

The Keartons

Inventing nature photography

John Bevis

In 1892, brothers Richard and Cherry Kearton took the first ever photograph of a bird's nest with eggs. Realising the camera's potential to reveal secrets of the natural world, they resolved to make the best possible records of their discoveries in the habitats, habits and behaviour of birds and other creatures. The following three years of field work resulted in the first nature book to be illustrated entirely with photographs.

This was the springboard to two outstanding careers in wildlife photography. Richard developed the photographic hide through a series of devices which included the extraordinary Stuffed Ox, was author of numerous best-selling nature books, and with an exhaustive programme of public lectures did more than anyone of his generation to popularise nature studies. Cherry excelled at both still and cine photography, made the first recording of birds singing in the wild, and brought back the first film footage of African big game. They were, as numerous natural history photographers have proclaimed, founding fathers of their discipline.

This new and definitive study concerns itself with the lives and partnership of the Keartons, especially their role in the history of nature photography; their attitudes to and interaction with nature; and the status of invention in their work.

Reproduced throughout the book are the remarkable photographs that they declared as having been taken 'direct from nature'.

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