

YOUR LETTERS

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Collecting memories

In Laurie Campbell's article in the February issue (OP201) he revisits some of his old photos, and shares the memories and experiences that they trigger. I underwent a similar experience recently when I revisited my slide collection of mongooses and other creatures from two decades ago in Uganda. The experience was a transformative one because it reminded me of how bad my photography was back then – which is why I had not blown the dust off the collection for many a year. Secondly, I was reminded that it does not matter how bad my photographs are because the images bring back memories of experiences that would otherwise be blurry, if not forgotten.

While reminiscing, I remembered the trusty old Canon EOS 500N film camera that I used back then. I would drive about in the bush in my Land Rover Defender (like the EOS 500N, a discontinued model) with my camera on the passenger seat beside me ready to react to photo opportunities. Being an old Land Rover, the doors were a bit dodgy, and on one occasion the passenger door flew open spontaneously as I was driving along. I instinctively leaned over to try to catch the door as it swung outwards. The Land Rover lurched to the side and hit a bump in the road, and I watched in slow-motion horror as my camera leapt out the now-open door. Suddenly aware of my dangerous driving, I jerked the steering wheel back on to the straight-and-narrow and hit the brakes to avoid further calamity. As I did so, I felt a camera-shaped bump as the Land Rover drove over my beloved Canon. The camera, it turns out, was about as indestructible as the Land Rover; I continued to use it, slightly bruised and misshapen, for many more slide films.

Jason Gilchrist, via email



A group of banded mongooses emerge from the bush, taken by Jason Gilchrist with a slightly squashed camera during a research trip in 1999

July's letter of the month winner, Jason Gilchrist, receives three superb books from Triplekite Publishing, together worth £55.50

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