselves because of the amazing new 150-400mm. If they launched a 50-200mm F2.8 with the multiple axis IS, it



Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14
@420mm
F/5.6 . 1/320" . ISO 400

Olympus E-M1 MK III
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14 @420mm
F/10 . 1/50" . ISO 400

Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14 @420mm
F/5.6 . 1/50" . ISO 500



**“I have programmed my
cameras, so the features I use
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Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 300mmF4.0 + MC-14
@420mm
F/16 . 1/5" . ISO 400

would be a really serious pro lens setup. No other brand even comes close, and maybe with the size of a normal 70-200mm FF lens, but here being 100-400mm F2.8.

But for now, the size, image stabilization, the weather sealing, and all the processor-based features helps me to capture wonderful moments from nature like no other brand is capable of.

www.instagram.com/bornholmsnaturfotograf/
www.mikkeldueandersen.com

Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 7-14mmF2.8 @7mm
F/7.1, 1/400", ISO 400





Olympus E-M1 MK III
Olympus M.Zuiko 12-100mmF4.0 @28mm
F/4.0 . 1/320" . ISO 400



Olympus E-M1 MK III
Olympus M.Zuiko 8mmF1.8
F/1.8 . 1/30" . ISO 250

Olympus E-M1 MK II
Olympus M.Zuiko 40-150mmF2.8 @150mm
F/22 . 1/20" . ISO 80



“It takes a lot of practice to learn the birds’ behavior. When to expect the right light at the right space.”



Olympus E-M1 MK III
Olympus M.Zuiko 12-100mmF4.0 @70mm
F/18 . 0.5" . ISO 100

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