



WILD SOJOURNS

March
April
2017

WORKFLOW

Minimalist Wildlife
Photography

PHOTOSTORY

Grizzly Bears of Alaska
and British Columbia



- ▶ The Return of the Amur Falcon
- ▶ Elephants of Kabini
- ▶ A Bid to Save Dankuni Wetlands

COVER STORY

Photographing the
Big Cats of Africa

Grant Atkinson

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PULSE

Is global warming and drought increasing wildfire incidence?

Come summer, the effects of global warming on temperature, rain, and soil moisture are turning many of our forests into a very dangerous areas. These hot, dry conditions also mean that, once wildfires are started by whatever means, they will be more intense and long lasting.


The costs of wildfires, in terms of risks to wildlife, human life and health and property damage are devastating, and they are only likely to increase unless we better address the risks of wildfires and reduce our activities that lead to them.

It is an ominous situation as the temperatures and rains are projected to alter further, the overall potential for wildfires is likely to increase as well. In 2016, 3,500 hectares (8,600 acres) of forest was burnt in Uttarakhand. This year forest fires are reported in Bandipur and Coorg. The global temperature is increasing and the climate is changing due to the damage already done, leading to a likely rise in the incidence of wildfires.

But it is not too late. We can still make sincere efforts to reduce the incidence. By engaging in salvation efforts like creating buffer zones between human habitation and forests, educating and reduction of human errors and by taking steps to reduce our impact on the climate, we can help keep our forests, homes, and health safe.



**Megh Roy
Choudhury**
Editor in Chief



Photographing the Big Cats of Africa

Africa is home to a large number, and variety of wild animals. There are few though, if any, that are more impressive or attract as much attention, as the three big cats; the Lion, Leopard and Cheetah.

As with many big predators the world over, these cats face threats to their existence, mostly from humanity. Lions and Cheetahs especially so. However, for now, they can still be found in many game reserves, national parks and protected areas. Many of the big cats in some of Africa's better protected areas are used to vehicles. One can get very close and not disturb them. This makes viewing and photographing them an intimate and accessible experience. It also means that you can get good images even without having to own the very biggest lenses and cameras. Most mid-level modern DSLRs or mirrorless cameras with bigger sensors will do a reasonable job. For lenses, focal lengths ranging from 300mm to 400mm will be good enough at least part of the time, but it can be helpful to have more.

The images in this collection are my photographic tribute to these amazingly powerful, imposing and yet imperilled large carnivores.


Grant Atkinson



Early morning is a favourite time of mine for big cats. They are often at their most active at this time. Male lions make patrols of their territories, walking, scent-marking and roaring, all through the night. Sometimes they are still going when the sun rises, which makes for good photographic opportunities. This particular male in the Okavango Delta, Botswana, was walking with his head held high, and alert to his surroundings. Although the tall grasses hid his feet and legs from view, they also made for lovely textured surroundings to frame him against, and also hid all the visual distractions below. Image with a Canon EF 300mm f/2.8L IS and Canon EOS 50D. Shutter speed 1/640 at f/4, ISO 640.



Like most big cats, lions have a bony orbital ridge that guards their eyes. Their eyes are set back a little, to protect them and shade them. Once the sun gets higher in the sky, it begins to cast shadows from this ridge, over the big cat's eyes. In order to get full color, and have my lions bright-eyed in my images, I try to find them very early in the day. This particular Okavango male was photographed just a few minutes after sunrise, which meant his face and eyes were illuminated from the side and not above. Image with a Canon EF 300mm f/2.8L IS and Canon EOS 40D. Shutter speed 1/1600 at f/2.8, ISO 400.

A lioness is sitting in a field of tall, green grass, looking towards the right. The background features a bright, multi-colored rainbow arching across a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The scene is captured in a natural, outdoor setting.

Lions are large enough that they can be photographed with shorter focal lengths and still be noticed, when the surroundings are suited to such a composition. A storm had passed by earlier on this afternoon in the Okavango Delta, and a rainbow formed against the dark and distant skies. The lioness's bright and warm cooler made her stand out all the better, in this summer scene, as did positioning myself better to have her framed against the sky. Captured at 85mm focal length. Shutter speed 1/800 at f/7.1, ISO 320. Canon EOS 7D and Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II.



Male lions are not always friendly to cubs from their pride, whether they are their own offspring or not. I always pay special attention when I see a cub making its way towards an adult male, so that I am ready to take a picture of the reaction, whether it be friendly or hostile. This particular male was at rest in the morning, at Kariega Game Reserve, South Africa, when a cub from his pride walked right up to him and rubbed against his face. Such shows of affection make for emotive images and also contrast the power and size of the adult male with the tiny cub very well. Image with a Canon EF 300mm f/2.8L IS II and Canon EOS 1D Mark IV. Shutter speed 1/400 at f/5.6, ISO 400.



When a lion cub or sub-adult approaches a male lion, the big male often show irritation or sometimes even an aggressive response. Anytime I see a youngster heading directly towards a male, I make myself ready to photograph. On such a morning in the Mara I was able to capture this young lion leaping instantaneously upward and away from the snappish pride male. The cheeky young lion almost jumped right on his head. As I was expecting action, I already had a fast shutter speed dialled in, and had closed down my aperture a little to give myself more depth of field, in order to get both animals in-focus. Image with a Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II and Canon EOS 5D Mark III. Shutter speed 1/1600 at f/6.3, ISO 800.

I always enjoy photographing cubs, and try to capture something of the 'togetherness' that makes the mother and cub bond. In this image, that happened when the cub snuggled right up to the mother lioness, touching her. The image was taken just as they both paid full attention to another lion moving nearby. Image with a Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II and Canon EOS 5D Mark IV. Shutter speed 1/320 at f/5.6, ISO 2500.





Lions don't like deep water, especially as it may harbour crocodiles. For this reason the cats tried to crowd behind the lioness in the lead, and follow her footsteps. Some even press inward amongst the group, trying not to expose themselves on the outside and all looking a little apprehensive. I took this image in northern Botswana, as the big cats were crossing over the Savuti channel. Image with a Canon EF 70-200L f4 and 50D. Shutter speed 1/500 at f4.5, iso 400.

In those reserves where they are protected, lions can become very used to vehicles and they basically ignore them. This can allow for very close viewing and photographic working distances, and the opportunity to use wide angle lenses. An overcast day and a relaxed pride at Duba Plains in the Okavango Delta allowed me to position myself low in the vehicle so that I could capture the whole pride in my frame. The clouds overhead meant that the light stayed even and soft, and that my vehicle did not cast a shadow on the cats. Image with a Canon EF 16-35 f4L IS and 5Dmk4. Shutter speed 1/500sec at f8.0, iso 1250. Plus 0.33 exposure compensation.



A Crouching Lioness!

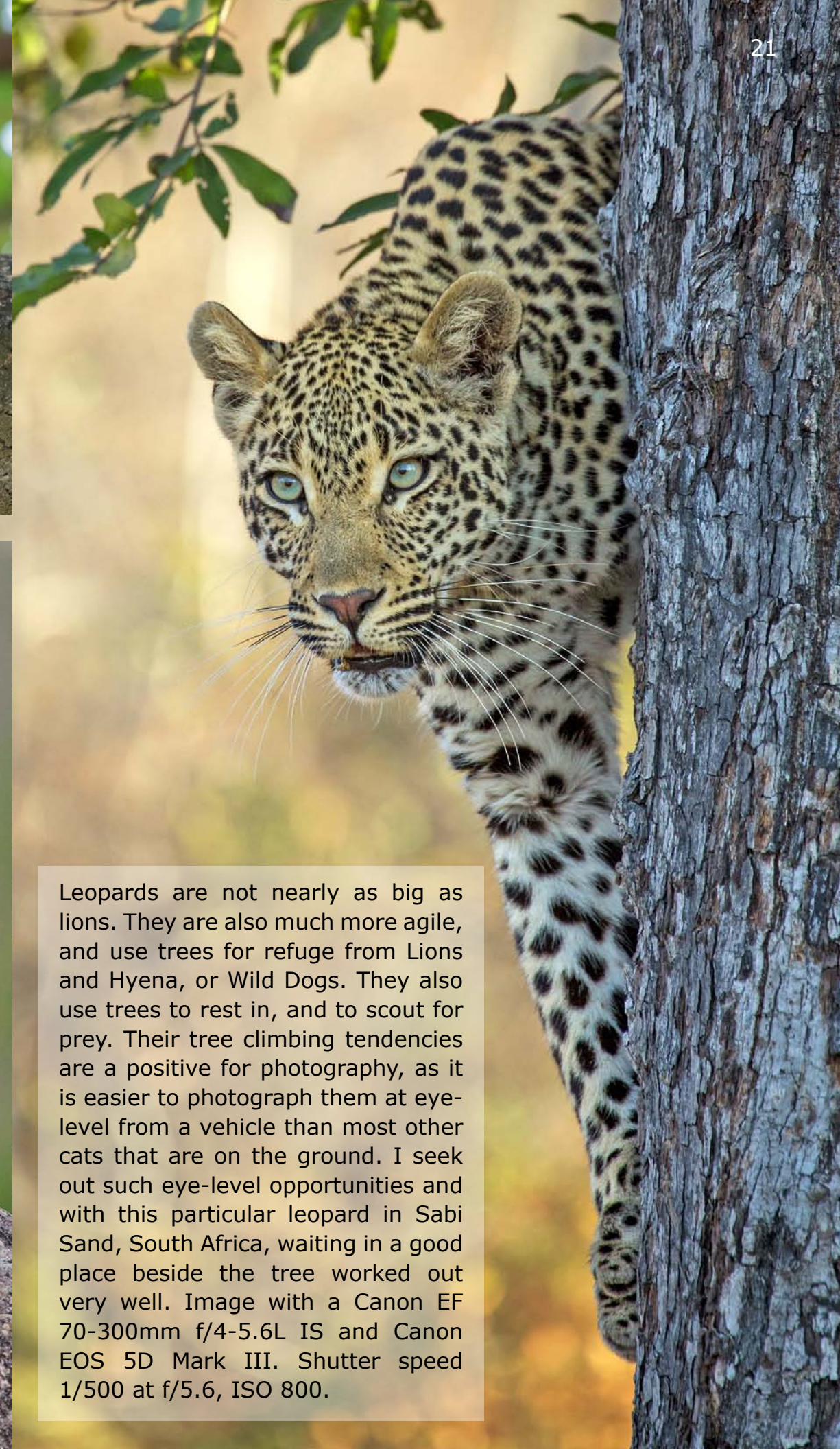
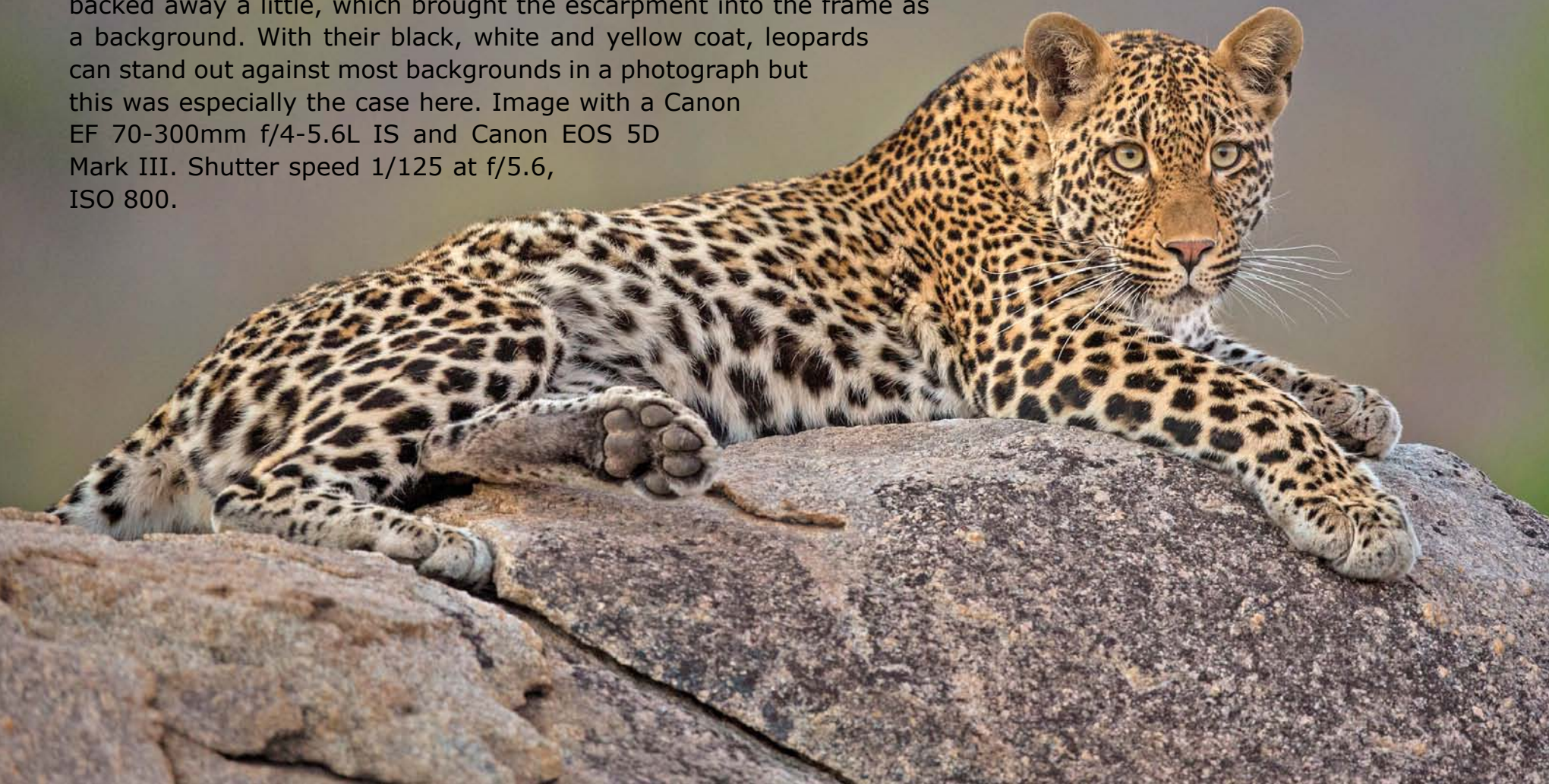
Lions are social and are often found in groups. This adds an extra dimension to photographing them, as compared to solitary animals. Lion cubs, when well fed, and rested, like nothing more but to play. This is especially true in the cooler times of the day. I photographed this adult female being 'attacked' by three cubs from her pride, very early one morning in the Selinda area, Botswana. Although the lioness was walking directly away from the sun, the backlit dust added some drama to the scene. Image with a Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II and Canon EOS 1Dx. Shutter speed 1/250 at f/5.0, ISO 800.



Leopards are so well-adapted to using trees, that they really do make themselves at home in them. Sometimes in nature photography it can be very difficult to simplify a scene. This is because the wild animals we photograph often live amongst bushes and shrubs, or perhaps amongst rocks. This can sometimes make it challenging to capture a 'clean' image. Leopards on trees offer a delectable opportunity to make eye level images
Image made with a Canon EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6L IS and Canon EOS 5D Mark III. Shutter speed 1/100 at f/5.6, ISO 250.



Leopards like to lie out on high places, be it trees or rocks. Big boulders like this one in Malamala, South Africa, are too steep for other animals to climb and they can scan their surroundings for possible prey. In this instance a young female leopard spent some time on the rock, giving us lots of opportunities. Driving up too close to the rock was counterproductive, as it meant we were getting a bright sky for background. Instead I backed away a little, which brought the escarpment into the frame as a background. With their black, white and yellow coat, leopards can stand out against most backgrounds in a photograph but this was especially the case here. Image with a Canon EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6L IS and Canon EOS 5D Mark III. Shutter speed 1/125 at f/5.6, ISO 800.



Leopards are not nearly as big as lions. They are also much more agile, and use trees for refuge from Lions and Hyena, or Wild Dogs. They also use trees to rest in, and to scout for prey. Their tree climbing tendencies are a positive for photography, as it is easier to photograph them at eye-level from a vehicle than most other cats that are on the ground. I seek out such eye-level opportunities and with this particular leopard in Sabi Sand, South Africa, waiting in a good place beside the tree worked out very well. Image with a Canon EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6L IS and Canon EOS 5D Mark III. Shutter speed 1/500 at f/5.6, ISO 800.



Leopards are opportunists. They will hunt at night, and by day. Spending time with a leopard that is active can lead to unexpected happenings. I was following an Okavango Delta male, as he went about patrolling his territory. The big cat had just laid in some tall grass to rest when a group of Reedbuck (a type of antelope) walked right by him. He took his chance and sprang onto the male reedbuck, bringing it down after a struggle. Image taken on a cloudy day, and shot with a Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II and Canon EOS 7D Mark II. Shutter speed 1/400 at f/4, ISO 800.



Although adult leopards are mostly (not always) solitary, mothers do spend much time raising their offspring. A mother leopard has to take care of her young until they become independent, usually after 18 months. There is a strong bond that exists between the mother and cub, and I look to capture some of that expression in my images. This image from an overcast day in the Okavango Delta, Botswana was taken with a Canon EF 70-300mm f/4-5.6L IS and Canon EOS 5D Mark III. Shutter speed 1/1000 at f/7.1, ISO 800.



Leopard cubs are just like miniature versions of the adults, except they do not have that wide-eyed 'look' of many young animals. I was photographing this cub and her sister, as they moved about from the ground below in and out of a low-branched tree. When this cub gazed upward, directly at its sibling, the light shone right onto her face and I pressed the shutter. Image with a Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS and Canon EOS 7D. Shutter speed 1/500 at f/4, ISO 500.

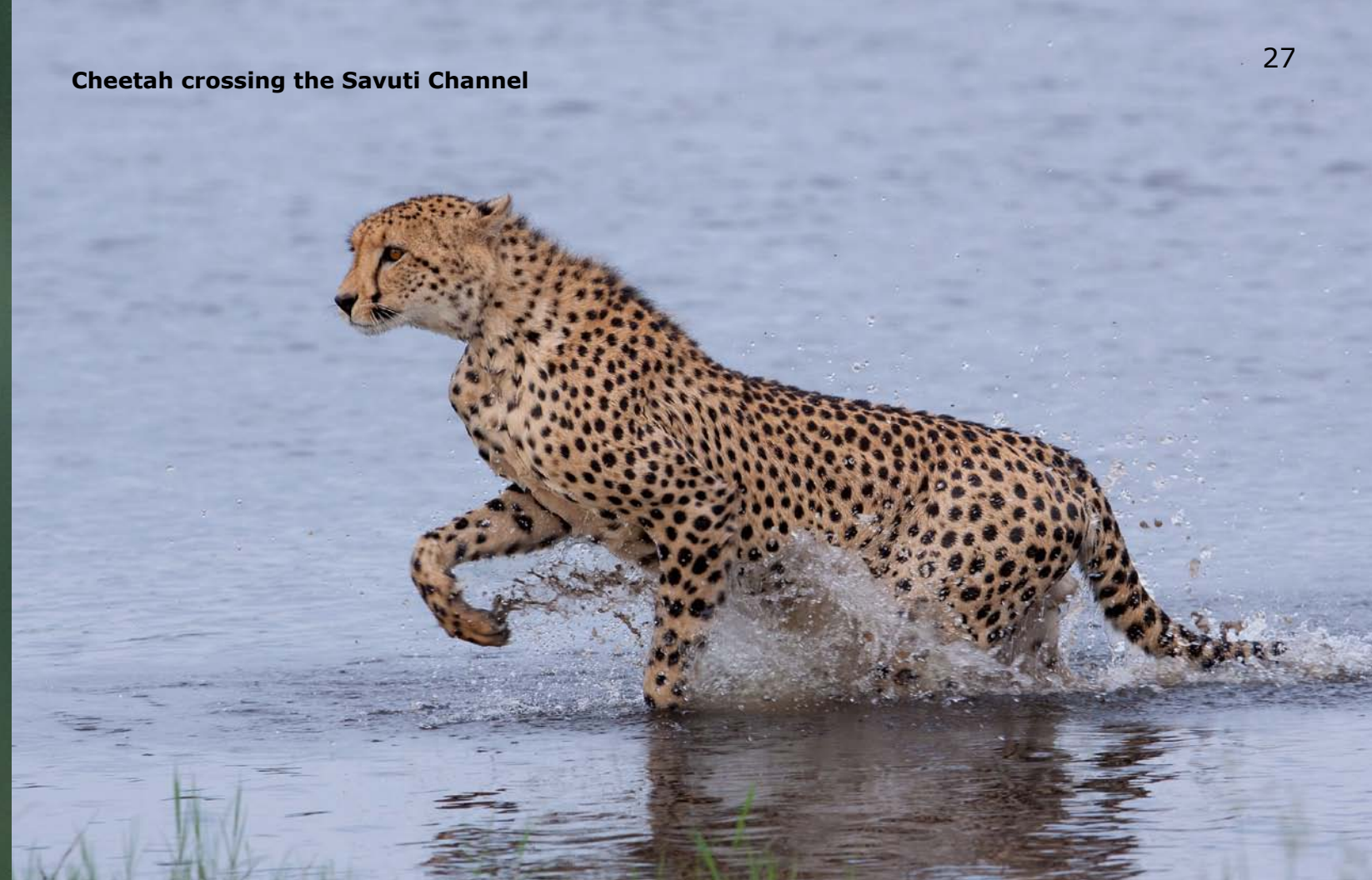
Leopard cubs develop the skills they are going to need to survive as adults, quite soon. In this regard they are perhaps faster developers than their lion and cheetah counterparts. The cubs are also fun to watch as they try out things they see their mother do. Here a four-month-old leopard cub hangs from the leg of an Impala carcass, killed by the mother leopard. The image was taken in soft light beneath the tree canopy. Image with a Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II and Canon EOS 1Dx. Shutter speed 1/1250 at f/5.6, ISO 400.





Cheetahs are built for speed. Compared to the other big cats, they are supremely adapted for running, rather than climbing or subduing very large prey animals. As such, they tend to avoid conflict with other big cats. Consequently, they are always on the lookout, checking over their shoulders, and listening behind them, with ears tilted back. This can make it very difficult for a photographer to get images of the good-looking cats when they are looking alert and with ears perked forward. This particular male was looking for his brother, and had his ears cocked forward, helping to give him an alert appearance. The overcast weather meant that there was no shadow cast over his eyes. Image with a Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II and Canon EOS 5D Mark III. Shutter speed 1/640 at f/5, ISO 1000.

Cheetah crossing the Savuti Channel



Cheetah silhouette in Masai Mara





Cheetahs are famous for their speed – they are estimated to exceed 100km/h in their fastest sprints. They also hunt mostly in the daytime, perhaps because they can see better, or maybe because lions and hyena may be less active then to steal their kills. Following a cheetah that is intent on hunting can take lots of patience, but the reward of witnessing a hunt is great. Here a male cheetah has just captured a young Blue Wildebeest, after a chase that extended over a few hundred metres only. Photographing cheetah hunting and trying to show something of their speed, is an important part of showing one of the things that is special about them. I took this image with a Canon EF 400mm f/4 DO IS and Canon EOS 7D Mark II. Shutter speed 1/2500 at f/6.3, ISO 500.



In many of Africa's larger reserves, there are healthy carnivore populations, sometimes made up of five species, namely: Leopard, Lion, Cheetah, Spotted Hyena and African Wild Dog. These predators compete with one another and sometimes even clash. Such interactions can provide great photographic opportunities and are also very exciting to witness. When a leopard in the Okavango Delta tried to steal an impala carcass from a pack of African wild dogs, things went a little wrong for the cat. The dogs immediately went after her, forcing her to climb up the nearest tree, for refuge. Here she snarled her defiance at the dogs below, who could do nothing to harm the leopard, just as long as she stayed up, which she did. I have learned to keep my shutter speed fast in such situations just in case there is more action to follow. Image with a Canon EF 300mm f/2.8L IS and Canon EOS 1D Mark IV. Shutter speed 1/3200 at f/5, ISO 250



Lions in Botswana's Okavango Delta have to deal with water crossing as a way of life. But, they still don't like doing it. Deep water can hide Crocodiles and the cats are smart enough to be afraid of them. When the body of water is not too wide, the lions will jump right over, staying safe that way. This was just such an instance. What made it a little easier to photograph was that the cat took a little time to decide where she should cross, which allowed me to position ahead of time. Image with a Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS and Canon EOS 30D. Shutter speed 1/640 at f/8, ISO 200.

Grant Atkinson is a very well known wildlife photographer, guide and writer. He lives with his wife Helena in Cape Town, South Africa. He is an enthusiastic lover of nature and has travelled widely in Africa and abroad for wildlife. He spent twelve years guiding full-time in Botswana. Today he leads groups of travellers to Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa, as well as other destinations further afield. Grant shoots a variety of wildlife related subject matter with big cats being amongst his favourites. His images have been on the cover of both Africa Geographic and the US National Geographic Kids magazine. He is a regular contributor of text and images to African Birdlife, magazine.



For more you can visit: www.grantatkinson.com or you can follow him on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/atkinsonphotographyandsafaris/?pnref=ihc>.

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Image by Rhucha Kulkarni

From our Facebook group



Manish [Mann] Arya

This stunning image of a pair of Indian Eagle Owls was taken in Kota, Rajasthan



Henriksen Greaves

This is a Mottled Wood Owl and the image was made in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu



Mousam Ray

This beautiful image of the Himalayan Wood Owl was taken in Zuluk, Sikkim





Grizzly Bears

Alaska and
British Columbia

David Hemmings



Over the last decade or so, I have had the good fortune to be able to spend hundreds of hours in the field photographing one of North America's most spectacular and beautiful animals, the Grizzly Bear. Two of my favorite places to do this type of photography are in British Columbia, Canada and Alaska, U.S.A. When you have two of the world's most majestic lands with mountains, lakes, rivers and valleys, it is hard to imagine a more inviting place for the avid nature photographer. Grizzly bears are, for the

most part, a very misunderstood animal. All too often they are perceived as ferocious and dangerous to be near. Although they are powerful and formidable animals, more often than not they choose not to have any human interaction and would rather avoid us than attack us. Largely, pun intended, they are gentle, family loving and full of play and personality. When you have a lot of knowledge about their behaviors, their habits and their habitat it becomes a beautiful experience to see and photograph them.





As with any type of nature photography, knowing your subject is paramount in putting yourself in the right position at the right time to see and capture these magnificent creatures going about their daily lives. This means knowing your locations and what the bears should be doing at any given time of the year. This could mean that in June they will likely be found feeding on the long sedge grasses near the shores of rivers and creeks in Alaska. It could also mean that in the fall the bears will congregate in streams and rivers where the Salmon spawn and then

die. You can be sure that any bears in the area will be taking advantage of this abundant buffet that nature has provided for them.

When you are around grizzly bears, always remember to respect the bear's space and give way whenever necessary to their needs and travel. Never run towards them and never shout excitedly. Stay quiet and move slowly and the bears will not perceive you as a threat. Always travel with an experienced bear guide/photographer to maximize your safety, your opportunities and your learning experience.



It is easier than you may think to get to places where the grizzlies live and then be able to go into the field to see them up close in the wild and photograph all the different behaviours that you may see.

Although there are many places to see and photograph grizzly bears in North America, British Columbia and then Alaska will always be two of my top destinations.

Note: The Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos ssp.*), is a large subspecies of brown bear inhabiting North America. Scientists generally do not use the name grizzly bear but call it the North American brown bear. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark named it to be "grisley" or "grizzly", which could have meant "grizzled" (i.e. golden and grey tips of the hair) or "fear-inspiring", Naturalist George Ord formally classified it in 1815 - not for its hair, but for its character - as *Ursus horribilis* ("terrifying bear").



DAVID HEMMINGS: A world-renowned bird photographer who is known throughout the nature photography world for creating some of the most dynamic and impressive bird-in-flight images anywhere today. His work has been published on the cover of National Geographic, Canadian Geographic and has also appeared on the cover of other numerous nature photography publications including Audubon Magazine, On Feathered Wings, Birding Essentials and more. In addition to David's photo passion, he is the President of Natures Photo Adventures. Combining his photo passion, imagination and public relations expertise, he strives to introduce new, exciting and unique photo nature adventures. David loves meeting new people and sharing his passion for bird and nature photography with others. Connect with David on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/david.hemmings.562?fref=ts> david@naturesphotoadventures.com



Prized Catch

Red Phalarope

Red Phalarope, which breeds in N America and Eurasia, was seen in Bhigwan, Maharashtra in March 2016. Red Phalarope, is a very rare vagrant which breeds in the Arctic region of North America and Eurasia. There have been only around six confirmed records in India.

The bird is a small wader or shorebird, generally migrates via marine routes. The first time that it was spotted in India was in Kolkata and it also has been recorded in Rajasthan, Hyderabad, Satpura, Nagpur and now in Pune.

The adult in non-breeding plumage looks similar to a Red-necked Phalarope in non-breeding plumage, with white below and light grey above, a white head, and a black ear patch behind the eye. The Red Phalarope's bill is much thicker than those of the other species. The bill is dark with a lighter base in non-breeding plumage.

This is a bird which is normally seen in the sea. It must have drifted away from its migratory route and filling itself up to be fit and fly back to its location according to some leading ornithologists.



Dharuman Nanjan
Kotagiri, India

Minimalist Wildlife Photography





Minimalist photography is a style or technique that is strikingly distinguishable by its extreme sparseness and simplicity. It is a highly appreciated field in landscapes, street photography and abstract photography. As recent innovations enable us with precise focusing and creation of bokeh, this art form is spilling over steadily into the field of wildlife photography. When accomplished satisfactorily, minimalist photography can be an extremely simple but dramatic way to capture images. Hence it is very crucial for any wildlife photographer to embrace, interpret, understand and execute minimalism within his/her own work.



© Nilesh Bhadla



© Dilipsinh Chudasama



© Kushal Adaki

Keep It Simple

The first and the fundamental rule is to keep it simple. Pre-visualise your shot, pausing for a moment to consider what you are going to include in your shot and what you are going to leave out. The subject has to be the strongest element of the shot. Another point is that it may not necessarily fill up the entire frame. The space around a subject will accentuate its prominence, so look to omit any distractions.

Composition

A key point to enhance the impact of a minimalist image is to get a strong compositional element. So good amount of thinking needs to go into the incorporation of the subject and the space around it. The quintessential "rule of thirds" applies here too and guides in framing your subject.



© Megh Roy Choudhury



Keep Your Eyes Open

When you're out for photographing in the wild, keep your eyes open for opportunities. Many such instances can present themselves where a clean cut and full body image of the subject is not possible. A different perspective can be portrayed by such images.

© Nilesh Bhadla



© Anvita Paranjape



Perfect Focus

Be sure to focus in on the subject, and if possible, select a depth of field that will make the subject stand out, this will draw the eye into the shot and enhance impact. Many tele lenses available now enable pin point focus as well as creating a good depth of field. Both these need to be exploited to the fullest in a minimalist image. Aperture preferably should be set to the widest level possible.

© Sudheendra Rao



© Nilesh Bhadla



Background

Background is one of the most important things for such images and is as important as the subject itself. It is highly imperative to get it in a proper and optimised way. Choice of background can be anything, but needs to be perfectly blurred and out of focus. It is also essential to avoid a background which draws the attention away from the subject itself. Last aspect is to see that it contains no bright or dark spots and unnecessary distractions.

Foreground

Foreground is another important element in these images. The coloured and defocused area at the bottom of the frame in addition to defocused backgrounds can make the subject really stand out. Both the foreground and background can be similar or contrasting colours. The best way to get this effect is to shoot from a very low angle as this brings the foreground much closer to the camera, highlighting the effect. It also helps generate a more distant, out of focus background.



This breathtaking image symbolises everything a minimalist photograph stands for. A subject in crisp focus with a beautifully defocused surrounding keep the eyes riveted to the subject. A wonderfully crafted work indeed. The magic trick here is to go absolutely to the zero ground level so that both fore and background go out of focus.



© Krishnamurrthy



© David Hemmings

© Bharat Mishra



Uncluttered Settings

Minimalist wildlife images can also be engineered by photographing the subject in an uncluttered setting. This is possible when shooting especially in the snow, against the sky and subjects on water. Most of these shots are inherently simple and the subject automatically becomes the focal point. Snow and sky form the purest base for minimalist images while calm water is equally effective.

Special Techniques

High key images can be created in the situation where the background is brighter by overexposing the subject. Usually this technique is useful while shooting white water birds against sky or water. High key photography is challenging because it requires you to create an intentionally overexposed background while still properly exposing your subject. Once you learn how to use proper exposure compensation in a situation where background is brighter than the subject, you can create some pleasing images.



© Avijit Ghosh

© Pravin Pai



© Dheeraj Mali

© Megh Roy Choudhury



Low key images can be created by slightly underexposing the brightly lit subjects rendering the overall image except the subject to be dark. There are instances when you feel the light is very harsh or the subject is very brightly lit. You can get a very good result if you set these parameters and shoot. Set your ISO low, choose a wide aperture, use aperture priority mode, spot meter on the brightest part of the bird and apply generous negative exposure. This negative space can work as a very good composition as the well exposed subject keeps the viewer occupied.



© Nikhil Deshmukh

Many times the habitat of a particular species can be integrated into the frame by carefully choosing the shooting angle or by using a wide angle approach. This beautiful Wagtail scape is one such example. I personally feel that minimalistic wildlife photography can kickstart your creative juices and fuel a fertile imagination. This approach is very appealing by its sheer simplicity. Also many of these images don't necessarily require expensive equipment. A perfectly crafted composition with judicious use of subject, light and the surroundings can create some really stunning and soulful images.



Megh Roy Choudhury

Spangled Drongo



Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, India



Arindam
Chakraborty

CAPTURE MANIA PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE IS LOOKING FOR PHOTOGRAPHS THAT EXHIBIT THE BEAUTY AND DIVERSITY OF OUR PLANET

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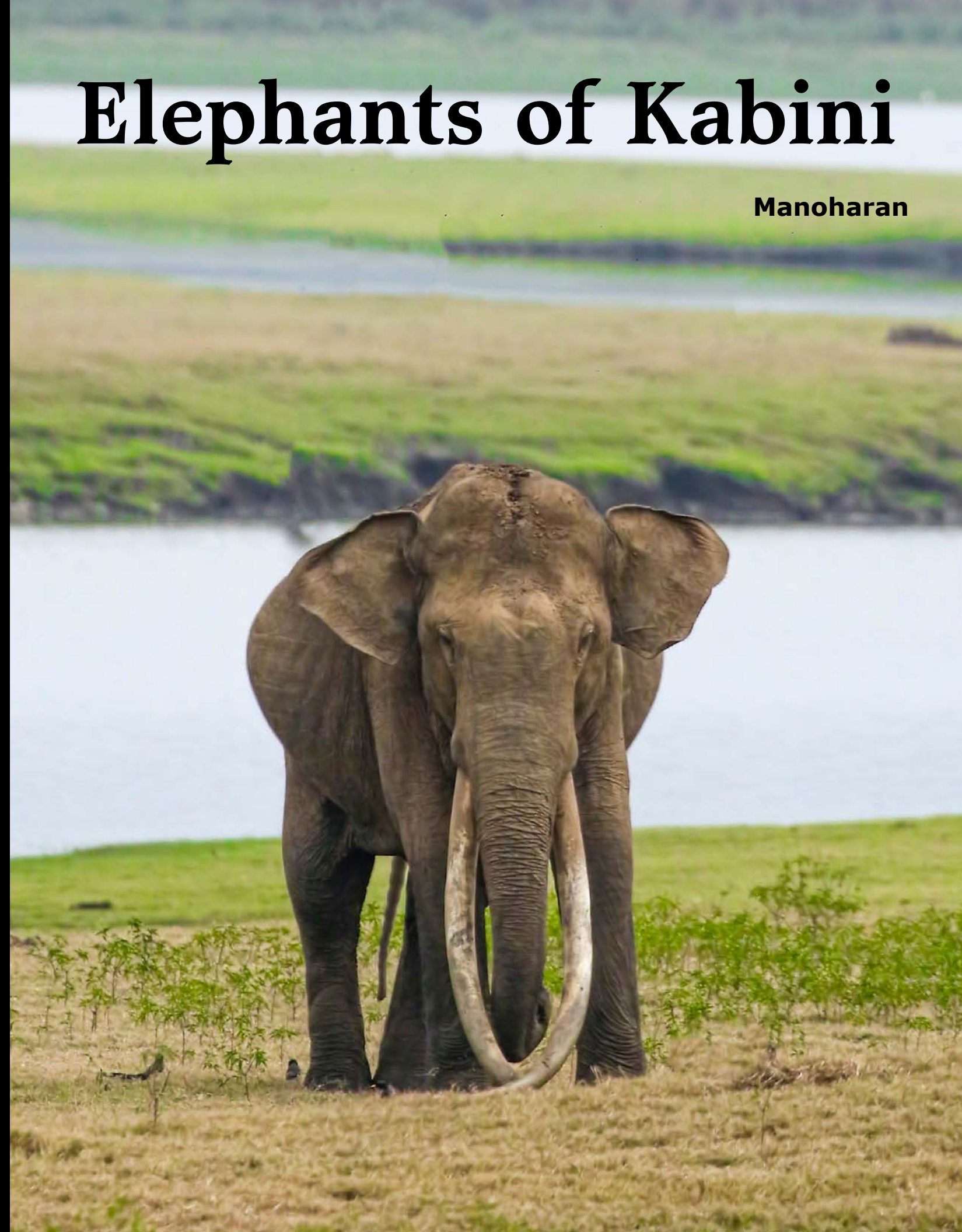
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Elephants of Kabini

Manoharan





K A B I N I

Whenever any wildlife enthusiast hears this name, The Nagarhole forests and its flora and fauna are the first thing that flashes in mind.

Nagarhole National Park (also known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park), is a national park located in Kodagu district and Mysore district in Karnataka state in South India.

This park was declared the thirty seventh Project Tiger tiger reserve in 1999. It is a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The Western Ghats Nilgiri Sub-Cluster of 6,000 km² (2,300 sq mi), including all of Nagarhole National Park, is under consideration by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee for selection as a World Heritage Site.

The park has a rich forest cover, small streams, hills, valleys and waterfalls. The park has a healthy predator-prey ratio, with many Tigers, Indian Bison and Elephants.



The park ranges from the foothills of the Western Ghats spreading down the Brahmagiri hills and south towards Kerala state.. The park covers 643 km² (248 sq mi) located to the north-west of Bandipur National Park. The Kabini reservoir separates the two parks.

Since 2010 when I visited Kabini for the first time it has become my favorite and frequently visited park till now. I was lucky enough to have stayed at Sungadakkatte Forest Guest House in 2010 which is located inside the jungles. That time Kabini was not very popular like now. It was not a Facebook period though.

But over the years Kabini has become one of the most sought after wildlife destinations across India. With a most favored stay at Kabini River Lodge which is operated by "Jungle Lodges and Resorts" one can explore the flora and fauna with the guidance of naturalists and safari vehicle drivers who have an intimate knowledge about this incredible biosphere.



Kabini is famous for Leopards. Leopards on trees and open branches are nature's gift for the travellers. As the tiger population is also on the rise now, the cat sighting happens very frequently with an occasional special guest "The Melanistic Leopard" or Black Panther, which stops your heart beat with its sudden appearance from nowhere. Kabini has almost everything. Tigers, Leopards, Indian Wild Dogs, Asiatic Elephants, Sloth Bears, Indian Gaurs, Sambars, Cheetals, Barking Deers and Mouse Deers. What is very fortunate is one has a fair chance to see almost everything. Of course during my last stay I saw all the above and the highlight was the Black Panther.

Most of us are dying to see the predators, but the show stoppers and majestic creatures who often steals the show or fulfil the trips even when cats are not sighted are Asiatic elephants. Yes, Kabini Backwaters is one of the most beautiful place in India to sight the Asiatic elephants.



The experience of sighting the Asiatic elephants at the backdrop of Kabini Backwaters is magical. Amid the morning mists or evening sunshine at a blue and green backdrop, seeing the large herds of these majestic animals coming to the backwaters for water gives us an awesome experience to cherish.

Not only at the back waters, we can see the herds swimming in Tiger Tank (a big waterbody), walking solitarily on open spaces and roads. Sometimes few lucky people have seen the tusker chasing the tiger away .

During summer, large herds of elephants migrate from Bandipur region to Kabini Backwaters in search of water and fodder. With backwaters being a source of perennial water, elephant herds from Bandipur, Nagarhole, Mudumalai and Wayanad are known to congregate there during summer, when water holes and fodder dry up in these national parks. The numbers will be large at the peak of the summer season where hundreds of elephants can be seen at the backwaters. The count of elephants at Nagarhole can rise to around 800 during peak summer.

Elephant society is typically headed by the eldest and most experienced female in the herd, known as the matriarch. The herd consists of females, their calves and sub-adult animals. Bull elephants are driven out of the herd when they reach maturity and typically live solitarily, away from the herd.





The matriarch knows, through years of experience, which areas will have food in a certain season, the location of water during the dry season and places where the herd will be safe.

Over the centuries, herds have followed rigid migration routes that take them through areas of optimum food and water during the course of the year.

By the beginning of March, the lush banks of the Kabini reservoir start to fill up with elephants. As summer advances, more and more herds descend from the hills to partake in the annual feast of grass. This is also a

vocalizations. Calves that were born the previous year are now old enough to eat the soft, nutritious grass and they too get a rare chance to play, tugging at each other's trunks and tails and butting one another. Younger calves stay close to their mothers or gambol playfully with their elder siblings. Adult elephants are remarkably tolerant of their young. The big bull elephants that are normally solitary mingle with the herds, getting a chance to mate and thereby pass on their genes. Conflicts occasionally occur, as is wont to happen in any society, but they do not last long and peace soon returns to

social aggregation for the elephants as matriarchs meet each other and the meadows echo with the rumbles, squeaks and trumpets of elephant



the vast sea of grazing elephants.

Towards the end of May, the grass has worn away, leaving behind short, dry stubs. These too are kicked up by the elephants, exposing bare, dusty patches of soil. Soon the rains would come and the reservoir would fill up once again and it would be the right time for the matriarchs to lead their herds back into the cool, green heights of the Brahmagiri hills. The lone bull elephants remain behind, to feed on the bamboo and fresh sprout of leaves in the forest. The great elephant congregation dwindles to just a few individuals.

As summer is on, the dream sightings of Asiatic Elephants at Kabini Backwaters has started already and the majestic creatures will rule the backwaters for a while from now.





Manoharan hails from Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India. He is in apparel business but devotes quality time for his passion of wildlife photography. Primarily a mammal lover he is now making forays into bird photography too.

White-bellied Woodpeckers

Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka



Abhishek Mehta
Pune, India

PORTFOLIO

Gianluca Podestà

Natural Frame

Sestri Levante, Liguria, Italy





A date with Manarola



Caldini Group, Dolomite Range, Italy



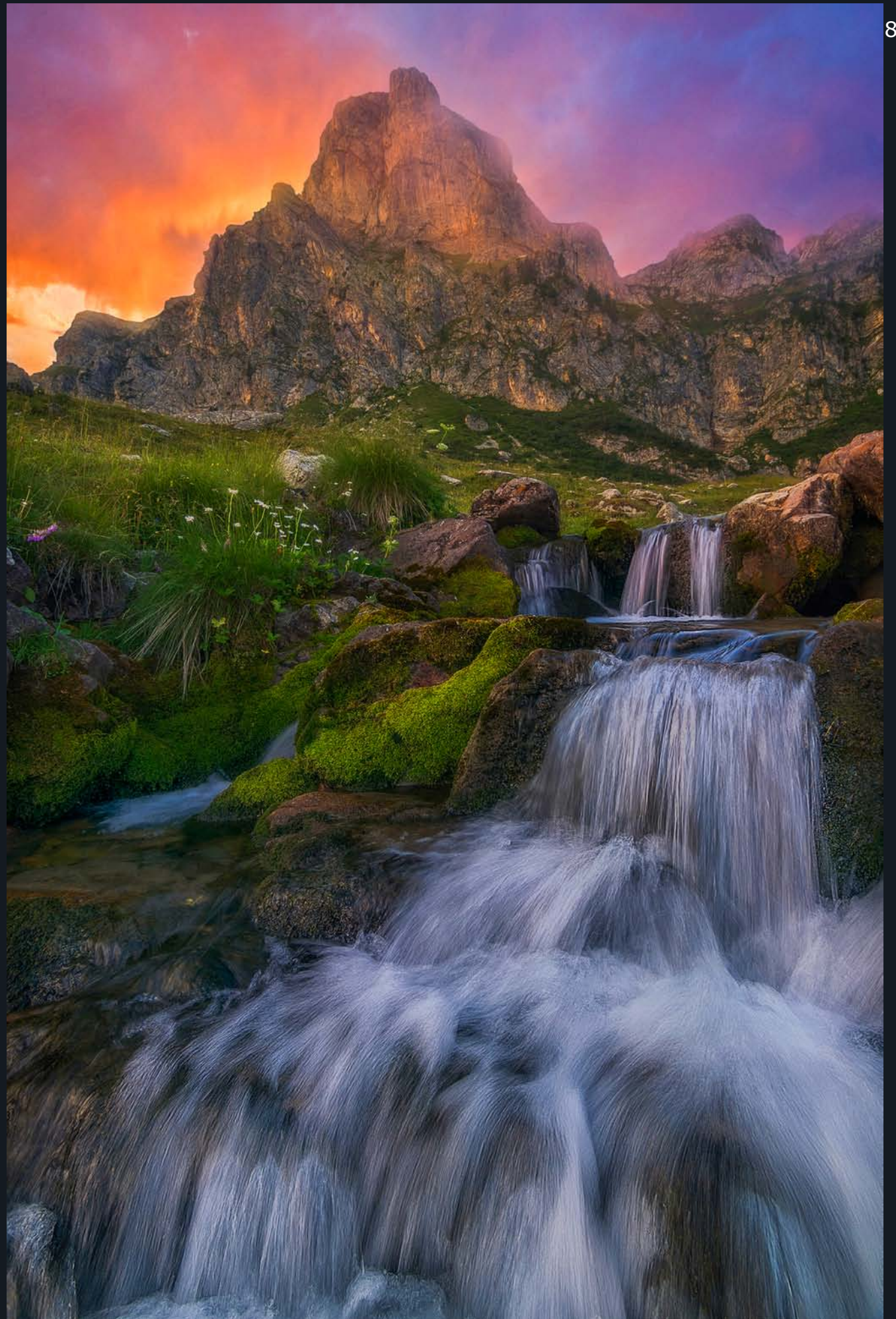
Sunset in Liguria



In fantasy land



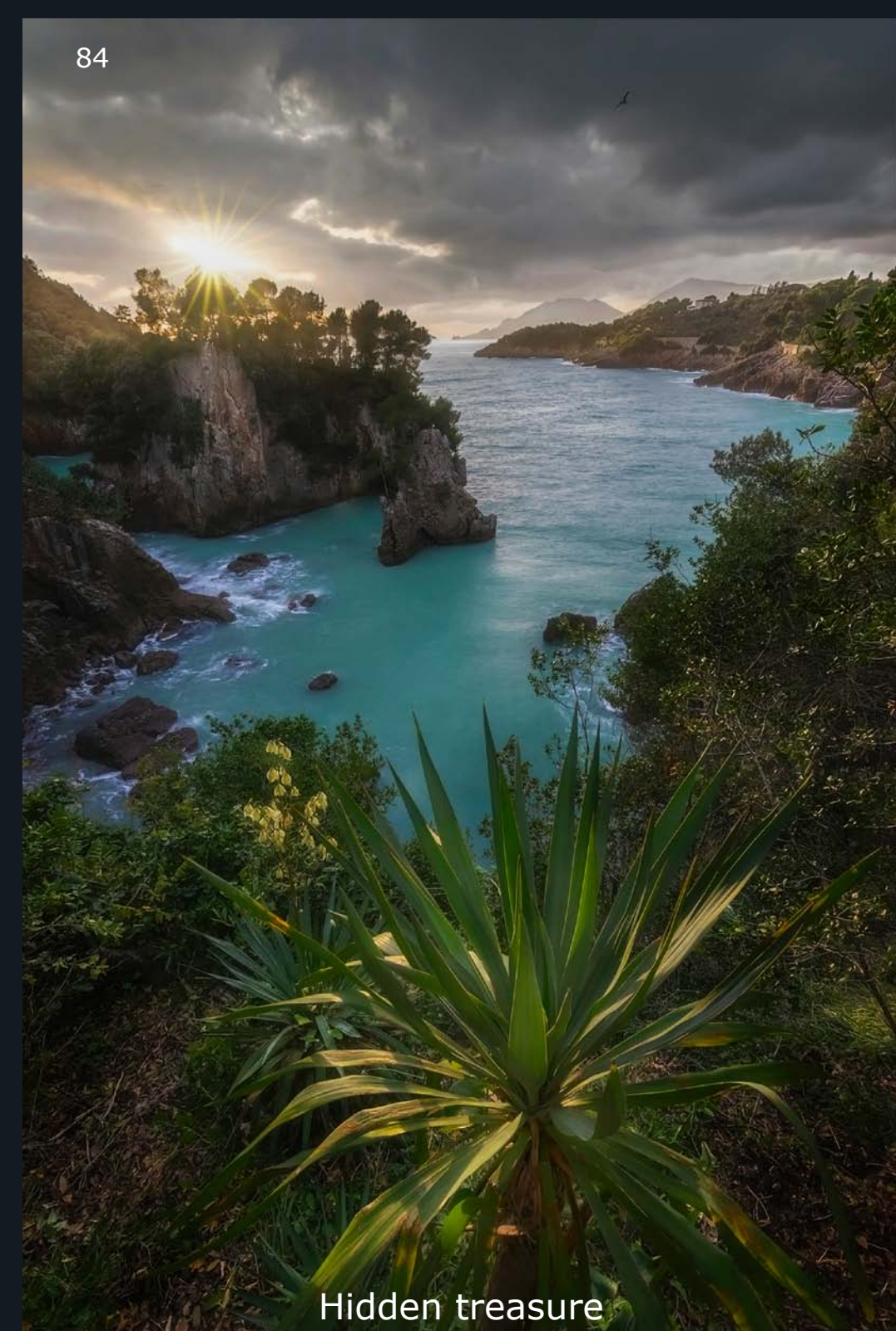
Mountain in Flames



El Dorado



Vivalda's Cave



Hidden treasure



Golden Belief



Flowers of Tofana



Gianluca Podestã is a very talented photographer who lives in North Italy. He experiments a lot in his landscape photographs and always tries to find a new point of view. He aspires to create epic images and tries to paint nature with his camera work. His work can be followed at <https://500px.com/tecnicopodestasrl>

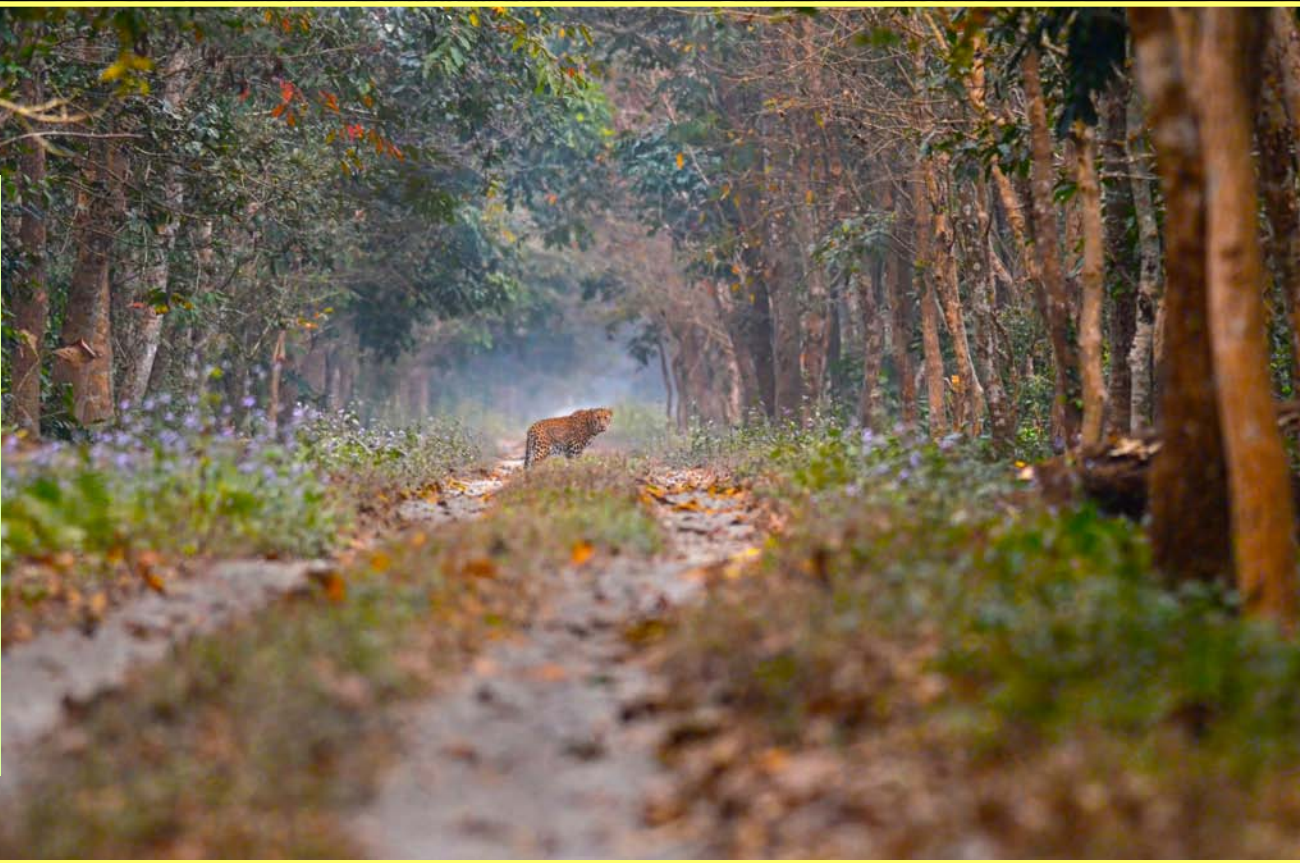
From our Facebook group



Sovon Deb

He is from Dinhata, West Bengal, India.

This very pleasing image of the leopard in its habitat was taken in the Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal.



Vishwajeet Naik

He is from Pune, India.

This highly elusive Himalayan Red Fox was captured in Chopta, Uttarakhand.



Rajbeer 'Sunny' Oberoi

He is from Mumbai, India.

This very pristine Pelicanscape was shot in the magical birding land of Bharatpur, India.



Sahasrangshu Choudhury

He is from Mumbai, India.

This image of the Southern White Rhinoceros was shot in Kruger National Park, South Africa

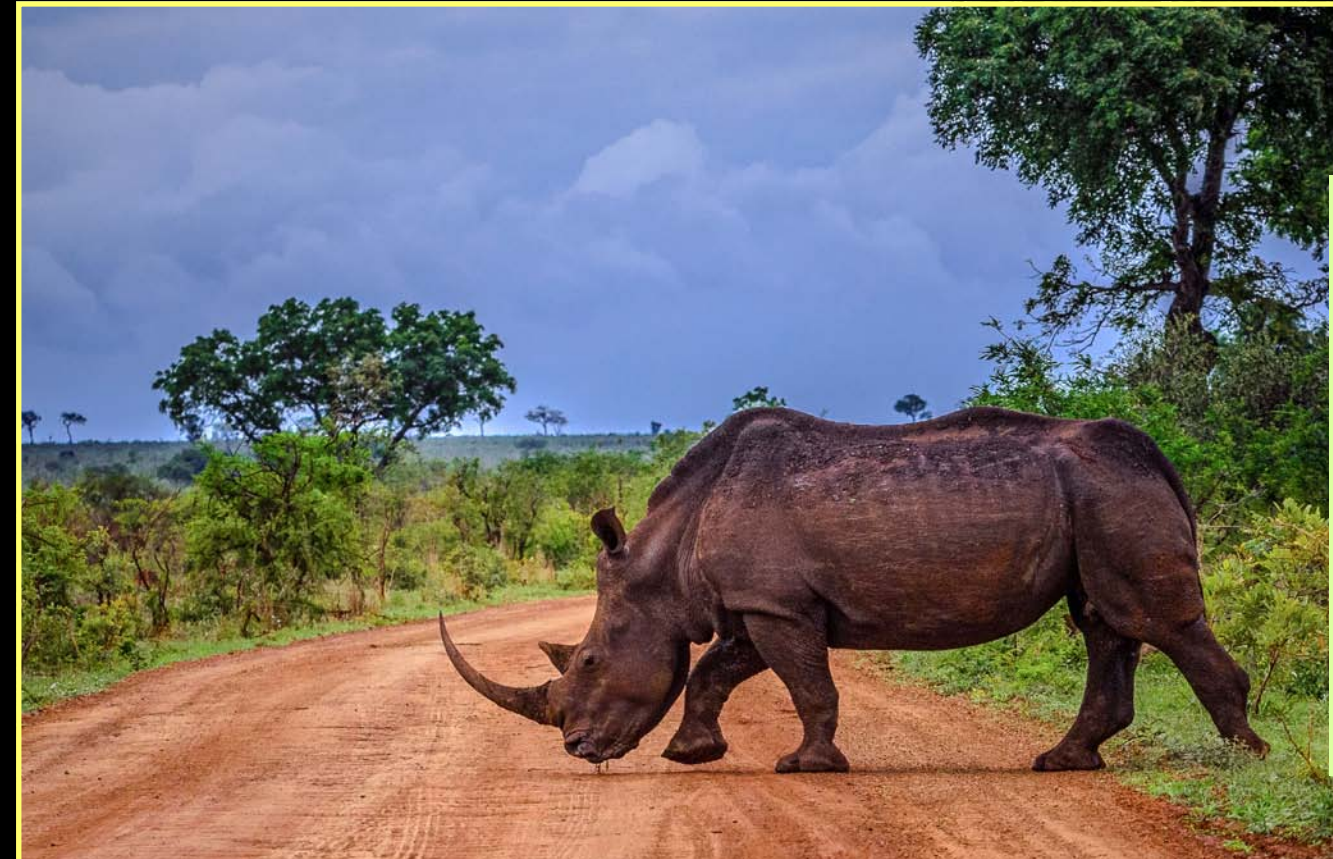


Image of the month - March



This is a Common Nawab (*Polyura athamas*) butterfly. This panoramic image was taken at Chalakudy forest, Anapandam, Kerala.

The image very strikingly includes the pristine habitat of the butterfly with crisply executed wide angle feel. This was taken with a Nikon D800E with a Nikkor 105mm macro lens. Multiple exposures were taken with HD image stacking.



The Common Nawab

Praveen G Nair



The Return of the **AMUR FALCON**

An otherwise in descript small bird of prey, the Amur Falcon has caught the attention of conservationists and wildlife lovers owing to its indiscriminate hunting during its migratory journey. The Amur Falcon has achieved a phenomenal feat of consistency, strength and avian intuition, in having the longest migratory cycle in the avian world. The species was not talked about much till the last few years, when incessant killing of migrating flocks in north east India came to light, and raised conservatory concerns.



© Henriksen Greaves

The Amur Falcon (*Falco amurensis*) is considered a rare species, owing to its occurrence in only selected pockets of India. Primarily recorded from north east India, researchers indicated a few scattered sight records in peninsular India. Earlier considered a sub-species of the Red-footed Falcon, they have not been recognized as a distinct species. Males are sooty grey above, sport rufous thighs and vent and white wing linings which are visible in flight. The base of the beak and legs are dark orange-red. The female is of the same size as the male. She has cream or orange underparts with dark streaks, grey upperparts with a slaty grey head and cream forehead. She also sports bars or spots on the wings and tail. White throat, white cheeks and a dark eye patch and 'moustache' characterize the female. Both

male and female have white claws, a rarity amongst birds of prey. Juveniles mimic the female, but may be paler. The Amur Falcon is a bird of open woodland and wooded steppe and takes to savanna and grassland during the cold months. It is not averse to human population and is often seen roosting in or near towns. Insects are its primary food, it preys on locusts, grasshoppers, beetles, flying termites and sometimes even small birds or amphibians. It is an adept bird of prey, used to grabbing prey in mid-flight or sometimes from the ground. A typical hovering action is typical of the bird searching for prey. This insect-focused feeding lends the Amur Falcon a very important ecosystem service- it controls the pest population, thereby aiding a good harvest, keeping farmers happy.



An Amur tree in Nagaland

© Kartik Patel

Amur Falcon - Male



Amur Falcon - Female



The bird has a vast breeding range that spreads across Asia, eastern Siberia, through Amurland and Ussuriland, north east Mongolia and Manchuria, and North Korea and northern and eastern China.



A Flying Feat

More than anything else, the Amur Falcon has generated awe for its migratory journey covering more than 22,000 kilometres, annually. A commendable display of sheer strength ensues, as one of the most oceanic migrants flies over 3,000 kilometres of the Indian Ocean, on its way to Africa. Migration to the warmer climes of South Africa start from Mongolia sometime in late August and travels in huge flocks, often including other types of falcon. The first stopover is in the north east of India and Bangladesh, where the birds fatten up for the arduous journey over sea. Accounts about the exact route are not conclusive due to very less research and the large distances covered. The birds are then seen in East Africa where they roost. The flocks return in February-March and arrive at their Asian breeding grounds in April-May. The birds are believed to fly at altitudes of over thousand meters during their journey over India and are aided by the strong westward winds. In India, Doyang Lake in the Wokha district is seen to be a primary roost site, before they carry on with their onward journey. The journey from Mongolia to north east India is plotted at around 5,600 km and is covered in about 5 days and nights, non-stop.

The Species Shoots To Fame

It was few years back that the mass harvest of Amur Falcons came to light. Gory picture of mass murder created mayhem at an international level, and India reacted by banning hunting of the species. It was then that a slew of conservation measures were initiated by the Nagaland Forest Department and non-governmental organizations. The year 2013 marked the involvement of locals and civilian enthusiasts, in a movement that was to change the fate of the bird.

Amur Falcons follow a mass migration pattern, where entire flocks fly over Nagaland in the north east. Precision in arrival and mass numbers helped the locals undergo mass massacres, mainly with an intention to consume and commercial selling of the birds. It has been estimated that mass killings happened to the order of 12,000 – 14,000 falcons being hunted per day, taking the number from a horrendous 20,000 to 140,000 birds being slaughtered every year. Many of these were found being sold in the Nagaland market either as smoked or fried delicacies, or sold for other commercial uses. It was this extreme form of killing that created headlines, and thereafter much has been done to address this traditional habit of the Nagaland tribes.

Traditionally the Amur Falcon had not been killed nor eaten by the Naga tribes. In fact, in Tamenglong the tribals of yesteryears look up to the beautiful birds, revering them as messengers of God. Their timely arrival is believed to be a harbinger of a good year with bountiful harvest. According to some sources, it is only the recent generation that has let go of this veneration, and resorted to mass killing using convenient and cheap means such as nets, slingshots and even guns. Though the bird is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, the area of Tamenglong and surrounding places in Nagaland are too hilly to ensure proper law enforcement.

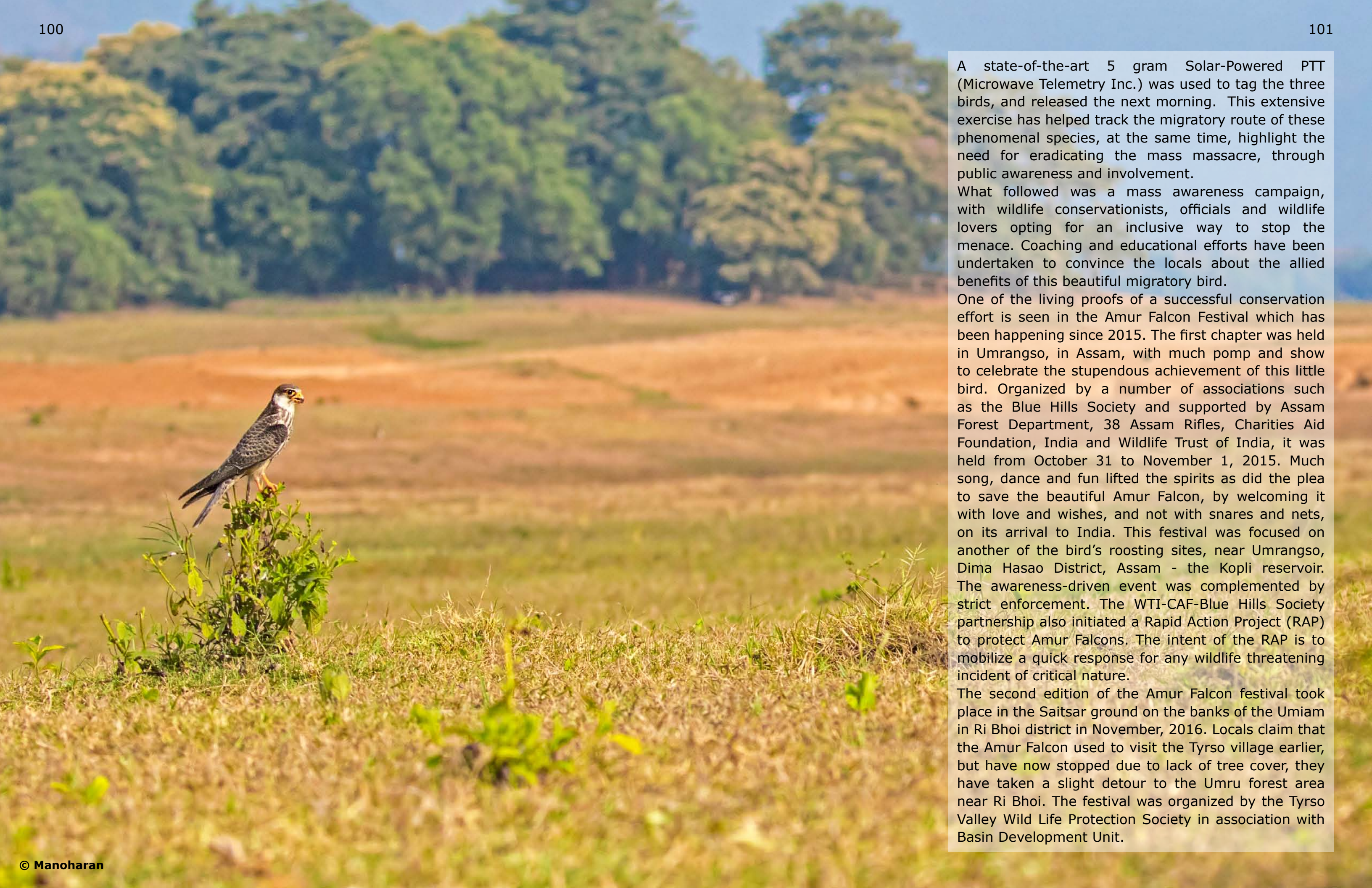


© Dharuman Nanjan

It is interesting to note how the slayers leveraged the peculiar roosting behavior of the falcon, in setting it up for its death. The Amur Falcon has the typical habit of spending the daytime on the transmission wires, which are inaccessible to hunters. However, come dusk and they descend to forested patches along the banks of the reservoir to roost. The hunters have mastered the art of laying large fishing nets on the roosting sites, trapping them for a merciless death at the hands of the trappers. It is important to note that entire populations of the birds were earlier wiped out, since no parts of the roosting area were spared from the nets. On an average the statistics of hunting point to 180 bird catches per day and with 60-70 hunting groups operating each day, it translates to 12,000 to 14,000 birds being dealt the death knell. The birds were not immediately killed, but captured and kept alive in mosquito nets or cane baskets, from where they were transported to poles, to be carried into town. This was the final death blow, birds eventually died, their feathers plucked and then sold. Throwing some light on the commercials of the bird, each bird was known to be sold for about sixteen to twenty five rupees, with most being sold door-to-door in the villages of Pangti, Doyang and Wokha and sometimes as far as Dimapur.

Saving The Amur: A Mass Movement

In order to make conservation efforts effective, it is important to understand the bird behavior, particularly its migratory path. In an extensive study effort by the Wildlife Institute of India in 2013, the Convention on Migratory Species, Birdlife Hungary, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and the Nagaland Forest Department, satellite tagging of three Amur Falcons was undertaken. The three birds, two females named Wokha and Pangti and one male named Naga, set the stage to gain deep insights into the bird's behavior.



A state-of-the-art 5 gram Solar-Powered PTT (Microwave Telemetry Inc.) was used to tag the three birds, and released the next morning. This extensive exercise has helped track the migratory route of these phenomenal species, at the same time, highlight the need for eradicating the mass massacre, through public awareness and involvement.

What followed was a mass awareness campaign, with wildlife conservationists, officials and wildlife lovers opting for an inclusive way to stop the menace. Coaching and educational efforts have been undertaken to convince the locals about the allied benefits of this beautiful migratory bird.

One of the living proofs of a successful conservation effort is seen in the Amur Falcon Festival which has been happening since 2015. The first chapter was held in Umrangso, in Assam, with much pomp and show to celebrate the stupendous achievement of this little bird. Organized by a number of associations such as the Blue Hills Society and supported by Assam Forest Department, 38 Assam Rifles, Charities Aid Foundation, India and Wildlife Trust of India, it was held from October 31 to November 1, 2015. Much song, dance and fun lifted the spirits as did the plea to save the beautiful Amur Falcon, by welcoming it with love and wishes, and not with snares and nets, on its arrival to India. This festival was focused on another of the bird's roosting sites, near Umrangso, Dima Hasao District, Assam - the Koplri reservoir. The awareness-driven event was complemented by strict enforcement. The WTI-CAF-Blue Hills Society partnership also initiated a Rapid Action Project (RAP) to protect Amur Falcons. The intent of the RAP is to mobilize a quick response for any wildlife threatening incident of critical nature.

The second edition of the Amur Falcon festival took place in the Saitsar ground on the banks of the Umiam in Ri Bhoi district in November, 2016. Locals claim that the Amur Falcon used to visit the Tyrso village earlier, but have now stopped due to lack of tree cover, they have taken a slight detour to the Umru forest area near Ri Bhoi. The festival was organized by the Tyrso Valley Wild Life Protection Society in association with Basin Development Unit.

© Aggal Sivalingam



Thanks to spreading awareness about the important role that the birds play in sustaining a healthy economy, a lot of grass-root initiatives have cropped up. Locals are working towards preserving the Yaongyimchen Community Biodiversity Conservation Area, and some locals claim that some of the falcons are also seen staying back in these forests, rather than going ahead with the ongoing migration. They say that they have seen Amur Falcons even during January – March, though this is not the usual period. A rare incident of a snow white colored Amur Falcon too is reported, by a scientist from the Wildlife Institute of India, in 2015. Other common roosting areas for the bird are Niuland area in Dimapur and

MBA by qualification and HR Professional by experience, doDifferent is the mantra by which Rhucha lives. Juggling different hats - wildlife-travel entrepreneur, nature and wildlife love, writer and poet, photographer, traveller, musician, avid reader and last but not the least, HR professional; Rhucha is a mixed medley of endearing quirks. Be it taking off on a solo trip and starting her Travelunatic blog or clicking the striped predator from a short distance, she enjoys the thrill of twists. She loves penning down her travel experiences by way of contributing articles to magazines, one can find her entries in Jet Wings, Vistara, Air Arabia, Little India and the likes. Her passion for nature and wildlife led her to find jungLEADz aiming at sharing the joy of nature with one and all through carefully curated safari-tours and nature-based games. When not busy writing or clicking, you may find Rhucha doodling away random poetic thoughts while sipping on a hot cuppa and admiring the shenanigans of the brimming bird life outside her window.

**Rhucha Kulkarni**

Intangki National Park in Peren district. From a conservation perspective, the species is listed on the Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which outlines that any international trade in the Amur Falcon should be carefully regulated. Another direct impact is the increased number of sightings of Amur Falcons all over the Indian subcontinent. Right from coastal

Kerala, these winged predators are reported from many areas including central India. This is a heartening story of slayers turned savers, as the very tribals who first set the weapons of death for these innocent species, welcome them with open hearts and minds today. The rhythmic tribal drums during the much-awaited Amur festival deal out not the dangers of death, but the promise of brimming life. Life that is precious, wild

and free. And that has the right to remain so. Had it not been for the intervention of the right people at the right time, today the alluring Amurs would have disappeared from the face of the Earth. Of course, this is just a beginning, and we have a long way to go in terms of sustained conservation of this ecologically important avifauna. As they say, a stitch in time saves nine. This is a story with a twist - a stitch in time saves thousands!

Red-Breasted Merganser



This Red-Breasted Merganser was clicked by Abhay Kewat at Sativali Village, Vasai Dist, Maharashtra, India. Dr. Rajneesh Gadi recorded this bird in 21st of December 2016 and it was there till 27th of January. These images were shot on 18th of January. In fact on the same day a Marsh Harrier attacked this very bird, but luckily it was able to save itself. This is the first officially documented sighting of the

duck in India. The Red-breasted Merganser is an extremely common bird in North America, Europe and even Central Asia but it never winters in India. The bird looks like a female, a sub-adult, and it could have lost its way from its regular wintering site, the nearest of which could be in Pakistan. It is a diving duck and depends on fishes and insects for food and mainly prefers deep waters.



Abhay Kewat

Macro Photography with a Twist



Yasir Mehmood

An Exclusive Interview



Q. Can you tell us about your background and how you got into photography? Tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Yasir Mehmood and I belong to Islamabad, Pakistan. Although I am a designer by profession, my real passion is photography in general but nature and wildlife photography in particular. In my childhood I was very creative and an art lover. In 2009 I bought my first DSLR Camera Olympus E-410, and started photography. I am also the chief editor of an online photography magazine "Capture Mania". My photographs are also published in many international magazines, and photographic art society of Pakistan "Year Book 2015". Also my photographs are displayed in different national and international exhibitions. I have received more than 20 awards including many gold medals.

Along with a team of photographers I founded Nature Watch, an online community which has now become the largest platform for upcoming wildlife photographers in Asia. Sharing my knowledge of photography, wildlife, and people across various platforms including workshops and seminars is an important part of the

work I do. As a wildlife photographer and videographer I completed two wildlife documentaries with a media group. Now I am working on my project, "The unseen life of Pothwar". It's about my native town called Pothwar (Pakistan)

Q. What do you love to photograph the most?

As a designer I love the colour combination and the form of design. Insects, the tiny creations of the God, are marvellous in colour combination, pattern and designing point of view. Such detailed creation explains how God has designed every feature in every tiny bit of an entity. I try to capture every tiny movement of such insects which are an emblem of beauty. The beautiful colours, their structure and their movement shows how organized this world is.

I have gained expertise in insect photography from my work as I have a God gifted ability of seeing nature differently, I see insects as objects of beauty, which are as beautiful as any other element of nature and worthy of being photographed. For me photography is not just a hobby, but a tool of insight into nature.



Q. In macro photography, it is quite difficult to get your subject completely in focus as you get closer. Is there a specific technique that you use to get as much of the subject in focus as possible?

Well, I am shooting with the 70-300mm and extension tubes; it gives much distance between me and the subject. I recently bought Tamron 90mm lens for the macro shots. Now it's easier to shoot macro. I am shooting manually with the tripod, as it gives easy focus of subject. I start shooting as insects are far away and get close gradually with a steady pace and keep on getting shots. Insects are the creation of God and we are as well, we can understand each other easily. If we do not harm any insect it will automatically get used to you and move freely and one can get the shots he/she wants.

Insects are mostly lazy early in the morning so it is better to carry out the shoot in the morning else evening is also a good time but then one would need a good lighting setup. After years of practice now I am able to understand the nature of the insects. I also use alternative methods for bees or other insects like placing sugar grains somewhere to attract them.

Q. How is your working process? How do you "explore" your motive?

Weather is an important factor for finding the type of insects you need. Secondly learning about the habitat of the insect is important and thirdly creation of specific environment for the shot is necessary. Learning about the habit of an insect is also important.

You should never get discouraged. Your vision is valid, but you may have to work to achieve it.

Q. Is there any gear in particular that helps you in your photography?

As working in the field, I am using my Nikon D5200 with Tamron 90mm, Sigma 70-300mm lens and extensions tubes. I really love the natural green color. I mostly use a big leaf in background and place my camera on the best place. Using sigma 70-300mm with extension tubes increases the length and weight of the lens. To avoid the blur issue I use the remote trigger. I use different type of light depending on the scene I am shooting.



I am currently using Chinese flash light with homemade diffuser which I have built with plastic bottle, black card paper and reflectors. As some subjects are reflective, if I do not use the flash diffuser properly, photos get overexposed. Most of the time I use tripod, and sometimes if I have to move quickly I don't avoid it.

Q. What is the most critical moment in the capture of your images?

In wildlife macro photography a critical moment is capturing the movement of interacting objects in a particular way in a certain environment, for example capturing an interaction between insects in such a way that one is ready to attack and the other preparing to counteract is very critical to create a perfect image. And capturing such kind of moments need high professional skills, ability and a bit of luck.

Q. Do you do any post-processing on your images?

It's an interesting question; most of the people ask me the same. For the post-processing I use Photoshop. Photos



require fine tuning like noise reduction, brightness, contrast, correction of white balance etc.

I don't use Photoshop for pasting or cutting and also don't use any cloning. I use it for the cropping, resizing photos for the web or Facebook and adding my water marks on it. I always shoot in raw format and use Photoshop for converting to jpg.

Q. How important do you think the composition is in macro photography?

In every photograph composition is the way of guiding the viewer's eye towards the most important elements of your work. Macro photography is also based on good composition. A good composition makes a master piece even if your subject does not look good and on the other hand bad composition can spoil a good photograph. Cropping can sometimes save an image, but only when tighter framing and removal of certain portions of the image is the correct solution. That is why giving your choice of composition plenty of thought before capturing an image is a step of utmost importance.



Q. Photographers like to show their audience something in their pictures. What do you hope to inspire in people with your works?

I would like to inspire the people by the beauty of insects. Insects which are very tiny creations of God, have extra ordinary designs and colour combinations. Their movement and designs are inspiration for me and I would like to capture these beauties and show them to people through my photographs. As normal human eyes can't capture these things, I would like to show these colourful insects to people through my photographs.

Q. What displaying your work on social networks or publishing your work in magazines mean to you?

Well, I am very active on the social networks like on my Facebook fan page named "Photography". I upload all of my images on it and share these in many different photography groups. One of my favourite group is "Wild

Sojourns" where I meet many famous photographers. I am also active on National Geographic profile with published pictures in "Daily Dozen" and available on Twitter, Flickr and Instagram.

My photography has been published in many other international photography magazines. This was a great experience and improved my skills through positive feedback from the readers of these magazines including Wild Sojourns provided me a way forward to my photography career and recognized my skills. Wild Sojourns was one of the earliest magazines which showcased my work. For that I am very grateful to Wild Sojourns.

Yasir Mehmood is a very talented photographer hailing from Islamabad, Pakistan. His work can be followed at <https://www.facebook.com/yasirwildlifephotographer>



From our Facebook group



Avijit Ghosh

He is from Kolkata, India.
This image of an Intermediate Egret catching a snake was taken in Mangalajodi, Odisha.



Suraj Shankar Roy

He is from Coochbehar, India.
This action filled moment of Black-tailed Godwits was captured in Mangalajodi, Odisha.

Prakhar Krishnan

He is from Lucknow, India.
This highly energising frame of the tusker was made in Dehla Gate, Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand.



Wildlife Photography

Family Edition



Gaythri

Mansur

Abisek

Banded Mongoose**Coqui Francolin****Spot-billed Pelicans**

Photography, especially wildlife photography has mostly been dominated by men all these days. Times are now changing and the recent years have seen lots of women entering into this field and giving a real tough competition to all. Though considered risky, what drives them is their love for photography and Mother Nature. It is even tougher to see a whole family involved into wildlife photography and this article is to introduce one such family – Gaythri, Mansur & Abisek.

Gaythri Devi, a passionate wildlife photographer likes her time in the wild a lot better than her urban days. Mansur Ahamed, a telecom professional who tries sneaking in during weekends to satisfy his passion and also unwind. Abisek Ahamed who does his studies in a boarding school St. Jude's Public School & Junior College, Kotagiri waits for his holidays to join his parents into the jungle. Such varied are their schedules and still they ensure that they take time in pursuing their common passion – Wildlife Photography.



Malabar Grey Hornbill

Malabar Trogon



Gaythri Devi had this passion in her right from her childhood days. Her father bought her a Kodak camera while she was studying in class 8 which she still considers that prized possession. Taking normal portraits never excited her even then and she used to try photographing flowers and butterflies. Though the results were like an amateur, she was excited to see it in print. Even in her college days, she used to be the most sought after by her friends to take photographs of the group. The fire in her to enter photography was burning till it took a small break in the form of her marriage. Gaythri fell in love with Mansur Ahamed and soon got married. Both of them were working and she never expressed her hidden talent to Mansur. Three years rolled by and Gaythri gave birth to a lovely son Abisek Ahamed.



White-bellied Treepie



Mottled Wood Owl

As with any normal Indian woman, she quit her job and got herself immersed into taking care of her son. It was only during a very casual talk with Mansur after 5 years of their marriage, Gaythri expressed her love for photography. Gaythri incidentally was a Black Belt in Karate and her husband was feeling guilty that it was their marriage which suppressed her talent in Karate and he was thoroughly surprised at her additional love for photography. Mansur took this as an opportunity to get her back into something which she loved and got her a DSLR camera as a gift. Fire got ignited once again and she has been shooting since then.

Mansur grew up seeing the negatives turning into beautiful prints sitting in the dark room where his grandfather who was a photographer used to work. Once Gaythri got into photography, Mansur too followed suit in a year and they have been capturing the beauties in the wild since then. Both the parents being madly following their dream, Abisek Ahamed too had no other option but to start learning the art.

The couple have been visiting various places around the country and abroad and have documented more than 300 species of birds in India and almost an equal number of species in Africa which they recently visited. Tigers are their fascination and they have been lucky to photograph many tigers in different wildlife reserves across India. You can see their photographs in <https://www.facebook.com/gaythrimansurnaturephotography/>. They are soon launching their own website www.gamatos.in which would be live soon.



Royal Bengal Tiger



Ground Hornbill



Bateleur Eagle



Amur Falcon

The Primate Superhero

**Black-and-White
Colobus Monkey**



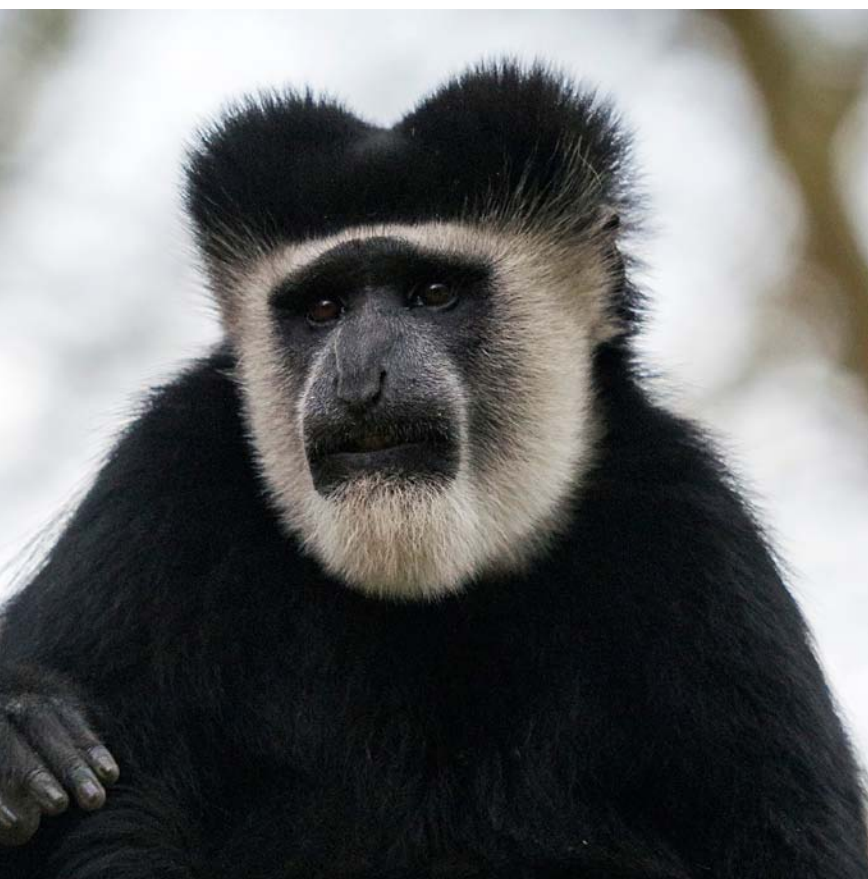


Lake Naivasha, a pristine freshwater lake in Kenya, Africa. I'm enjoying the breath of fresh air amidst the Yellow Fever trees [yellow barked *Acacia Xanthophlea*]. High above in canopy, a shrieking howl reverberates through the trees. I look up trying to localise it, but all I see is a streak of white fluttering on the breeze.

What is it? Is it a bird? Is it a superhero? As I look high and low and zero in on the source of the din, I realise I've seen my first ever Colobus Monkey.

When I planned my trip to Kenya this beautiful species was very much high on my wish list. The precise subspecies is the *Colobus guereza*, Black-and-White Colobus Monkey, the Eastern race.

These black-and-white beauties spend most of their time high in the treetops, where they find their favourite food, the tender young leaves that don't grow down below. In order to get around, they use the springy branches near the trees' crowns as improvised trampolines. Black-and-White Colobus Monkeys are excellent jumpers – they routinely jump 45 to 50 feet between trees.



When under threat, however, they can jump in excess of 60 feet. Colobus Monkeys leap up and then drop downward, falling with outstretched arms and legs to grab the next branch. Their mantle hair and tails are believed to act as a parachute during these long leaps. These sure are a superhero's ability but what is striking is it does a fabulously designed outfit too.

The silky white hair that distinguishes the species forms a U-pattern down the monkeys' backs, fluttering out behind them in the breeze almost like a cape. In fact, the white mantle and long, puffy tail act as a sort of natural parachute for the monkeys, helping them land on narrow branches in the upper canopy.

However, I encountered only one monkey, probably the dominant male. As I observed him I found him to be very bold in nature. After taking some record shots, I started moving closer for some portraits. I was holding my camera with 70-200mm f/2.8 lens. He was calm enough and didn't make any moves even when he saw my movement towards him. Suddenly, my safari guide rushed to me and warned that Colobus Monkeys are very dangerous and their bites can be very poisonous & can kill.



So I moved back to a safe distance and observed his movements. After a while, he surprisingly got down from the tree top and started eating tender leaves of a ground plant. I enjoyed his company for around 30 minutes after which he trudged back into the jungle with characteristic acrobatic manoeuvres.

Like all good superheroes, Colobus Monkeys have a special power, they are imperviousness to poison (at least some). Complex stomachs allow them to eat toxic plants most other animals can't, which is almost another superpower, at least in times of scarcity. They also feed on clay and charcoal to eliminate any toxins.

But no superhero is without a fatal flaw, and the Colobus is no exception: though they're surprisingly adept, the monkeys have no thumbs. In fact, that's how they got their name; "Colobus" derives from the Greek word for "mutilated."



Colobus monkeys are social species and live in territorial troops of about 5 to 10 animals—a dominant male, several females, and their young. Each troop has a well-defined territory, which is defended from other groups. Adult troop members, especially males, make croaking roars that can be heard resonating throughout the forest. Despite their territorial nature, fighting over mates rarely occur.

It is very disheartening to see that the numbers of Black-and-White Colobus Monkeys have been dwindling drastically. Earlier, hunting was the main reason both for its meat and the beautiful fur. In more recent years, the biggest threat to the colobus is habitat loss. Rapid human population

growth and the increase in the bush meat trade have caused population declines for this species. Chimpanzees are known to hunt these, particularly the baby Colobuses.





Many pronged conservation measures are there including Colobus Conservation, which is a nonprofit organisation that focuses on protection, conservation and preservation of primates, especially the nationally threatened Colobus Monkeys of which only 4,500 remain in Kenya. Located in Diani on Kenya's South Coast, Colobus Conservation was founded in 1997 to address human-

primate conflict. Today, numerous projects are underway which concentrate on research and implementation of solutions to decrease the impact of the human environment on primate diversity. One project is the famous 'Colobridge' - bridges between trees spanning Diani's Beach Road reducing injury and death of monkeys due to vehicles.



Sumesh Nair

Sumesh Nair is a passionate 'Travel & Wildlife Photographer' based in India & presently employed as an engineer by profession in Muscat - Sultanate of Oman. As he has gracefully sailed into the photography world since 2008, he has realized that more than a passionate hobby, 'wildlife photography' has provided an opportunity to understand Mother Nature. He captures those little moments around to treasure the photographs in a cart carrier and cherish the good moments. Being a responsible wildlife photographer, he wishes to explore the nature with passion & purpose.



**This Magical image is taken in The Corbet National park.
© Krishnamurthy**

Birding in Kenya

Kenya. The word invariably conjures vivid images of the great cats and other astonishing mammals. However, Kenya also has a very rich avian biodiversity with over 1100 recorded species. Suresh Kamat recently visited this wonderland and shares his experiences with us.





Vulturine Guinea Fowl

It was my dream and high on my bucket list to visit Kenya, to view its wildlife and capture some endearing images. I, along with my friend and fellow wildlife photographer Mr. Arun Santhosh Fernandez decided to embark on this adventure in November 2016. We met Mr. K.D. Sathya Narayanan, who is also an ardent wildlife photographer to organize our trip, as he has been leading trips to various locations in Africa since 2000. We left Mangalore on 4th November, 2016 and after a long flight landed at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi on the 5th. Our guide from Mara Eden Safari Camp received us. We proceeded to Masai Mara National Reserve (the roads for about 100 kms are pathetic) and spent the next 9 nights at Mara Eden Safari Camp, nestled and hidden in greenery, on the banks of the Mara River. The camp is strategically located with abundant wildlife and very close to the crossing points, during migration.



Speckled Mousebird



Bateleur Eagle immature



Golden-breasted Starling



Red-and-Yellow Barbet



**Yellow-necked
Francolin**

White-bellied Canary



African Harrier Hawk



Lilac-breasted Roller



The luxury tents are clean, food and hospitality excellent. The local Masai guides with their in depth knowledge made it a very productive adventure.

On 14th November, we proceeded to Lake Naivasha and enjoyed 2 good sessions of birding in the fresh water lake, especially the Fishing Eagles.

On 15th November, we left Lake Naivasha early and drove to the lesser known jewel, called Samburu National Reserve with our guide and friend Mr. Joseph Mahugu, whose knowledge and passion for birds is simply unparalleled. On the way we did birding at Lake Olbolosat.

Our stay was arranged at Samburu Intrepids Camp, on the banks of the river. An excellent place to stay with good hospitality and birding opportunity all around the camp.

Samburu National Reserve is situated within the Rift Valley Province of Kenya. Measuring approximately 104 sq. km in size, is roughly 350 kms from Nairobi. (approx 5 hours by road, which are good). It is relatively small in size compared to other Kenyan parks, such as Tsavo or Masai Mara. Samburu National Reserve derives its name from the Samburu people of Kenya who have lived in the area for many years. The Uaso Nyiro River cuts through this reserve. The river bustles with activity throughout the day. There is a good population of Nile Crocodiles.

You get to see lots of elephants, lions, leopards, giraffe, all antelopes and plenty of birds along the banks of the river.

The reserve's topography is mainly open savannah (grassland) with clusters of acacia trees, forest, thorn trees and grassland vegetation.

The famous movie Born Free based on the famous lioness Elsa was filmed here.

The climate in Samburu is hot and dry during the day, and cool during nights and evenings. Average maximum temperatures are around 30°C (85°F) with minimum temperature of approximately 20°C. Most rain falls between March and May, with short rains falling from November to December, recording a total maximum rainfall of 350mm. July through October and January through March are mainly hot and dry. During our stay we had short showers, which provided for magical lighting.

The park is renowned for its rare species of animals unique to the park, namely: the Long-necked Gerenuk, Grevy's Zebra, Reticulated Giraffe and Beisa Onyx, Somali Ostrich, all of which we got to see and photograph.

Birdlife is as plentiful as wildlife at Samburu National Reserve, which boasts over 350 different species of birds.



Black Capped Social Weaver



Grey- headed Kingfisher



White Headed Buffalo Weaver



Pygmy Falcon



Masked Weaver



Yellow-necked Francolin



Over the next few days we saw and photographed myriad number of bird species. After 5 days of birding, we left the jungle with a very heavy heart to catch our flight back home.

I thank Mr. K. D. Sathya Narayanan and Mr. Arun Santhosh Fernandez for their company and comradeship during the entire trip. Mr. Munir, Mr. Cyrus-Guides, Bennet, Mosses, Juilis, Tom of Mara Eden Safari Camp for their Hospitality. Special appreciation to Mr. Joseph Mahugu without whose knowledge and passion, we would never have been able to spot so many birds in such a short duration.

Suresh Kamat is from Puttur, Karnataka, India.



Lion-tailed Macaque - A wide angle view



I always wanted to make a wide angle frame of this species, so I visited a spot where this species visited regularly and setup my camera with a 14mm manual focus lens and pre focused it to a distance of 2 to 3 feet.

As I had observed this species crossing a particular path, I placed the camera on tripod at a lower angle near the path and waited for the LTMs to come close by. I was 50 feet away and as I saw them coming in front of the camera I used a remote trigger to take pictures. This technique requires lot of patience and perseverance, the success rate is low. But the few frames you get makes all the effort worth it. I wish to do more of such photography in future.

About me

A professional photographer covering various genres, I'm very passionate about wildlife photography. I also conduct on-field workshops. I like to keep trying various techniques in photography.



Varun HB

A Bid to Save Dankuni Wetlands

The vast stretches of wetlands situated near the Durgapur Expressway spanning numerous mouzas and covering hundreds of hectares in the Hooghly District of West Bengal are nothing short of biodiversity hotspots. These typical wetland habitats are home to numerous species of flora and fauna. Many of the species found here are protected under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and/or categorized under the Red List maintained by International Union for Conservation of Nature. These wetlands also form one of the few remaining habitats of the state animal of West Bengal, the Fishing Cat (Schedule I, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Vulnerable, Red List of International Union of Conservation of Nature). Golden Monitor Lizard (Schedule I, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972) and Jungle Cat (Schedule II, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972) are also common denizens of these wetlands. The Dankuni wetlands boast of a large population of avian fauna. Species like Peregrine Falcon (Schedule I, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972), Lesser Adjutant Stork (Vulnerable, Red List of International Union of Conservation of Nature), Yellow-breasted Bunting (Endangered, Red List of International Union of Conservation of Nature), Osprey (Schedule I, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972), Bristled Grassbird (Vulnerable, Red List of International Union of Conservation of Nature), are some of the birds commonly seen in the wetlands of Dankuni. Many common species of birds too make these wetlands their home.

Meghna Banerjee

Suvrajyoti Chatterjee



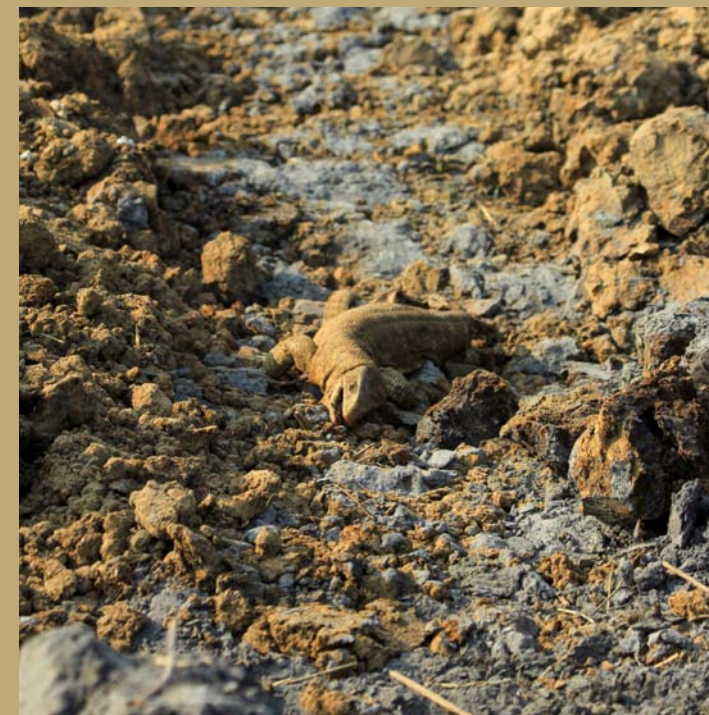
Sadly, industries like the Coca Cola Bottling Plant and Vikiran Radiation Processing Plant have come up in these areas in the last few years by encroaching upon wetlands, which is having a severe impact on these sensitive ecosystems. The march for unplanned development had already started taking its toll on Dankuni wetlands when members of PUBLIC (People United for Better Living in Calcutta/Cities) first visited the Dankuni wetlands way back in 2013. They were met with a shocking sight - ongoing destruction of large tracts of pristine wetlands. Hundreds of trucks were dumping fly ash in marshes and reed beds irreversibly and drastically changing their nature and character. Large water bodies and reed beds were turned into carpets of fly ash and the denizens of marshes had been pulverised by dumpers and payloaders moving relentlessly over the fragile habitats. A carcass of a Golden Monitor Lizard was found near one of the water bodies where fly ash was being dumped. The animal

had been crushed by a dumper and from the scale of destruction at the site it was evident that an entire colony of these highly endangered animal had been wiped out. PUBLIC filed a public interest litigation before the Calcutta High Court in May 2013 to stop illegal reclamation of these wetlands and save them from extinction. The Calcutta High Court through its order dated 17.05.2013 directed that "no further activity of filling up of the area in question shall be allowed and no construction without the permission of the Court shall be permitted to be raised". The District Magistrate of Hooghly and Superintendent of Police of the district are directed to ensure that the order is duly complied with. Let the competent authority initiate appropriate proceedings on the basis of aforesaid communications for restoration of the wetlands within a period of 10 days from today in accordance with law. Despite the above order, illegal dumping/ construction activity continued on these

wetlands on account of which PUBLIC was constrained to initiate contempt proceedings in accordance with the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 against the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police, Hooghly District.

Subsequently, the illegal dumping stopped in the areas specifically identified by PUBLIC in their writ petition and some work of restoration was also carried out in one of the plots illegally encroached by the developers forming part of the wetland complex flanking the eastern side of Durgapur Expressway.

Subsequently, the Calcutta High Court disposed of the writ petition filed by PUBLIC on 29th November, 2013 and directed a government appointed expert committee (formed by the government of West Bengal pursuant to a direction of the Calcutta High Court in an earlier writ petition seeking protection of wetlands) to determine the extent of wetlands and to ensure that ecological balance of the area is not disturbed by the construction of industries.



The PUBLIC along with other environmental activists were given liberty to assist this committee. Over time, it became increasingly clear to PUBLIC that the government appointed committee was not carrying out the task of examining/demarcating the wetlands in a manner envisaged under the state policy,



Dead monitor lizard as a result of illegal digging.

Lesser Adjutant Stork



© Meghna Banerjee

the draft West Bengal Wetlands and Water Bodies Conservation Policy, 2012 of West Bengal and the expert committee's own recommendations submitted earlier to the government of West Bengal.

The procedure adopted by the committee was not in consonance with established scientific principles for identification of wetlands or guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and did not adhere to the National Wetland Conservation Programme or the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010.

Meanwhile, members of PUBLIC on visiting the wetlands at different points in time found that unscrupulous elements were illegally filling up wetlands, raising culverts, building roads and burning aquatic vegetation. In fact, a road was being constructed covertly inside the wetlands

solely for the purpose of facilitating illegal reclamation of wetlands/marshes. PUBLIC repeatedly informed the authorities like District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police of Hooghly District, the Environment Department and the Land Department, of such illicit activities in the wetlands. Inspections carried out in the wetlands along with the concerned authorities showed that all these encroachments were taking place in complete violation of the applicable laws as well as the High Court's order dated 29th November, 2013. It was clear that without definitive protection, it would be virtually impossible to protect these wetlands.

In order to seek long term protection for the wetlands, PUBLIC filed another writ petition before the Calcutta High Court seeking fresh assessment, demarcation and declaration of wetlands of Dankuni on the eastern flank of the Durgapur Expressway,

Bluethroat



© Suvrajyoti Chatterjee

in accordance with the applicable laws, rules and guidelines. PUBLIC also sought a complete moratorium on all filling up and/or construction activities and restoration of existing encroachments.

The Calcutta High Court transferred the matter to the Eastern Zonal Bench of the National Green Tribunal. Subsequently, the National Green Tribunal has passed an interim order dated 17th May, 2016 wherein it has found that the activities being carried out in these wetlands are in violation of the policies of the government of West Bengal.



This image was captured by a camera trap placed by wildlife biologist, Tiasa Adhya as part of a survey she is conducting to estimate the population of Fishing Cat in Howrah and Hooghly Districts of West Bengal. This image was captured in Madhpur, Dankuni wetlands, Hooghly. Tiasa is a member of the Fishing Cat Working Group and the Cat Specialist Group, International Union for Conservation of Nature and her project is sponsored by Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund.

Dankuni wetlands thriving as a result of embargo on filling up activities.

Prized Catch

Spotted Sandgrouse



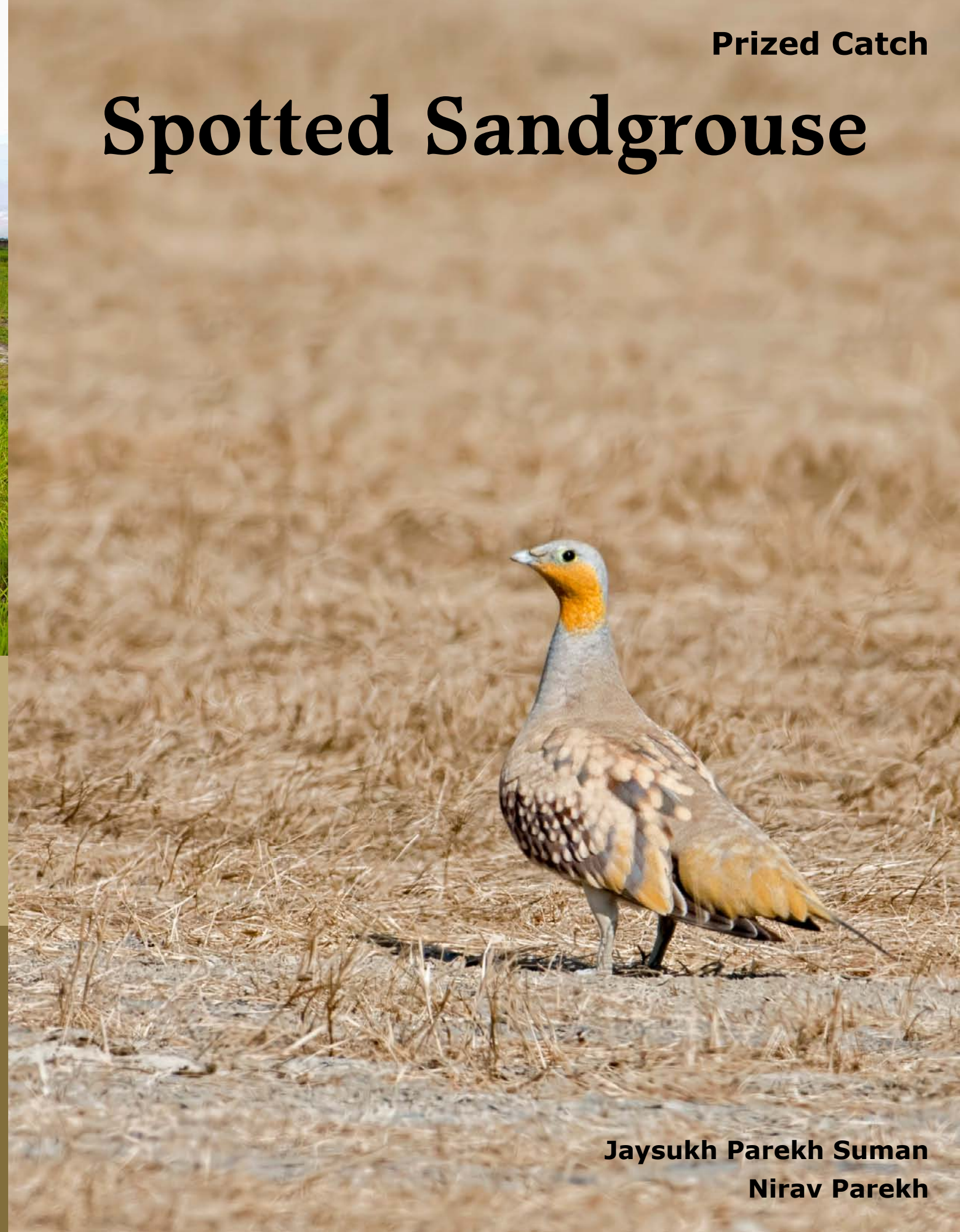
The Hon'ble Tribunal has granted an interim stay in favour of PUBLIC and put an embargo on all reclamation activities in these wetlands. The operative part of the order dated 17th May, 2016 is "Considering the seriousness of the issue raised in the present application, we direct the District

Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, Hooghly, who are Respondents No. 9 and 10 respectively, to ensure that no activities are carried on in any manner whatsoever to damage the wetland and also ensure that no person is permitted to reclaim/cover the wetland in the interregnum."

The matter is pending adjudication before the National Green Tribunal and is expected to be heard at length in the coming weeks.



Meghna Banerjee and Suvrajyoti Chatterjee are ardent conservationists and wildlifers. They belong to Kolkata, West Bengal.



**Jaysukh Parekh Suman
Nirav Parekh**



Spotted Sandgrouse Female

Spotted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles senegallus*) is a very rare bird. It is seen in western India, mostly in Kutch (Gujarat) and Rajasthan only. In Kutch it was seen after 19 years at Banni near Umedpar-Lodai this year. Last record was in the year 1997. It is a winter visitor to our country.

We were fortunate to document these birds regularly from 10th December 2016 up to 10th February 2017.

The habitat was about 3 sq km of flat barren land which was covered with small dry grass and some small plants. Small pit made by cattle was used by Sandgrouses for hiding and resting place.

Birds were coming on that spot between 9 am to 10 am. They had to travel much from their drinking spot as there was no water hole near this spot. Birds were always coming from north side where there is a white salty rann. Usually these frequent the waterhole only once in a day.

Many flocks of birds were landing with divine flying musical call vaku..vaku..vaku. Birds were coming in flocks of 15 to 20 and were landing at different areas of that spot and foraging.

We observed that most of the time many birds were foraging on a track made by vehicles. Later we understood that from that track they were collecting small stones for their gizzard (a part of stomach which crushes the food) Undertails of Spotted Sandgrouse is very beautiful. It was visible during display as well as when the birds were landing at rough areas with small, sharp pits to protect against damage. Sometimes the birds were hammering their beaks on other birds of the group like threat display.

We also noticed a strange behaviour. One Spotted Sandgrouse from the group would flap its wings once or twice and jump a little and then would restart foraging or walking. Other birds of the group would follow this behavior one by one.



Spotted Sandgrouse Male

We had seen more than 200 birds at a time on that spot in mid December and clicked 50 birds in one frame. These sandgrouses are very agile, alert and very wary of human

and raptor presence. The bird seems to be common over most of its extensive range and is listed as being of "least concern" by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.





Jaysukh Parekh Suman and Nirav Parekh are a father-son duo. They live in Bhuj, Gujarat, India. Both are very passionate birders and photographers.

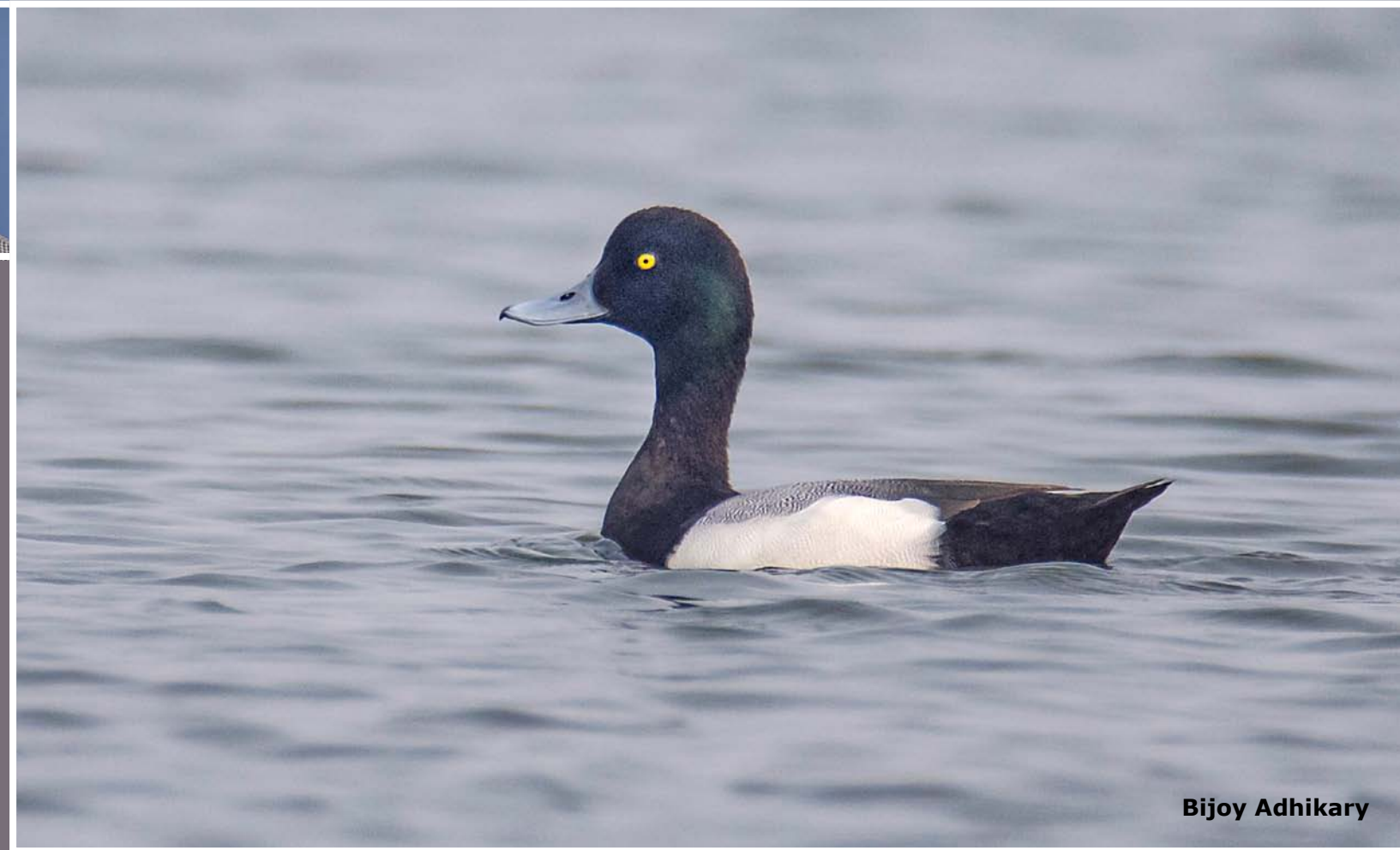
Prized Catch

Tundra Bean Goose

Tundra Bean Goose is one of the five species of grey goose and breeds in the northern Europe and Asia inhabiting in tundra, which lends it the name. It is a rare vagrant to India and this year marks its first visit to West Bengal; hence it is undoubtedly the most photographed species of the season. Tundra Bean Goose show significant variation in the size, shape and pattern of the bill, as well as in its overall size. The bill is black at the base and the tip and has an orange band across the middle. The legs and feet are also orange. The upper wing-coverts are dark brown, as in the White-fronted Goose and the Lesser White-fronted Goose, but it differs from these in having narrow white fringes to the feathers. It has a loud honking voice.

Greater Scaup

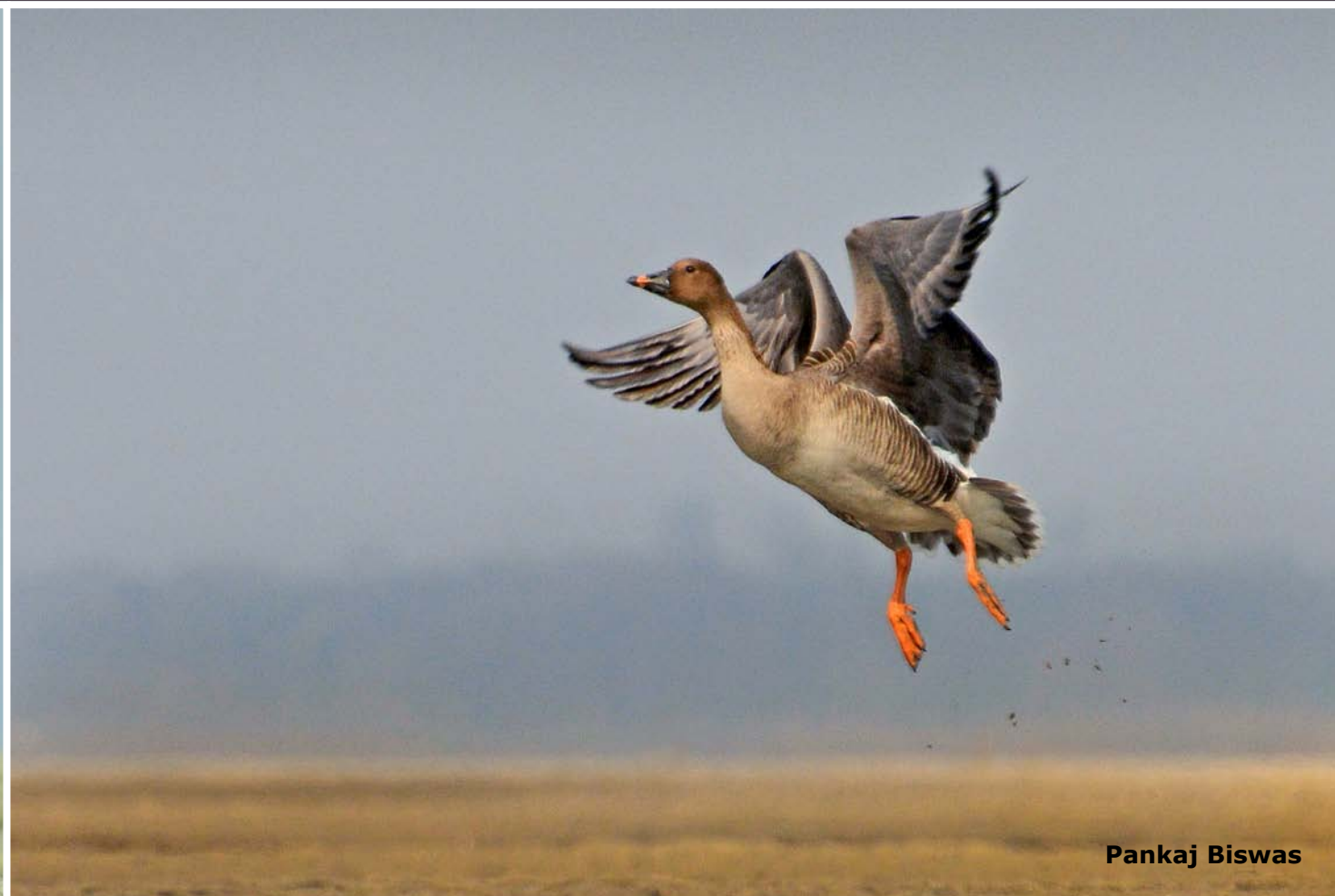
Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*) is a small diving duck and is a rare bird for India. It is classified as a sparse winter visitor. A few scattered sightings have been reported in the country. This individual was recorded by Bijoy Adhikary on, 14.2.2017 in Piyali, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India. Greater Scaup is a small duck with glossy greenish, rounded crown and yellow eyes. The bill is blue with black nail at tip. It has dark wings with dark-tipped white secondaries and inner primaries and pale gray outer primaries. Adult males and females are similar.



Bijoy Adhikary



Basabjit Ghosh



Pankaj Biswas



From our Facebook Group



Amit Kumar
Chestnut-mandibled Toucan,
Costarica





Suraj Ramamurthy
Black-and-Red Broadbill,
Malaysia



Udaya Kumar - Spotted Owlet, Madurai, India

Book Review

Photographic Field Guide to the Wildlife of Central India


This comprehensive field guide to the wildlife of Central India covers 850 species including

- 75 mammals
- 433 birds
- 156 butterflies
- 84 dragonflies
- 18 amphibians
- 84 reptiles

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 900 top quality species images
- Simple but informative maps of the region
- Up-to-date taxonomic data
- Information based on the experience of the authors who have been field naturalists in this very landscape for many years.


The visual treat of the images captured by 100 of India's top wildlife photographers, combined with simple descriptions and user-friendly design, will surely arouse the curiosity of all wildlife enthusiasts and help them explore further the treasures of the jungle.




PHOTOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE

WILDLIFE OF CENTRAL INDIA

David Raju, Surya Ramachandran



Sample Pages

34 WILDLIFE OF CENTRAL INDIA

CARACAL *Caracal caracal* **RGN** **Common**

Caracal **Q** **Q**

This striking cat has distinct long ear tufts and a uniform reddish-grey coat. The back of the ear is entirely black. The caracal's slender muscular body and long legs give it the ability to jump high up in the air to bring down birds in flight. Its preferred habitat is open scrubland and semi-arid woodlands. The wild caracal and its close relative the leopard are well known throughout the subtropical and subtropical regions of Central India.

Best Viewing: Ranthambore, Kuno-Palpur, Madhav.

ASIAN WILDEBEAST *Equus hemionus* **RGN** **Common**

Asian Wildebeast **Q** **Q**

Members of the genus *Equus* are found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It has a long neck, a thick coat covered with dark spots, black lines on the legs, and a long tail. The horn, throat and breast are white. This cat is well adapted to dense, bushy and open habitats, and is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

BUSBY SPOTTED CAT *Protonotaris bleekeri* **RGN** **Rare**

Busby Spotted Cat **Q** **Q**

One of the rarest cats in the world, this tiger is highly regarded as a large domestic cat. It is also the only species of wild cat endemic to India and Sri Lanka. The full grown coat is marked with large spots that together form broken lines on the sides. The markings on the face include a white patch on the forehead and white stripes on the ears and face. Busby Spotted cat is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

WILD ORISKANY *Canis aureus* **RGN** **Common**

Wild Oriskany **Q** **Q**

The wild oriskany is a member of the genus *Canis* and is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

35 WILDLIFE OF CENTRAL INDIA

CHITRA GHAZAL *Capreolus chitra* **RGN** **Common**

Chitra Gazal **Q** **Q**

This gazal is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

INDIAN GREY OWL *Ninox scops* **RGN** **Common**

Indian Grey Owl **Q** **Q**

This owl is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

LAGGAR FALCON *Falco laggar* **RGN** **Common**

Laggar Falcon **Q** **Q**

This falcon is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

BROWN NINJ OWL *Ninox scops* **RGN** **Common**

Brown Ninja Owl **Q** **Q**

This owl is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

SPOTTED OWLET *Ninox scops* **RGN** **Common**

Spotted Owlet **Q** **Q**

This owl is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

ORIENTAL SCOPS OWL *Ninox scops* **RGN** **Common**

Oriental Scops Owl **Q** **Q**

This owl is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region. It is found in the mountains and highlands of the region.

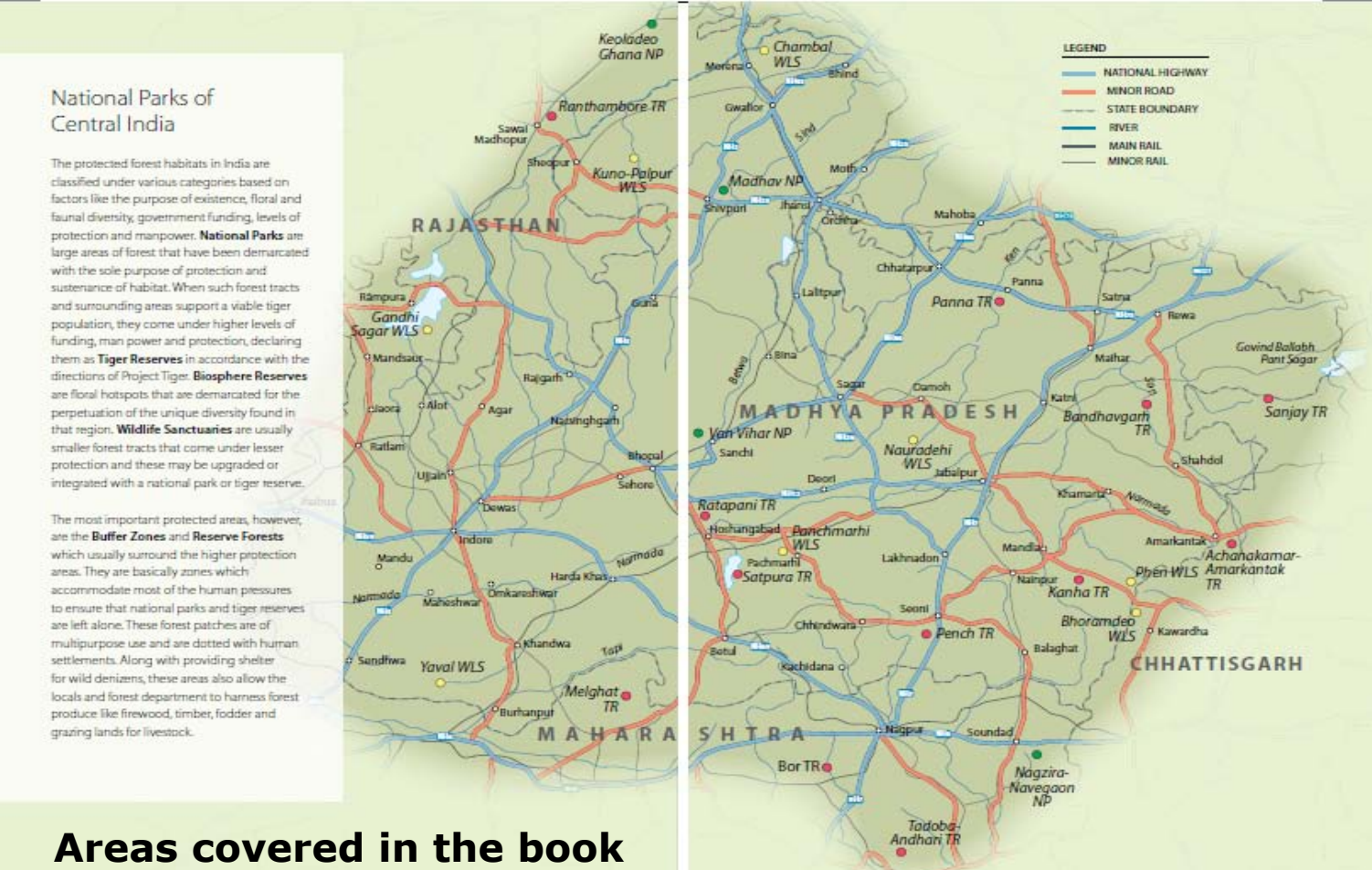
Best Viewing: Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehra Dun.

6 WILDLIFE OF CENTRAL INDIA

National Parks of Central India

The protected forest habitats in India are classified under various categories based on factors like the purpose of existence, floral and faunal diversity, government funding, levels of protection and manpower. **National Parks** are large areas of forest that have been demarcated with the sole purpose of protection and sustenance of habitat. When such forest tracts and surrounding areas support a viable tiger population, they come under higher levels of funding, manpower and protection, declaring them as **Tiger Reserves** in accordance with the directions of Project Tiger. **Biosphere Reserves** are floral hotspots that are demarcated for the perpetuation of the unique diversity found in the region. **Wildlife Sanctuaries** are usually smaller forest tracts that come under lesser protection and these may be upgraded or integrated with a national park or tiger reserve.

The most important protected areas, however, are the **Buffer Zones** and **Reserve Forests** which accommodate most of the human pressures to ensure that national parks and tiger reserves are left alone. These forest patches are of multipurpose use and are dotted with human settlements. Along with providing shelter for wild denizens, these areas also allow the locals and forest department to harness forest produce like firewood, timber, fodder and grazing lands for livestock.



LEGEND

- NATIONAL HIGHWAY
- MINOR ROAD
- STATE BOUNDARY
- RIVER
- MAIN RAIL
- MINOR RAIL

Areas covered in the book

When one thinks of viewing wildlife in Central India, the first names that pop up are the internationally renowned Ranthambore, Bandhavgarh and Kanha Tiger Reserves, home to the iconic Bengal Tiger. But there is definitely a lot more to this wonderland than just big cats. The overall hilly terrain, central India is arguably the most popular wildlife circuit in the country. It is perhaps the best region in the world to witness the tiger in action in the wild. Its 22 protected parks receive over two million visitors every season (October to June) with over 25 percent being international travellers. The tiger - admittedly the star attraction - presides over an incredibly diverse ecosystem comprising of many species of mammals, birds, butterflies, dragonflies, reptiles, amphibians and myriad other life forms that are equally amazing. This photographic field guide is the perfect, first-of-its kind, all-in-one, reference for identifying all these species on the go.

Focused on central India, it gives the user instant access to the rich biodiversity of the region without the need to carry multiple, highly scientific guides in their rucksack every time they set out. Many of the superb images have been contributed by India's top wildlife photographers. The text has likewise benefited from the experience of the authors who are seasoned field naturalists in the region, and also the expert guidance of specialist wildlife biologists. This book, has been specially designed with simplicity and ease of use, and would be at par with some of the best international field guides. The goal of the book is to make sure that every visitor's wildlife experience is enhanced beyond their expectations by arming them and their naturalist guides with this comprehensive and well-organised field reference which will also serve as the best possible souvenir of a trip into India's matchless tiger country.

Megh Roy Choudhury

Image of the month - February



Vinsilin Vincent is from Tirukalukundram, Tamil Nadu, India. This spectacular frame was captured at Vijayanarayana Lake near Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. Usually the lake is always full after the monsoon and no one can think even to enter it but due to scarcity of rain last year the lake has gone dry. Though dry, it had some green grass patches. Cattle Egrets used to hang around. We were in search for the birds of prey and Harriers. It was around 9.20 am when my friend Joe Anto driving the car, spotted the Peregrine Falcon doing something in the ground. I thought it was a carcass fully eaten but it turned out to be a fresh kill and the falcon had not yet started to eat. Luckily we had a great chance to get some good shots and could document the Peregrine Falcon with Cattle Egret kill.

Vinsilin Vincent



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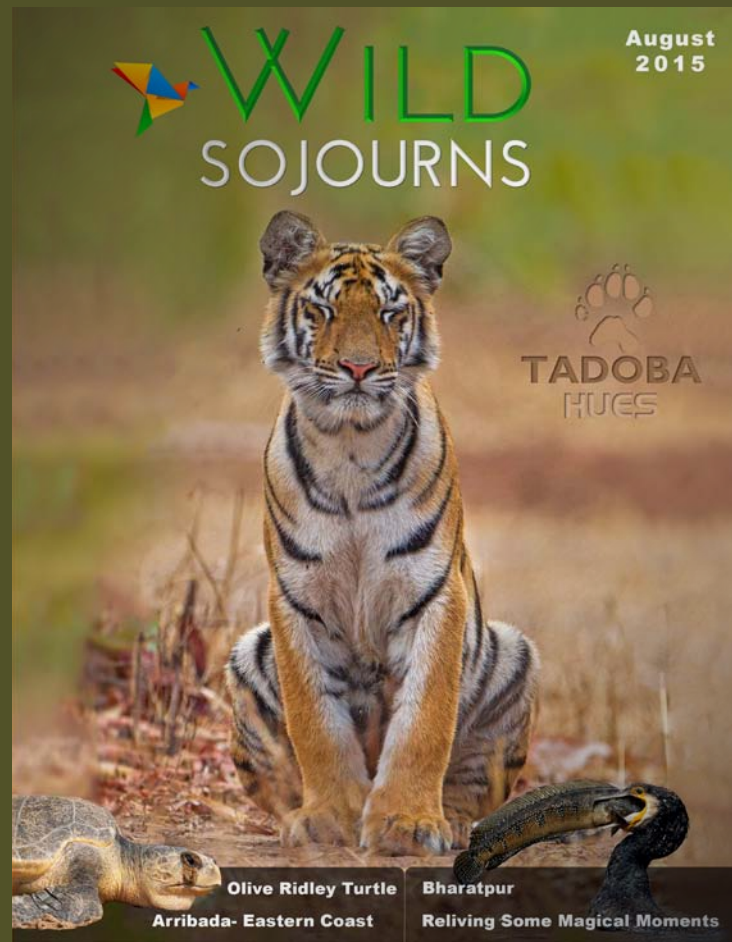
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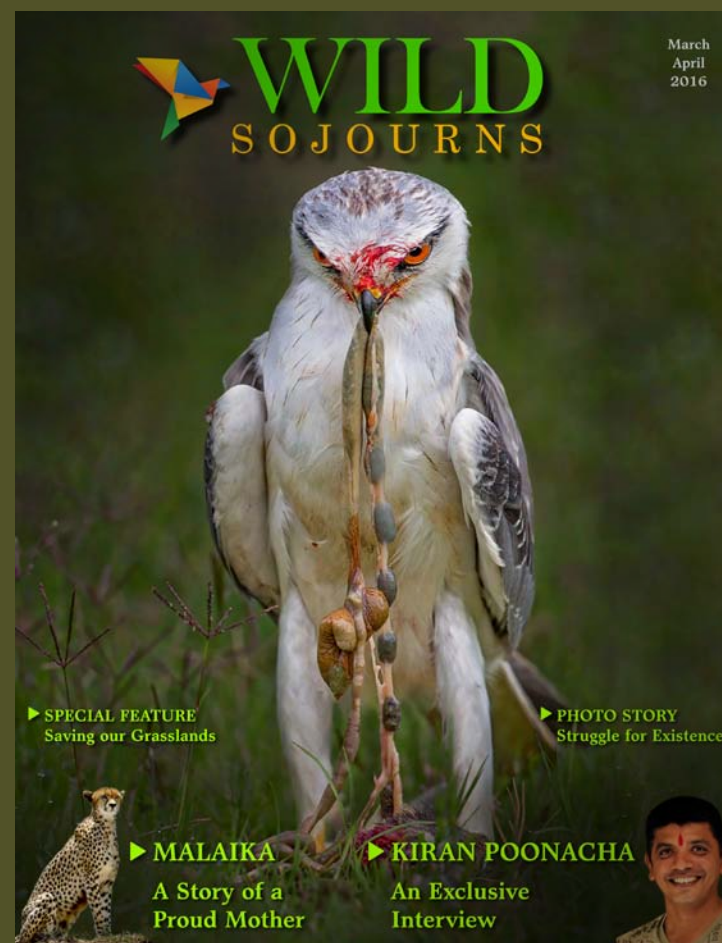
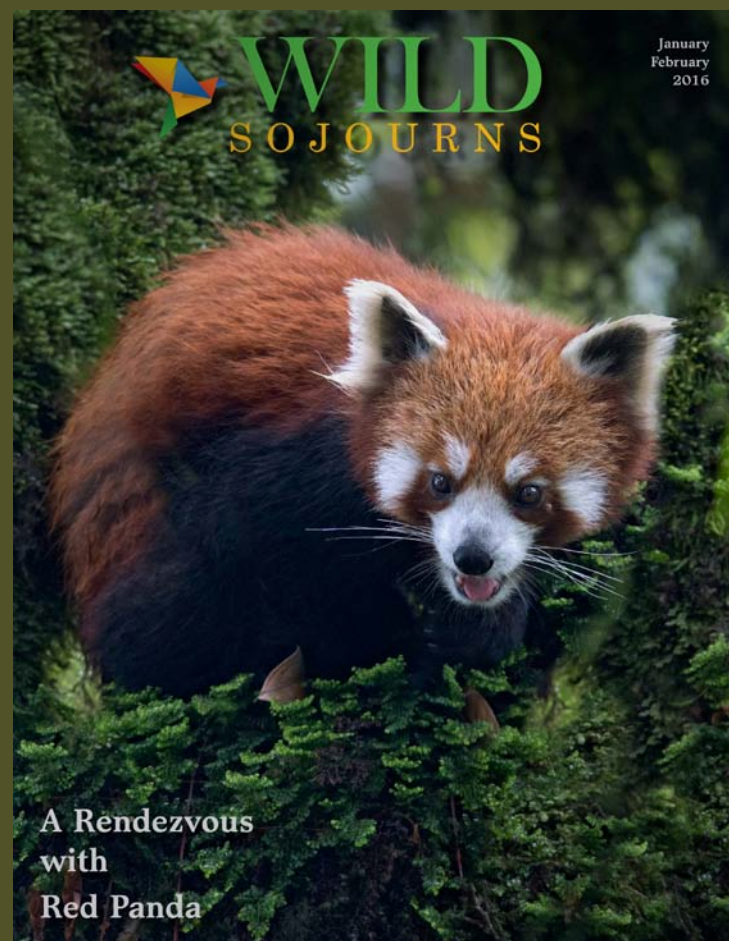
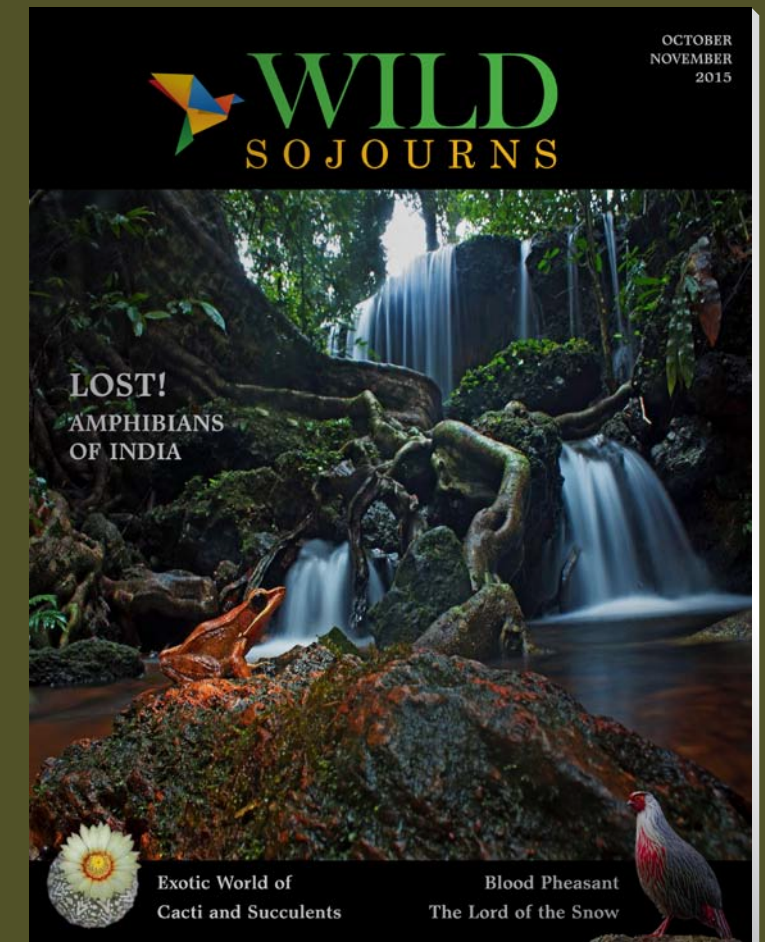




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