

The Nikon Coolpix P900 Superzoom

A genuinely outstanding camera

Walter Starck

Every camera comprises a collection of compromises involving size, cost, image quality, ergonomics and sundry operational features. In the P900 Nikon has hit a sweet spot with remarkable success. Its high points include:

- 83x optical zoom lens, equivalent to 24-2000 mm on full frame 35mm camera
- Crisp image quality at all focal lengths
- Macro capability from 0.0 cm at wide angle and from 5 m away at full zoom
- Very useable 2x Dynamic Fine Zoom
- Excellent 5 axis image stabilization
- 16 Megapixel CMOS BSI image sensor
- Fully articulated LCD
- Built-in GPS and Wi-Fi
- 1080/60p video
- Price \$600 - \$700
- Traditional Nikon ergonomics

Numerous detailed reviews are readily available on the web for further technical information.

For wildlife photography this camera is unsurpassed. The exceptional telephoto capability of this camera permits good close-up images with little need for stalking to get close enough. All but the last one of the accompanying images were handheld and most were at subject distances of 15 to 60 m or more. All are at "normal" image quality. "Fine" quality is also available at twice the file size. All have been reduced in size from the original 3456 pixel height to 1080 px for viewing on an HD monitor. Four of the images are accompanied by 1440 x 1080 px crops from the original image to permit better judgement of image quality at 100% magnification.

Suffice it to say that for any purpose other than large exhibition prints only a pixel peeping dilettante might notice any difference in these images and those taken by a full frame camera with a massive telephoto on a tripod. For any practical purpose the barely detectable improvement in image quality one might gain from the hugely more costly and cumbersome equipment is more than offset by the ability of a more nimble hand-held camera to capture subjects, lighting, composition and timing which, far more than sheer resolution, determine a good picture.

Incidentally, I have found one small accessory very useful for hand held shooting at extreme zoom. I call it a steady stick and it's just a short stick attached to the camera's tripod mount and projecting back to rest on one's shoulder. This greatly dampens any tremor from hand holding and combined with the camera's excellent image stabilization it permits sharp hand held images even at the equivalent of a 4000 mm lens.

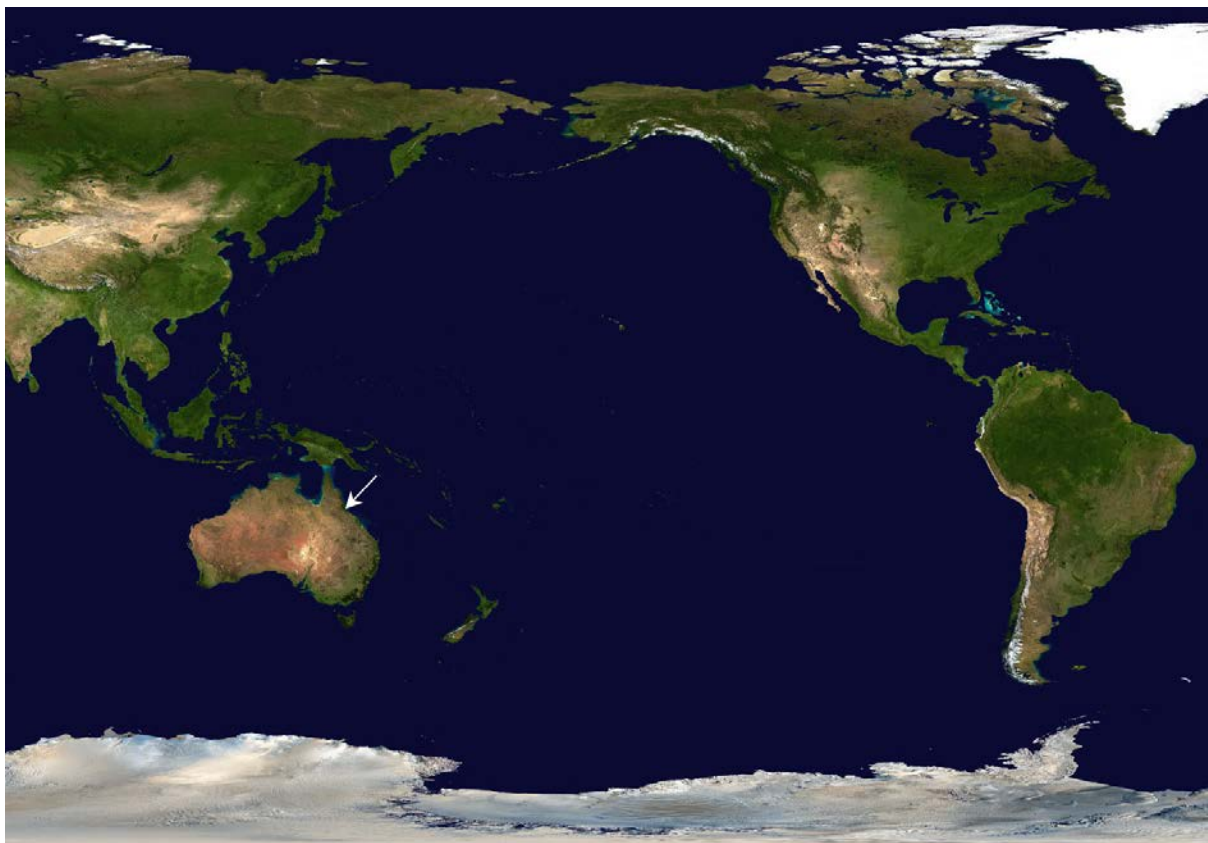
The P900 is truly a WYSIWYG camera (what you see is what you get). Almost anything you see you can get a nice close-up of it. The inbuilt GPS is also especially nice for wildlife photos. Just clicking on the icon in the EXIF data opens Google Earth and takes you to the location of where each photo was

taken. It is worth noting, however, that with the extreme zoom the actual location of the subject may still be some distance away from the position of the camera.



Coolpix P900 equipped with a steady stick

All these images have been taken over the past few weeks around where I live on Magnetic Island off the NE coast of Australia. It is a rocky mountainous island about 8 x 11 Km in extent situated some 7 Km offshore from Townsville and about midway along the Great Barrier Reef. Over half the island is a national park and it supports a diversity of wildlife and scenery.



Location of Magnetic Island

NASA Blue Marble image

Townsville
& Magnetic Island



Arthur Bay



Balding Bay





Bremmer Point



Arthur Bay



Balding Bay



Horseshoe Bay



West Point



View from West Point to coast
at low tide



100% crop from
previous image





Zoom in on White-faced heron
from same position



Eastern Reef Egret



Pied Oystercatcher



Gull-billed Tern

Silver Gull



Masked Lapwing



Masked Lapwing



Bush Stone-curlew





100% crop





Pied Currawong

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
& friend







Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo



Galah



Rainbow Lorikeets





100% crop



Purple Swampphen





Agile Wallaby

Magpie Geese





Australian White Ibis



Willie Wagtail



Magpie-lark





White-breasted Woodswallow



Woodswallow
eating butterfly

Laughing Kookaburra





Osprey nest at center



100% crop



Zoom in from
same position



Osprey & fish



Juvenile Sea eagle



Freshwater lagoon
in dry season





Agile Wallabies





Allied Rock Wallaby









Straw-necked Ibis

Rainbow Bee-eater







Welcome Swallow







Rock crab

Golden Orb Spider



Paperbark swamp





Paperbarks & dry creekbed



Mangroves



Mushrooms at 20 paces



Mushrooms at 10 cm







Horseshoe Bay



Palm Island from
Horseshoe Bay



Midday moon using tripod