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NATURE IN FOCUS

SUMMER holidays usually bring an increase in the number of amateur photographers, and for those who hope to take successful nature studies, WILL PARKINSON, a keen photographer of wild life since boyhood, had some practical advice, born of long experience in several countries, to offer listeners to his talk "Nature Through the Camera," given from 1YA at the beginning of this month. Here, in slightly condensed form, we print the talk and two photographs taken by the speaker

A GOOD many years ago I went to live in a remote feudal village in the North Riding of Yorkshire. I learned to see and recognise the various signs and tracks of the denizens of the woods, fields, streams and moors. This knowledge I consider is essential to wild life photography. The next essential is infinite patience, and this I cannot stress too much, even though luck sometimes does enable one to get a picture.



GIANT WETA—Caught by the camera at Little Barrier

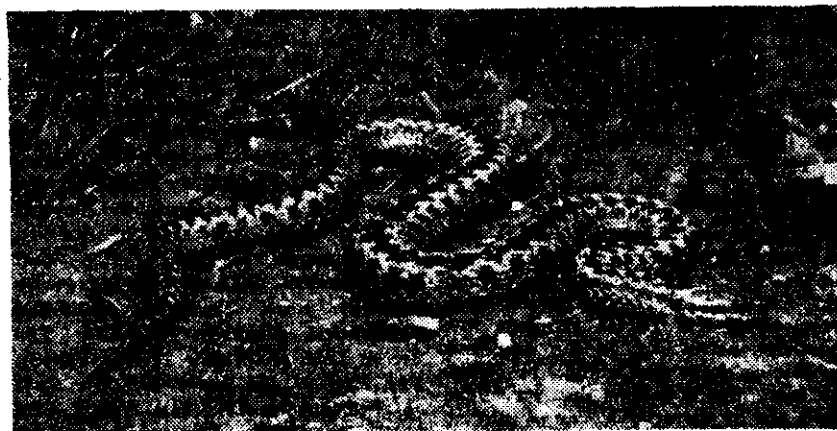
It is important to learn to move quietly, and to beware of dry sticks. The cracking of one of these by a carelessly placed foot is heard over a wide area. When approaching your object move so slowly that your movement is imperceptible. Many wild animals can scent you half a mile away; so approach them when what wind there may be is coming from them. At the slightest sign of alarm stand quite still and do not move again for some considerable time. Try and avoid letting your figure appear silhouetted against the sky for although you may be perfectly still some of the shyer mammals will recognise, even in semi-darkness, any change in the contour of a bank or wall near their home.

A camera that can be focussed is essential, especially for the smaller creatures. I have used many types, from the cumbersome half-plate stand camera to the miniature. The one I liked best was a quarter-plate reflex with a specially fitted lens. On the other hand two of my friends prefer the 35 mm. miniature. Nowadays I use a 2 1/4 inch square reflex. But the important thing is to get used to your camera. Learn its possibilities and its limitations. When you are going tramping and weight is a consideration there is much to be said for the miniature. Films are light and it is easy to carry extra lenses. I know that the cost of a good miniature may be a consideration. However, once you have embarked on

this work, you will find yourself making changes from camera to camera till you have finally found the one that suits you best.

I think it wise to use a camera stand whenever possible, as exposures sometimes may be prolonged. A ball and socket head is a useful adjunct, especially when working in a cramped space in a "hide," which is necessary when photographing some of the shyer birds or animals. The kind of shelter you use depends on the animal or bird that you are going to photograph. For a bird on a nest or feeding its young all that may be required is a fence made by driving a number of sticks about five feet long into the ground and then weaving branches through them. A hole large enough for the camera to "see" through should be left. After erecting the hide, some days should elapse before attempting any photography so that the birds have become used to it and are unafraid. This was the type of hide I used to photograph wild ducks. I went to the shelter almost every day for three weeks—which will make you realise what I meant when I said that

(continued on next page)



VIPER—A study which was exhibited at a Royal Photographic Society exhibition in London

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