



■ The oil *Interesting Finds*, painted in North Wales.



■ Filming in Alaska for the BBC.



■ An oil painting from one of Roger's visits to Cabezuelo, Andalucia.

Master in art of looking and waiting

By Tracy Spiers

HE has spent a life time looking and patiently waiting for the unexpected to happen. As a result, former BBC Natural History Unit senior producer, and now professional painter and tutor, Roger Jones has captured moments most of us miss because we're too quick to move on.

For many years he used his video camera to record. Today it is with his watercolours, oils and pastels. His eyes are on the lookout, hunting for the unusual angle, sussing out the atmosphere and ambience of a place, seeking to create a different perspective which challenges the onlooker to look again at what's around them.

His paintings are similar to the wildlife and natural world films he used to produce. They absorb the viewer; they often have a narrative and are engaging in detail and are well-balanced in composition. "Although the media are different, the approach is the same, the priorities being in order, atmosphere, viewpoint, composition, tone and colour," he admits.

Another common denominator is Roger's need to be outside with his subject before him. During his days with the BBC, it might have been grizzly bears. Today it may be a Cotswold town, a water's edge in the picturesque setting of Gozo, a seascape in North Wales or Cornwall

or a snowy scene in Slad.

It often starts with a watercolour sketch en plein air, soaking up the atmosphere and recording points of interest. This is later transferred to his studio in Randwick – conservatory in winter, shed in summer – where Roger creates an oil painting. It's a skill which seems to come easily for Roger.

Over the years he has created his own palette consisting of the colours he uses most – including his personal favourite cobalt violet – and even designed his own watercolour brush. The Roger Jones Brush is a round, extended point Kolinsky sable which he developed with the help of brushmakers Rosemary & Co. Brought up in Brock in the foothills of the Pennines, Roger has been painting ever since childhood when he spent hours fishing in the River Brock which flowed beneath his bedroom window.

"All that youthful waiting and watching for fish or fowl has since inspired my writing of nature essays, poetry, filmmaking stories, and, of course, my painting.

"I've never been bored in the wild, whether as a boy fishing for trout or else directing films in the remotest places half a world away," admits Roger, who studied botany, zoology and geology at Durham before going to Cambridge to research for a PhD in insect biochemistry.

A career with the BBC followed and it was here Roger became one of the first appointed producers of radio

■ Roger Jones at work in North Wales.



and TV programmes for the Open University, which was in its embryonic stage. His background in biology, geology, chemistry and technology, as well as his academic ability, proved perfect.

As well as an Emmy nomination, Roger is particularly proud of his prestigious award from The House of Representatives of the State of Hawaii for his entrepreneurial work in setting up a co-production agreement between the OU and the University Of Hawaii so both benefited from his educational radio and TV shows about biological evolution in Hawaii.

As well as being instrumental in making programmes for series such as *The World About Us*, *The Natural World* and *Wildlife on One* as senior producer of the BBC Natural History Unit, Roger's swansong was to help set up, film for and develop the *Blue Planet* series narrated by Sir David Attenborough.

He was the development producer for the cinematic version called *Deep Blue*, narrated by Michael Gambon.

"I always intended to paint full time so in April 1988 I decided to go for it. Although I worked for the BBC for 30 years, I always painted – often until 2am. I did love the job but at times it meant I was away for weeks on end

filming. I didn't want to miss any more important family events especially my children's birthdays," recalls Roger.

It was at this time that his paintings were on display at a local exhibition. They caught the eye of John Brough, managing director for Authentic Adventures in Stonehouse, which provides walking, photography, singing and painting holidays all over the world. It was a fortuitous meeting. John, who had just launched his company – then called Andalucian Adventures – was thinking of introducing painting holidays to southern Spain and was looking for a suitable instructor.

It proved the perfect opportunity for Roger, the company's senior tutor who, every spring and summer, takes guests on week-long painting holidays to Spain, Italy, Jersey, Gozo and the Cotswolds.

As well as tutoring at the annual Marlborough College Summer School in July and August, Roger teaches residential weekend courses at Farncombe Estate near Broadway in Worcestershire and writes the occasional article for *The Artist* magazine.

In 2011 he won the Menena Joy Schwabe Memorial Award for an outstanding painter, awarded by the

Royal Institute of Oil Painters.

To reveal Roger's trade secrets – and there are many – would be wrong. But for those who have been fortunate to have benefited from Roger's patient, yet honest, approach to teaching they will know he practices what he preaches. He makes every mark count and looks carefully at the landscape around him before starting painting so he knows what he wants to highlight.

"I have spent all my life patiently looking, waiting for things to happen especially with nature. Things will suggest themselves to you and then you know which parts become relevant but it does require time looking. If you wait long enough you will see something for the very first time," he admits.

His ability to look and see is evident in everything he has produced to date – be it a stunning film about grizzly bears or an atmospheric cobbled street in a quaint Spanish village. Roger is a master in the art of looking and waiting, skills very few are patient enough to grasp.

For information visit www.roger-jones.co.uk. To celebrate Authentic Adventure's 15th birthday, the company is running a Facebook competition to win a week's painting holiday in Grazalema, Spain.



■ The Stroudwater Navigation canal.