

The Essential Requirements & Specifications that Camera Equipment Should Ideally Have for Wildlife & Landscape Photography in Namibia / Africa

Updated Mirrorless Edition (2026)
Canon & Nikon Focus

Based on the original course material by Claudia & Wynand du Plessis, updated and expanded for the modern mirrorless era.

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1. Introduction

The original version of this document was created during the DSLR era, when Canon and Nikon DSLR systems dominated professional wildlife and landscape photography. While many of the principles in that guide remain highly relevant today, camera technology has evolved dramatically over the last decade.

Modern mirrorless cameras now dominate the professional market. The most important improvements are not only image quality, but also autofocus performance, subject recognition, burst shooting speed, stabilization, low-light capability and silent shooting.

For landscape photography, many older professional DSLR systems remain capable of producing outstanding and fully professional results. Cameras such as the Canon EOS 5D Mark IV and Nikon D850 still deliver excellent image quality and dynamic range. However, for wildlife photography — especially birds in flight, fast action, low-light situations and unpredictable animal behaviour — the newest mirrorless systems offer a substantial advantage.

This updated guide therefore keeps the original structure and practical philosophy of the course material, while expanding the content to include the capabilities, strengths and considerations of the latest Canon RF and Nikon Z mirrorless systems.

2. Essential requirements & specifications of modern camera equipment

Reaction time, autofocus performance and burst shooting speed are now among the most important advantages of modern mirrorless systems. Professional mirrorless cameras from Canon and Nikon can track animal eyes, bird eyes, vehicles and human subjects with extraordinary precision.

Modern flagship cameras such as the Canon EOS R1, Canon EOS R5 Mark II, Nikon Z8 and Nikon Z9 provide blackout-free electronic shooting, advanced subject tracking and continuous shooting rates of 20–40 frames per second while maintaining autofocus and exposure tracking.

For wildlife photography, autofocus reliability is often more important than absolute sensor resolution. Capturing the exact moment of action sharply focused is more valuable than having extremely high megapixel counts alone.

Important modern specifications include:

- Advanced AI-based autofocus and subject recognition
- Large image buffers with fast CFexpress memory card support
- High ISO performance with low noise
- In-body image stabilization (IBIS)
- High dynamic range and excellent RAW flexibility
- Weather sealing and durability
- Electronic shutters with silent operation
- High-resolution electronic viewfinders

Modern full-frame sensors typically provide the best combination of image quality, low-light performance and autofocus reliability. APS-C mirrorless systems remain highly attractive for wildlife photography because of their additional apparent reach and lighter telephoto lenses.

Image stabilization has improved enormously in the mirrorless era. Combined camera and lens stabilization systems now routinely provide 6–8 stops of stabilization advantage, making handheld photography in low light far easier than during the DSLR era.

Modern RAW files also provide exceptional flexibility during post-processing, allowing meaningful recovery of highlights and shadows in difficult African lighting conditions.

3. The right lenses for Namibia / Africa

Lenses remain more important than camera bodies. A mid-range camera with an excellent lens will often outperform a flagship camera fitted with a mediocre lens.

For wildlife photography in Namibia and Africa, a telephoto zoom lens remains the most versatile option. Modern zoom lenses have become extremely sharp and autofocus performance is vastly improved compared to older DSLR-era zooms.

Recommended focal lengths for wildlife photography:

- 100–400mm or 100–500mm zooms for general safari use
- 180–600mm or 200–800mm zooms for birds and distant wildlife
- 300mm, 400mm, 500mm or 600mm prime lenses for specialised professional wildlife work

Recommended focal lengths for landscape photography:

- 14–24mm ultra-wide zooms
- 15–35mm or 16–35mm wide-angle zooms
- 24–70mm standard zooms

- 70–200mm telephoto zooms for compressed landscapes and detail work

One of the biggest improvements of modern mirrorless systems is autofocus performance with telephoto lenses. Eye-detection autofocus for birds and animals is now highly reliable in many situations.

Modern Canon RF and Nikon Z lenses are generally sharper, lighter and optically superior to many older DSLR lenses. Internal stabilization systems also work together with the camera body stabilization for significantly improved handheld performance.

For photographers travelling long distances in Africa, the reduced size and weight of mirrorless telephoto systems can make a major practical difference.

4. Additional modern camera features for wildlife & landscape photography

Modern mirrorless cameras include many capabilities that were unavailable or limited during the DSLR era.

Important modern features include:

- Subject detection autofocus for birds, mammals and vehicles
- Eye-detection autofocus
- Silent electronic shutters
- Pre-capture shooting modes
- Advanced video capabilities including 4K and 8K recording
- In-camera focus stacking
- Built-in interval shooting and timelapse creation
- Live histograms and exposure previews in the electronic viewfinder
- High-resolution articulated screens
- Dual card slots with CFexpress support
- Improved weather sealing

Electronic viewfinders (EVFs) have improved dramatically and now offer major practical advantages:

- Real-time exposure preview
- Live histogram display
- Focus peaking
- Magnified manual focus assistance
- Improved low-light viewing

For landscape photographers, live exposure preview and histogram display are extremely valuable. For wildlife photographers, silent shooting and advanced autofocus tracking provide major advantages.

Pre-capture modes available on some modern cameras can even record images slightly before the shutter is fully pressed, helping photographers capture unpredictable wildlife behaviour.

5. Essential accessories and workflow recommendations

Modern high-resolution cameras produce extremely large RAW files. Fast memory cards, powerful computers and reliable backup systems are now essential.

Recommended accessories:

- Fast CFexpress Type B memory cards
- Multiple spare batteries

- Portable SSD backup drives
- Carbon fibre tripod
- Bean bag for vehicle-based wildlife photography
- Weather protection covers
- High quality UV protection filters
- Circular polarizing filters for landscape work
- ND filters for long exposures

A modern wildlife photography workflow should always include:

1. Daily backups to at least two separate devices
2. RAW shooting for maximum editing flexibility
3. Proper keywording and image organisation
4. Colour-managed editing workflow
5. Reliable cloud or off-site backup when possible

Modern editing software such as Adobe Lightroom, Photoshop, DxO PureRAW and Topaz AI tools can significantly improve image quality, especially for high ISO wildlife photography.

6. Recommended Canon & Nikon mirrorless camera systems

Recommended Canon mirrorless cameras:

Professional wildlife & action:

- Canon EOS R1
- Canon EOS R3
- Canon EOS R5 Mark II

Professional landscape & hybrid photography:

- Canon EOS R5 Mark II
- Canon EOS R5
- Canon EOS R6 Mark II

Excellent enthusiast APS-C wildlife option:

- Canon EOS R7

Recommended Nikon mirrorless cameras:

Professional wildlife & action:

- Nikon Z9
- Nikon Z8

Professional landscape & hybrid photography:

- Nikon Z8
- Nikon Z7 II

Excellent enthusiast APS-C wildlife option:

- Nikon Z50 II

General observations:

- Canon currently offers exceptionally strong autofocus tracking for wildlife and birds.
- Nikon's Z8 and Z9 are widely regarded as among the best all-round wildlife and landscape cameras available today.

- Modern mirrorless cameras outperform older DSLRs particularly in autofocus tracking, silent shooting, stabilization and video capability.
- DSLR systems still remain highly capable for landscape photography and general photography.

7. Recommended lenses for Canon RF and Nikon Z systems

Recommended Canon RF lenses:

Wildlife:

- RF 100-500mm f/4.5-7.1L IS USM
- RF 200-800mm f/6.3-9 IS USM
- RF 400mm f/2.8L IS USM
- RF 600mm f/4L IS USM

Landscape:

- RF 15-35mm f/2.8L IS USM
- RF 14-35mm f/4L IS USM
- RF 24-70mm f/2.8L IS USM
- RF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM

Macro:

- RF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM

Recommended Nikon Z lenses:

Wildlife:

- Z 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 VR S
- Z 180-600mm f/5.6-6.3 VR
- Z 400mm f/2.8 TC VR S
- Z 600mm f/4 TC VR S

Landscape:

- Z 14-24mm f/2.8 S
- Z 24-70mm f/2.8 S
- Z 24-120mm f/4 S
- Z 70-200mm f/2.8 VR S

Macro:

- Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S

Modern mirrorless lenses are generally optimized for high-resolution sensors and advanced autofocus systems. Many newer lenses are sharper edge-to-edge than older DSLR designs and provide faster, quieter autofocus.

8. DSLR versus mirrorless in 2026

The DSLR era is gradually coming to an end. Canon and Nikon now focus almost entirely on mirrorless development. However, DSLR equipment remains highly capable and excellent value on the used market.

Advantages still offered by professional DSLRs:

- Excellent battery life

- Proven durability
- Optical viewfinders preferred by some photographers
- Lower second-hand prices
- Outstanding image quality

Major advantages of modern mirrorless systems:

- Superior autofocus tracking
- Animal and bird eye autofocus
- Silent electronic shooting
- Better stabilization
- Live exposure preview
- Higher shooting speeds
- Improved video features
- Reduced size and weight in many systems

For wildlife photographers entering the market today, mirrorless systems are clearly the better long-term investment. For landscape photographers, high-end DSLR systems remain fully capable of producing world-class images.

9. Budget considerations and practical recommendations

You do not need the most expensive flagship equipment to create outstanding images. Good light, strong composition, patience and fieldcraft remain more important than owning the latest camera body.

Practical recommendations:

- Prioritise lenses over camera bodies
- Buy the best telephoto lens you can reasonably afford
- Invest in reliable support systems and backup storage
- Learn autofocus settings thoroughly
- Practice tracking moving wildlife before travelling
- Keep your equipment setup practical and manageable for travel

For many photographers, an enthusiast-level body paired with excellent lenses represents the best balance between performance, portability and cost.

Suggested combinations:

- Canon EOS R7 + RF 100-500mm
- Canon EOS R5 Mark II + RF 100-500mm
- Nikon Z8 + Z 180-600mm
- Nikon Z50 II + Z 100-400mm

Modern mirrorless systems have dramatically improved the ability of photographers to capture sharp, well-focused images in demanding wildlife situations. Nevertheless, understanding light, behaviour, timing and composition remains the true foundation of excellent wildlife and landscape photography.

Appendix: Quick Reference Comparison

Camera	Strength	Best Use	Comments
Canon EOS R1	Extreme speed & autofocus	Professional wildlife	Flagship action camera
Canon EOS R5 Mark II	High resolution + speed	Wildlife & landscape	Excellent all-round professional body
Canon EOS R7	APS-C reach	Birds & wildlife	Excellent value
Nikon Z9	Professional flagship	Wildlife & sports	Outstanding autofocus and durability
Nikon Z8	Balanced flagship performance	Wildlife & landscape	One of the best hybrid cameras
Nikon Z7 II	Resolution & image quality	Landscape	Excellent dynamic range

End of Updated Guide