

**USEFUL INFO**

Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown copyright 2010



**HOW TO GET THERE**

Folly Farm is 11 miles from Bristol and 12 miles from Bath, just off the A368 in Stowey.

**COURSE**

**BRISTOL WILDLIFE FILMMAKERS**

Folly Farm, Stowey, Pensford BS39 4DW

☎ 07785 282411

🌐 [www.bristolwildfilm.co.uk](http://www.bristolwildfilm.co.uk)

Courses are timed to coincide with a variety of wildlife events. Prices include accommodation and local, organic food.



**FOLLY FARM**

☎ 01275 331590

🌐 [www.follyfarm.org](http://www.follyfarm.org)

Folly Farm runs environment courses, but the reserve is open to visitors throughout the year.

**EAT**

**THE PONY AND TRAP**

☎ 01275 332627

🌐 [theponyandtrap.co.uk](http://theponyandtrap.co.uk)

This 200-year-old cottage pub near Chew Magna serves delicious, locally sourced food.

# Wildlife filmmaking course

## North Somerset

Find out how wildlife documentary crews make magic with a hands-on filmmaking experience **Words:** Eleanor Daniel **Pictures:** Rob Scott

I couldn't help feeling slightly wary as I pulled up at Folly Farm, a converted Georgian farmhouse set amid a 250-acre nature reserve of wildflower meadows and woodland. A complete novice to filmmaking and anything involving expensive, technical kit, I was nervous about taking on a three-day wildlife filmmaking course, taught by experienced producers, directors and cameramen.

Their warm welcome put me at ease as they assured me that the course was merely a chance for them to share their passion for wildlife with others through the art of filmmaking. They explained that, as keen supporters of the Avon Wildlife Trust, they could share their skills and experience and run a course in collaboration with the Trust.

**MEADOWS MISSION**

After meeting my fellow course mates, we were given our film brief "Disappearing meadows". Sarah Pitt, a wildlife film producer, told us our objective was "to reveal the meadows in a different way" in a three-minute film. I was excited now.

We had the privilege of "playing with", as Tim Shepherd, professional cameraman put it, the Z1 and Z7 cameras. With delicate fingers, I got to grips with the lenses, buttons and tripods, while Tim demystified things, explaining when changing lenses to "just wiggle it around until it fits!"

A short walk through the flower meadows followed, allowing us to check out filming spots. There was a plethora of wildflowers to show the world, such as the heath spotted orchid and the ox-eye daisy, with the marbled white and small tortoiseshell butterflies dancing about them.



Climbing up to the breathtaking Round Hill vista, we spotted two kestrels in only a few minutes. Folly Farm teemed with life.

**ON LOCATION**

Up bright and early the next morning, we were eager to take on the task in hand. Having hauled the kit up to the meadows, we set to work, shooting smooth and slow pans of the Chew Valley. The wind was against us but we persevered, spurred on by words of encouragement from our tutor: "With confidence comes fluidity." How very Zen!

With our untrained eyes we spotted a weird, frothy substance on a thistle. Tim told us it was cuckoo spit and, nestled inside, was a froghopper. I switched to the macro lens and captured amazing close ups of its world. I grew to love my new macro lens gadget, especially while filming a nest of baby spiders. As I zoomed in on the mother protecting her nest, I could see the individual hairs on her spindly legs.

On the final day, it was time to get editing, and Rob Harrington was on hand to help. Opening our film with a landscape pan, Rob's words "there's nothing better than finding your first shot" rang true. Rob patiently guided us through the complex editing software. Editing takes a lot of patience, but the satisfaction of watching your shots come together so fluidly is thrilling. After several tea breaks we had the finished product, a three-minute film entitled *A Sun's Wilderness*, set to music of our choice.

We were not disappointed. The film captured the wildness of the meadows, with some surprisingly satisfying camerawork, most notably on the macro lens. With a DVD of our film and a new wealth of knowledge, we parted, feeling a newfound appreciation for the humble meadow.

Watch Eleanor's film, *A Sun's Wilderness* at: [www.bbccountryfilemagazine.com/wildfilm](http://www.bbccountryfilemagazine.com/wildfilm)

**ABOVE** A marbled white butterfly  
**LEFT** Tim teaches his students tricks of the trade  
**1** Wildlife filmmaking involves some donkey work  
**2** Editing is crucial  
**3** Finding the right opening shot  
**4** A macro lens reveals the secret life inside cuckoo spit



"When we checked out filming spots, there was a plethora of wildflowers to show the world"

Photos: (butterfly) Tony Wharton/FLPA