

**Jonathan Sleath** continues his mini-series describing pieces of equipment that he has found particularly useful in the field.

## Useful Pieces of Equipment No. 2: The ‘Gorillapod’

**D**igital bryophyte photography has become increasingly popular in recent years. Rarely does one attend a field meeting where there is not someone with a camera, capturing the likeness of a plant in a convenient format that can be manipulated, stored and shared much more easily than in the past.

When I started macrophotography I met an old hand who told me that having a good tripod to keep the camera steady was just as important as having a good camera because of the perils of camera shake at high magnifications and long shutter speeds. Inevitably, some of my own disappointments have come about by not keeping the camera steady enough. Conventional tripods are mostly difficult if not impossible to use close to the ground, as well as being bulky and unwieldy in the field. Mini-tripods are better, but because of their rigidity still have problems coping with irregular surfaces and awkward positions.

Enter the Gorillapod. Manufactured by Joby since 2006, this is a flexible mini-tripod made of multiple jointed segments which can be bent or twisted into almost any shape you like. It is therefore useful for taking photographs on uneven ground and can even be used to support the camera by twisting its legs around small branches (see photograph). I tend to use it by setting up the shot and then using the self timer.

It comes as several different models which cope not only with compact cameras, but also with



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bulkier and heavier SLRs. Cameras up to 5 kg can be accommodated, and the Joby website (<http://joby.com>) advises which model is suitable for which camera. I see that that they also make a Gorillatorch incorporating an LED torch on a Gorillapod base, that could be useful in providing illumination when taking pictures at low light levels. So don't let the results of camera shake make a monkey out of you – use a Gorillapod!

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