**Wildlife Photography**

Dear Student,

Greetings from Univariety!

Wildlife photography may seem like a glamorous and carefree occupation—who wouldn't want to travel the world and take photos of animals? However, the job can be difficult and dangerous as you may have to spend long hours of waiting in the hot sun to get that perfect shot and may potentially be dealing with aggressive animals.

Before you go out and spend thousands of dollars on camera equipment, ensure that you are suited to the career of wildlife photography. If you can, consider interviewing a professional wildlife photographer for an honest first-hand account of what the job entails.

Also ensure that you are willing to:

* Work odd hours, including very early mornings and very late nights
* Learn about different species of animals
* Put yourself in potentially dangerous situations
* Travel extensively
* Work as a freelancer and promote your own work
* Spend several hours, or even days, in an animal's habitat, waiting for them to appear
* Subject yourself to potentially harsh weather conditions
* Spend thousands of dollars each year on equipment and supplies
* Learn about photography and stay up to date with the latest techniques and technology

Step 2: Get Equipped and Educated

Naturally, as is the case when pursuing any type of career in professional photography, you'll want to ensure that you have a camera capable of taking the highest quality photos.

In addition to a camera, you'll likely also need:

* A tripod
* A selection of different lenses
* Lighting equipment
* Camouflage blinds

Once you have purchased your equipment, ensure you know how to use it by reading your owner's manuals and practicing the techniques described therein. If you have not already done so, you may also want to consider pursuing formal education in the field of photography to learn the basics of photo composition, lighting, framing, depth of field and the like. If you prefer practical learning, you can also contact professional wildlife photographers and asking if they would be willing to take you on as an assistant or intern.

Step 3: Practice Taking Photos of Wildlife

After getting the basics down, your next step is to get out there and practice using your equipment and taking shots of wildlife. The more practice you get using your camera, equipment and different photography techniques, the better you will become at your craft.

Some areas where you may be able to find wildlife to photograph include:

* Zoos
* Bird or wildlife sanctuaries
* National or state parks
* Beaches
* Your own backyard or home, if you have pets

When dealing with wildlife, especially animals in a natural setting, be sure to respect them. Keep in mind that some animals may be dangerous and even seemingly timid animals, such as deer, may charge if threatened. Try not to startle or encroach upon the animals—remember that you are a visitor in their environment, not the other way around. One of the most important, and at times, frustrating an aspect of wildlife photography is waiting for the animals to come close enough to get a good photo of them.

Step 4: Build a Portfolio and Seek Employment

Although your ultimate dream may be to work as a photographer for National Geographic, be aware that most of the magazine's photographers have worked for years in their field to become respected and accomplished photographers. Many wildlife photographers work as freelancers, selling their photos to magazines, newspapers, websites and other publications.

Once you have taken a collection of impressive wildlife photos, arrange them into a professional portfolio. Then, either submit individual photographs to parties that may be interested in them, or approach a specific publication with your portfolio. Part of the challenge of securing employment as a wildlife photographer is convincing others that they are in need of and will benefit from your services.

Becoming a wildlife photographer can be an enjoyable and rewarding career for those who are suited for it. However, it is also a challenging occupation, as you will have to be patient with your subjects and spend much of your time traveling and waiting for animals to enter your camera's field of view. Especially when you are just starting out, you will have to prove your talents to potential employers and buyers by promoting yourself demonstrating that you have what it takes to provide them with high quality and engaging photos.