

# IMAGE CRITIQUE

by Bill Gozansky

## MATING KINGFISHERS

**Photographer:** Bruno W. | Common Kingfishers |  
Lake Neuchatel, Switzerland | Nikon Z9 with Nikon  
500mm f/5.6 lens and 1.4x tele-converter with FTZ-  
adapter | 700mm | 1/1000 sec | f/8 | ISO 2200

Let me share some thoughts on  
Bruno's amorous kingfishers from  
both an artistic and a technical  
perspective.



**Artistic:** From an artistic perspective, this image checks essentially all the boxes for a captivating wildlife photograph:

Behavior or Action? Check. Most definitely these mating kingfishers take us well beyond a static portrait. This creates a story image, showing a rarely seen natural history event that lends greater interest and appeal to the viewer.

Pleasing composition? Check. The weighting of the kingfishers on the right third of the frame is excellent. They are facing into the frame with nice space for implied motion and the diagonal perch flows nicely through the frame as well.

Uniqueness or Timing? Check and check. No doubt Bruno has captured the defining moment here. His timing was excellent and presents a very unique image that sets this common kingfisher image apart from many other images of this species.

Can I find anything that could be improved from an artistic perspective? Well, if I had to be super nitpicky, I guess I could dream up a couple of items:

1) In a perfect world, I would have liked to see a little space between the female kingfisher's bill and the branch. I'm not thrilled with the way her bill crosses through the branch (see inset image) and could visualize the image being stronger with her head tilted slightly up to allow for a little negative space between the branch and her beak.

2) Okay, now I'm really grasping for faulty straws, but perhaps that lighter/whiter branch in the background is a bit distracting. Does it grab the viewer's attention for a second that wouldn't be the case if the background was cleaner? Perhaps. Is it material? Heavens no.

Again, these are just a couple of wish list items for consideration. They clearly might not even have been possible to avoid in the field, but something to consider and perhaps watch out for in future field situations when similar issues can be avoided.

**Technical:** From a technical standpoint, the image looks really solid. Bruno's use of a fairly high ISO (2200) allowed for a 1,000<sup>th</sup> of a second shutter speed to freeze the action. The tips of the male kingfisher's wings are slightly blurred, but this gives a nice sense of movement and action. The eyes and that wonderful open bill are critically sharp and I believe these are the key areas that had to be in focus.

Overall, post-processing looks good as well. The color tones appear natural and there are no distracting hotspots (or bright spots) in the image. Bruno mentioned that he utilized Topaz DeNoise AI in post, and I think that the software has done a great job of removing most of the digital noise and enhancing sharpness in all the right places.



Again, if I had to be super critical... something that I have sometimes experienced with Topaz DeNoise AI is that occasionally there are a few small patches of noise that don't get fixed in the processing. Note this is only visible at 100%, so you probably can't see this in the magazine, but when the image is viewed at 100%, there are a few very small areas where it seems like the DeNoise missed the correction. This can only be seen with aggressive pixel peeping and would perhaps never be noticed in almost any general output, but again, something to be aware of when using this software that might have an impact in certain situations.

**In Summary:** This is an awesome image! This is the type of image we all strive for as wildlife photographers. Bruno has captured an amazing moment of action demonstrating the mating behavior of common kingfishers. His image is well-composed and technically solid. I guarantee there are more than a few readers out there who are quite jealous of this capture (present company included). Well done, Bruno!