

P E I

EXPLORERS

DEC 2019 / JAN 2020

BIOLOGIST AROUND THE WORLD

By Dr. Peter Hudson

PUMA

By Jorge Cazenave



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©Nisha Purushothaman



©Sybil Wentzell

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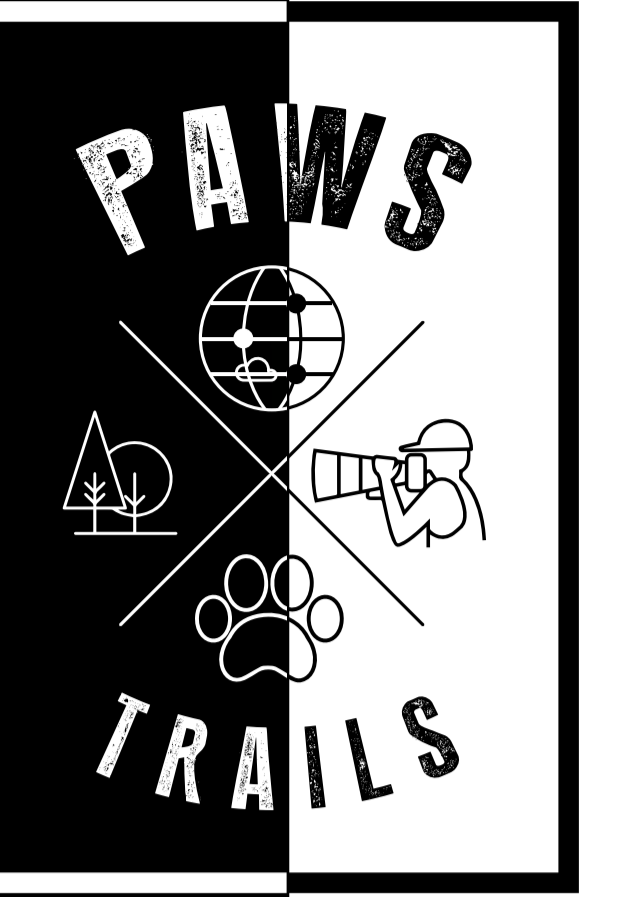
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Hank Tyler
Editor

Outstanding nature photography is a key element of PT Explorers. We select the best wildlife and landscape photographs to present along with articles about endangered species and conservation issues. We are grateful for the contributions of spectacular photographs by photographers who have spent years to capture unique images.

Paws Trails launched Nature Art Trails Institute in Dubai, UAE in November as a platform to promote art and nature photography. The Institute will offer training in wildlife photography and will host photography and art exhibitions.

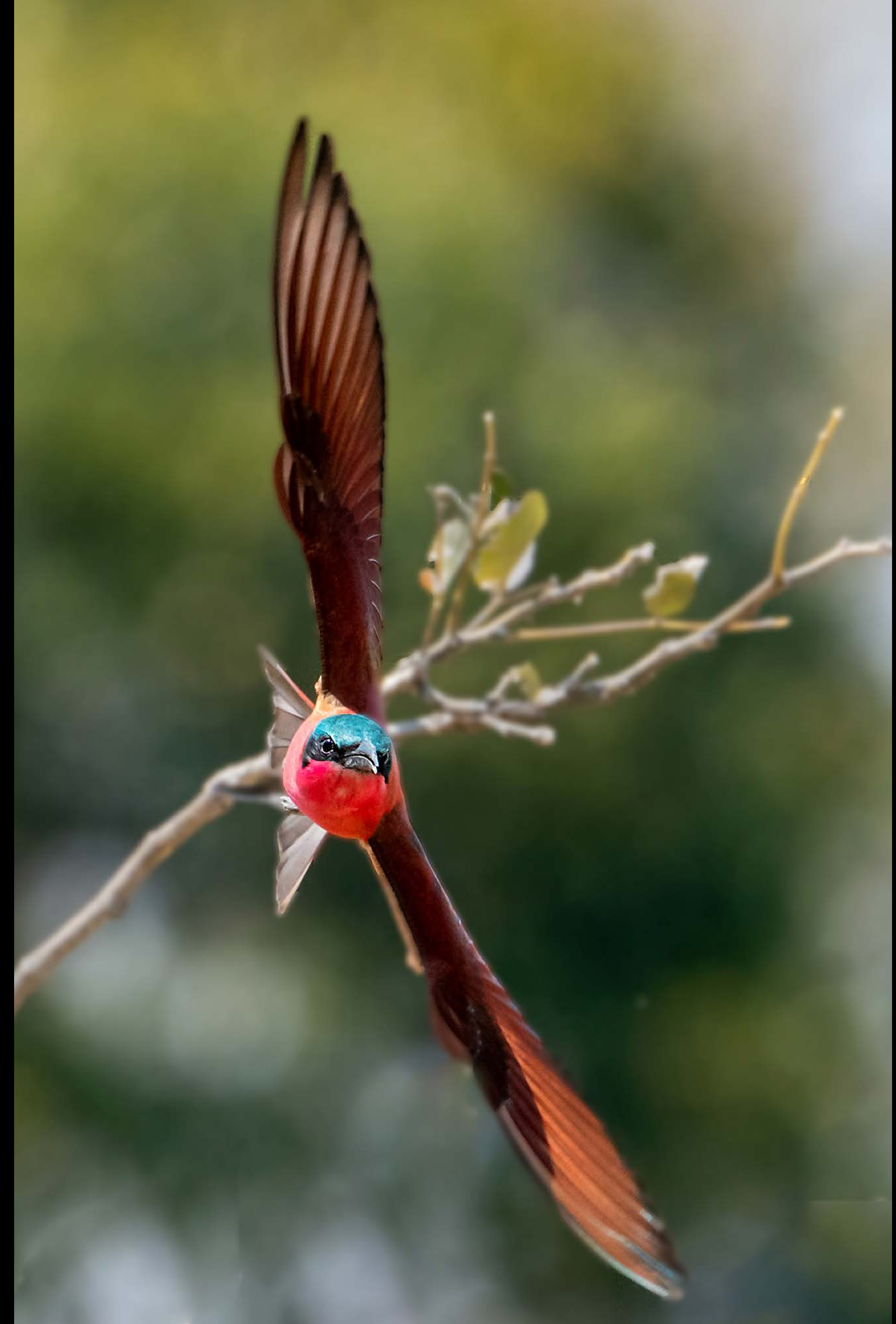
This volume continues with our tradition of offering a wide range of articles and photographs from around the world.

Our cover story and interview with Dr. Peter Hudson captures the story of a dedicated scientist with a passion for nature photography and a deep concern for our environment. His travels around the world visiting many environmental hotspots have given Peter the opportunity to capture stunning images.

From South America, Argentinian Cynthia Bandurek tells of her solo rainforest adventures exploring Ecuador and capturing macro images of insects. Jorge Cazenave, noted wildlife photographer writes of his experiences with Pumas in Patagonia.

Sybil Wentzell's stunning photos of sandpipers in the Bay of Fundy, Canada introduce us to the conservation story of thirty years of effort to protect critically significant wetlands and shoreline in North and South America for migrating and feeding shorebirds.

Artist Alison Nicholls tells us about her effort in Southern Africa to inspire wildlife art at the local level to stimulate local artists to become engaged in wildlife art as a profession.



PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Remya Warriar
Southern Carmine Bee - Eater
(*Merops nubicoides*)



EDITOR'S DEN

FOUNDERS' NOTE

NAT - Nature Art Trails - the newest PawsTrails initiative, opened its doors in the month of November. Located in Dubai, NAT is conceived as an art and photography institute, with an onus on nature and wildlife. The institute is located centrally in a prestigious address in Dubai, and aims to be the premiere institute in the region in its space.

We cordially invite all Dubaians to visit and take advantage of the various programs on offer here.

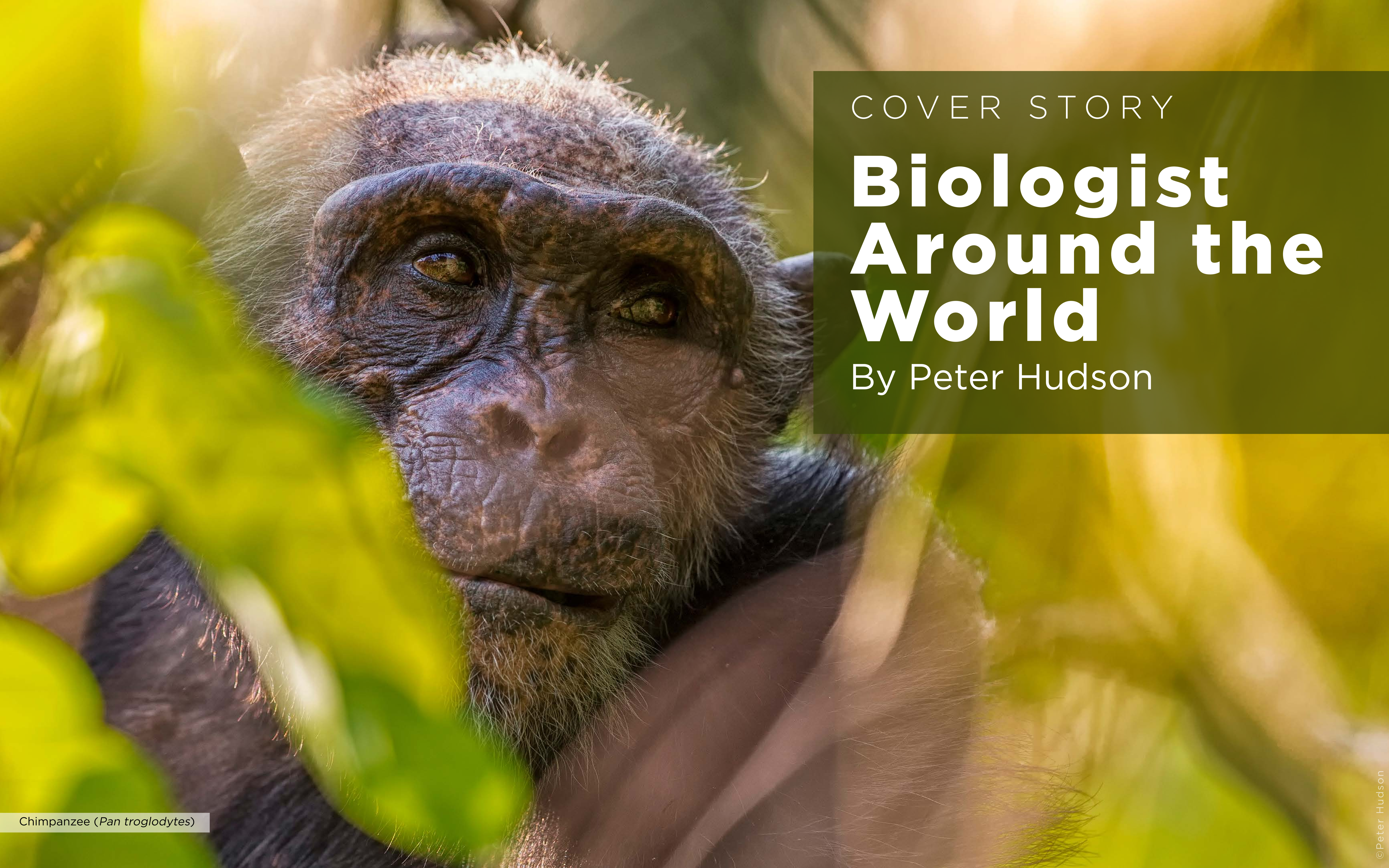
We aim to conduct an ongoing series of art and photographic exhibitions around this place. The first in the series will be on from the 15th of this month and will showcase the polar bear photographs from the Arctic. Through our exhibitions and various outreach programs, we intend to bring the amazing natural beauty and conservation issues from around the world to you, to inspire you to admire and protect nature. And, if you want to visit some of the exotic locales and eyeball these amazing creatures, why not enquire about the many PawsTrails tours that we offer. We can even do custom trips if you so desire.

The worldwide PawsTrails community is growing and we are receiving tremendous response in terms of photograph and article contribution. We thank all our contributors and volunteers for helping us make a difference in the world. Environment and Conservation is everyone's concern and communities should work together to ensure the wellbeing of mother earth and her many children. It is the objective of Pawstrails, to facilitate a caring and active community which contributes for the betterment of nature. Look out for more initiatives from us.
www.pawstrails.com

Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman

Founders - PT Explorers





COVER STORY

Biologist Around the World

By Peter Hudson

Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*)



Peter Hudson is a scientist, photographer and conservationist. He undertook his first scientific expedition to Africa at the age of 21 and has been a regular visitor ever since. Passionate about nature, he manages his own 36-hectare nature reserve in Pennsylvania which is home to bears, bobcats and other animals.

In his professional career, Peter is the Willaman Professor of Biology at Penn State University. The focus of his research has been the infectious diseases of wildlife and in particular how new diseases emerge. He has been running scientific studies on the wolves in Yellowstone, tortoises in the Mojave Desert and bighorn sheep in Idaho. He is currently involved in a major project in Australia investigating the viruses associated with bats.

Peter established a new global health institute at Penn State that seeks to develop the concept of One Health, whereby the future health of humans is dependent on that of the environment, livestock management and the conservation of wildlife. He is an adjunct Professor at The Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology based in Arusha, Tanzania and a Fellow of the Royal Society.

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Mexican Long-nosed Bat (*Leptonycteris nivalis*)

Thank you for joining us in our 20th edition of PT Explorers Peter! Would you please introduce yourself to our readers?

Thank you for the invitation, I have long been an admirer and supporter of Paws Trails so it is a great honour for me to be included in this edition.

I have been a photographer for more than 50 years and a biologist for even longer. Biology including the behaviour, population dynamics, ecology and conservation of living creatures has been my passion since my parents gave me a bird book on my 4th birthday. I have always tried to use my photographs to show the wonder and fascination of biology and to educate and illustrate my own research - I believe images in context can help educate and make people aware of the natural world. In my career as a research biologist I have undertaken work on multiple species including puffins, grouse, tortoises, bighorn sheep, wolves and even bats. My current research is on new and emerging disease that come from bats and mice, but I am also involved in a long-term study of wolves in Yellowstone. As a University Professor at Penn State I think I have the best job and life I could ever have imagined, and I also run my own little nature reserve in central Pennsylvania.

From a background of biology, we're curious to know how your photography journey began. Can you tell us a bit more?

My dad gave me his cast-off camera





Kermode Bear (*Ursus americanus kermodei*)

when I was 11 and I learnt black and white photography and darkroom skills at this early age. I was frustrated that my photos of animals were so weak and I saved up and bought my first Praktica 35mm SLR when I was 18 and made the mistake of buying the cheapest 135mm telephoto lens with a 1.4x converter. I used this on my first African trips to Ethiopia and the Congo in 1974 and got a few almost acceptable photographs of crocs and birds and also some of puffins during my doctoral studies. When I started working on grouse, I switched to the Olympus system, with the small and flexible OM1 and the OM2 but I never had the long reach lenses even though I started working on technique. Then I won a prize for my research and was given a Canon film camera and I bought a 300mm lens to go with it and I started taking better slide photos. In 1997, I experimented with digital and had the first Sony digital Mavica camera with 0.3MP (woohoo!) that used a 3.5inch floppy disk to store your images and a 10x built in zoom. That was an amazing camera and it was so nice to be free from film at last. I went on to the EOS D60 at 6MP in 2002 but still wasn't satisfied. Then one day I was in Yellowstone having trouble with my camera when a friend lent me a copy of "Outdoor Photographer" as night reading and by the end of that night I had a Canon 5D mk2 and a 100-400 lens ordered. That was the revolutionary digital camera for me, and I haven't looked back since. I still take film photographs and love street photography and flash.

Do you think you have a specific photography style?

I think I am still working on a consistent style and I think I have a collection of styles. I enjoy high-speed flash photography because that is so challenging but I also love black and white and take street photographs of dogs so that is another style. With my wildlife photography I am still using multiple techniques and approaches to capture informative images that I don't really see one dominant style. Three years ago I thought it was black & white of animals in the environment but then others are doing this so now I am not sure that I should have just one consistent style but strive for excellence - what do you think?

It seems like you've done your fair share of traveling. Of the various trips you have done, is there any place that you hold close to your heart?

It has to be Africa - I have been going there now for 45 years and every time I step off the plane I breathe in the air and the smell of dried grass and say to myself - Ahhhh Africa! I have had wonderful and sometimes scary trips into the bush where I have been caught up in battles, met despots like Mobutu, been attacked by youths and saved by elephants, seen hunger and disease, met the most generous people and yet, the wildlife always leaves me speechless with admiration. I have undertaken research and education in multiple countries, including the Baka people in what is now the Congo, the Danakil in Ethiopia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and Tanzania. I feel a strong passion and connection for the African bush.



White-booted Racket-tail (*Ocreatus underwoodii*)



White-booted Racket-tail (*Ocreatus underwoodii*)

What are some of your upcoming trips planned for the next year?

Well I thought I was about to go to Spain to photograph Iberian lynx using a research hide until an hour ago when they told me the hide had been washed away in a landslide, so that's cancelled I am afraid. In January I am back in Yellowstone for wolves and then onto my first trip to Bangladesh and I hope to photograph flying foxes and then visit Kaziranga. In February, a special trip to spend time with 2 female snow leopards

in Ladakh during which I am also hoping to photograph the enigmatic Pallas's cat. Later in the year I am back to Africa, Canada, France, Arizona and I hope to catch up with those Iberian Lynx again.

What are some photography tips that you can give to our readers who would like to venture into wildlife photography?

Become so familiar with your camera that you can focus on composition and catching a wildlife interaction at

the very moment it happens without worrying about settings. Portraits can be fine, but the exciting and interesting photos are really ones that show interactions between a predator and prey, a parent and offspring, a courtship display or fighting so focus on these. Personally, I get the most pleasure from watching wildlife, taking photographs and then quietly moving away and knowing that I have not disturbed the animals, even though they knew I was there. I get concerned when I think a photographer has disturbed an animal

unnecessarily.

Of the countless photographs you have taken, do you have an all-time favourite?

I do - I really like this infrared photograph I took of an elephant and offspring walking away from me. I see beautiful synchrony between the mother and the baby - both of them in step, their tails moving together and there is a strong connection I feel. I like the contrast in the skin texture and size

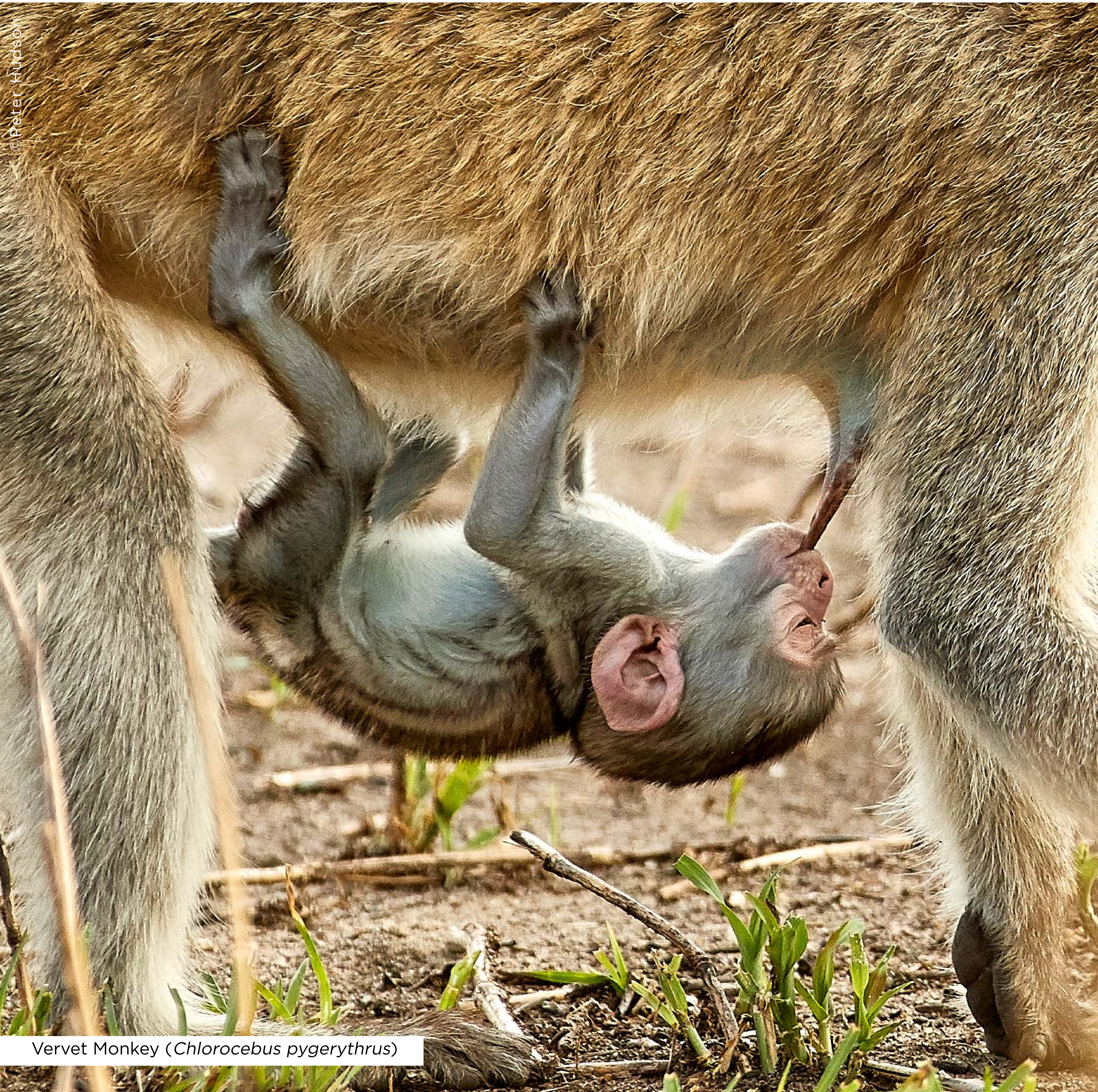


Lion (*Panthera leo*)

©Peter Hudson



Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*)



Vervet Monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*)

between the mother and the baby. No one else likes this image since it breaks all the rules – you can see no eye in the photo, and it is at the end of the day a butt shot! But I like it – that is the anarchist inside me.

Can you explain the difference between wildlife photography and conservation photography to our readers?

Wildlife photography is a record of a species or a biological interaction while conservation photography should capture an emotion where you feel a connection with the animal and a desire and need to protect it. The obvious conservation photographs are harrowing photographs of animals suffering but I believe photographs that leave you in awe of beauty and happy are also conservation photography.

If you could change one thing about the mind set of society in terms of photography, what would it be?

I am concerned about the multitude of photographs being posted on social media with comments which are either trivial or meaningless. I would like to change the mind set of the new wave of and persuade them to tell us what the photograph represents so we can learn from the way they see the world.

Do you have any specific principles that you apply to your work?

Honesty is really important – if your photo is of an animal in captivity, then say so – if you have doctored it in anyway, then say so and say if it was a setup in any way. A portrait of a snow leopard in a cage is a very different

photograph to one in the wild. I also want to spend more time with my images looking at new ways to be really creative.

How would you like to see the world in the next five years? What do you think we as a society can do to achieve that?

I would like to see widespread recognition by all that we are facing an environmental crisis and we must protect ourselves by protecting natural habitats, mitigate against climate change, stop all pointless persecution of animals like elephants and rhinos and while I am at it can we have a negative population growth of humans on this planet please? This can be achieved first through education and in particular a more concerted effort to ensure women are educated to a higher level, second by a deeper tolerance and respect, not only of each other but also the animals that share this planet with us and thirdly for everyone to take responsibility for their actions and the impact of those decisions.

In the era of technology and speaking of the future, what are your thoughts on social media and photography?

If I look back just a few years then I am astonished by the way the smart phone has dominated our lives – I really don't think we thought it would be this big 15 years ago and so I feel it is very difficult to predict where social media is going to go. It will be less typing and more videos and I think it needs to provide more in brain experience with smells and a presence. The wonderful aspect of social media is that we could use



Red-eyed Tree Frog (*Agalychnis callidryas*)



Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*)

it to change the behaviour of people for the better – much in the way Greta Thunberg has increased the visibility of climate change and I hope resulted in people changing their own behaviour. I hope we could also use social media to reach out to China and the Philippines to stop elephant poaching and the pointless destruction of pangolins – to stop habitat destruction and to improve our urban environment so wildlife can live alongside us.

Are you partial to any specific camera gear in your photography trips? If so, why?

I am very partial to a 15mm sigma diagonal wide angle to take photos of animals in their environment. It is small and cheap and special. I also love my Leica Monochrome – the only camera made for taking black and white photographs. I also have a soft spot for my sabre infrared trigger – so sturdy and useful.

What is the one thing you never leave the house without when heading out for a photography expedition?

I really like to think that I am going to see something today I have never seen before – and then I look for this thing so when I see something happen, I celebrate it so I guess I leave home with a hungry eye. If you meant a piece of kit, and I suspect this is what you did mean, then I always have my camera on a Sun Sniper strap – they are comfortable and fit the Really Right Stuff base Arca Swiss plate I have on every camera. Why don't manufacturers design the base of their cameras with an Arca Swiss plate?

Leafcutter Ant (*Atta*)





Blue-footed Booby (*Sula nebouxii*)



- that would make life so much easier.

Finally, is there anyone in the wildlife photography field you look up to for their work or has been an inspiration to you?

Dano Grayson - he isn't on the social media or big on the travel circuit, but he is a really an original photographer who understands how animals and cameras work and can capture images that are so different to what everyone else is getting. I have been out in the middle of the Arizona desert with him when a flash trigger breaks and he mends it with his teeth! He told me once he was so confident an ocelot was going to cross this river on a log that he lay there with a cover over him to capture images of it running towards him and it ran straight over his head and back. He is one of those guys who is so relaxed with animals he knows what they are going to do and does setups to capture beautiful images. He is now focussed on filming for the BBC and others.



Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*)



Arctic Fox (*Vulpes lagopus*) & Svalbard Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus*)



Arabian Oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*)



CONSERVATION

Shorebird Conservation in the Bay of Fundy, Canada

By Hank Tyler

Photographs: By Sybil Wentzell

Hank Tyler is an American zoologist and botanist who worked for Maine State government for 34 years on conservation project including natural areas, endangered species, lake management and recycling. For six years he was the forester for a privately owned natural areas open to the public.

In addition, art and sculpture are interwoven into Hank's life. Beginning in 1960 at the age of 15 he began wood sculpture of birds, and to this day he continues to sculpt birds.

**[instagram.com/harry.tyler.50/](https://www.instagram.com/harry.tyler.50/)
hanktylersculptor.com/**

New Brunswick nature photographer, Sybil Wentzell has been photographing the autumn shorebird migration for many years.





The Bay of Fundy is one of North America's most important autumn feeding areas for migrating shorebirds, especially Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Calidris pusilla*). Semipalmated means partially webbed foot. Located on the Atlantic coast between the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the Bay of Fundy has some of the largest tidal amplitudes in the world - 13 meters to 16 meters at spring high tides. Low tide exposes extensive food rich mud flats where the shorebirds feast on a wide variety of marine invertebrates. These fabulous mudflat areas are located at the northern end of the bay

By mid-August shorebirds have completed their breeding season in the Northern Hemisphere's arctic, and have begun their migration south to their wintering grounds in the Southern Hemisphere. Tens of thousands of shorebirds spread out over the extensive red mudflats at low tide, and at high tide the birds cluster in dense groups along the rocky shoreline. These birds spend a week or more feeding and fattening up for their one non-stop long flight to South America. They fly over the Atlantic Ocean for over 2,500 miles (4,500 km) during several days before reaching South America totally exhausted.

Other shorebirds, the Semiplamated Plovers (*Charadrius semipalmatus*), a few Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*), Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*), Short billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*), and Sanderlings (*Calidris alba*) also visit this staging area and feed in these mudflats. However, they are much less common than the dominant Semipalmated

Sandpiper. An estimated 2,000,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers feed and fatten up at the Bay of Fundy - about 75% of the world's population of this one shorebird species.

The amphipod crustacean (*Corophium volutator*) is extremely abundant in the mudflats and is the major food for the shorebirds. The extraordinary low tides of the upper bay expose expansive brownish sand and clay mudflats that are rich in marine invertebrates.

Flocks of sandpipers fly in a distinctive, synchronized group known as "murmuration". From a distance, these flocks look like swarms of insects swooping up and down in the sky. Upon closer inspection one sees tightly packed groups of birds flying in an intricately coordinated pattern. Generally, these murmuration flocks contain thousands of birds of one species as they swirl and swoop in the sky and over water.

Murmuration requires incredible coordination among all the birds in the flock. Often there are several flocks swirling and swooping in the sky at the same time. Murmuration provides protection for individual birds from predators such as hawks and falcons when they are part of a large flock. Beside sandpipers, other bird species that are often seen in murmuration flight are the Starlings, Dickcissels, Budgies and Pigeons.

During the past forty years conservation groups have formed to focus conservation and education attention on the Bay of Fundy's key role in the





© Sybil Wintzell

© Sybil Wintzell



© Sybil Wentzell

lives of shorebirds. In 1982 the region's wetlands received Ramsar designations. In 1987, Mary's Point Bird Sanctuary consisting of 12 square km of wetlands and mudflats was incorporated into the Western Hemispheres Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). In 2007 the area was designated a Biosphere Reserve. The Canadian Wildlife Service manages the Shepody Bay National Wildlife Area, and operates the Shorebird Center that provides an educational focal point to

many birdwatchers visiting in August.

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network was founded in May 1986 with the designation of Delaware Bay, United States. The Reserve's goals are to protect the most important feeding and resting areas for mixed flocks of shorebirds migrating north during the Northern Hemisphere spring in May, and for the autumn migration south in August and September.

There are 106 sites in the network from 17 participating countries. There are more than 400 participating government wildlife agencies and NGOs protecting and managing over 38 million acres of shorebird habitat.

Several Internationally Significant WHSRN sites in South America are Salina Solar Los Olivitos' 7,482 acres in Venezuela; Bahia de San Antonio's 41,760 acres, and Estuario del Rio Gallegos' 10,625 acres in Argentina.

The northern part of the Bay of Fundy has several large bays and wetland areas that are significant shorebird feeding and resting areas. Protection is being expanded to the Cumberland Basin in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and Cobequid Bay in Nova Scotia.

Conservation measures have increased to protect the feeding and resting shorebirds. For decades at high tide one could sit on the sandy beaches at Mary's Point among the resting shorebirds. Now access is restricted to the rocky beaches where the Semipalmated Sandpipers rest. Nature photographers now need longer lenses to capture the constant movement of flocks of shorebirds.

New Brunswick nature photographer, Sybil Wentzell has been photographing the autumn shorebird migration for many years:

"As a nature lover and wildlife photographer, nothing affects me quite like the arrival of the shorebirds, a life force bursting onto our Fundy shores each summer. To capture the beauty of

their aerial displays and their vulnerability during rest is an emotional experience."

"There's a palpable excitement in the air when the first wave of shorebirds arrive here on the Bay of Fundy from their breeding grounds in the Arctic. They are expected visitors, after all.

"I love to photograph the birds in celebration of their remarkable migration and also for their artistry in the skies, dazzling onlookers with their spectacular choreography."

"These shorebirds are a wonder to observe, photograph and contemplate. During roosting at high tide direct beach access is restricted. However, there's a wide range of photographic opportunity from the erected viewing platforms where you can still, respectfully, get quite close to the flocks. High tide and its approach is a critical time for the shorebirds. It's the only time they can rest and it's often interrupted by falcon predation. Once the tide recedes, exposing the mudflats once again, feeding resumes, day or night. Protection of our visiting shorebirds is hugely important on our shores and much effort is exercised to leave them undisturbed with the hope of enabling them to continue many future extraordinary and successful migrations."

Long time New Brunswick environmentalist's reports that significant progress has been made during the last two decades on the conservation of key wetlands and mudflats in the upper reaches of the Bay of Fundy. Wetlands have been purchased by the Canadian







© Sybil Wentzell

Wildlife Service. Wildlife management officers have implemented rules for visitors to Mary's Point. Years ago, visitors could walk out onto the sandy beaches during an approaching high tide, and sit and wait for the shorebirds to fly to the beach, land and walk around visitors and photographers. Now, visitors and

photographers are prohibited from going onto these sandy beaches at high tide. The beaches are now reserved for shorebird resting and sleeping areas.

David Christie, retired ornithologist from the New Brunswick Museum recently commented "during the past three

decades Canada has implemented significant conservation accomplishments for resting and feeding areas of migrating shore birds."

The Bay of Fundy is a world-class natural area with many impressive natural features and species -Atlantic

Puffins, Razor-billed Auks, Right Whales, rocky shores, and of course shorebirds. Visitors with cameras to the Bay of Fundy region in Canada are never disappointed. The second and third weeks of August are peak times for viewing and photographing migrating shorebirds.



SPECIES

Resilience and Stealth: the Puma's Recipe for Success

(Puma concolor)

By Jorge Cazenave



W

Wildlife photographer, naturalist and expedition guide. He's made innumerable trips throughout the world, focusing on wildlife and horseback rides. He has worked in the Travel industry for over 30 years

Jorge has worked as fixer for BBC, Nat. Geo and ZED among others. His photographs have been published in several scientific and commercial publications around the world, such as Quercus (Spain) and Patagon Journal (Chile).

www.jorgecaze.com





Puma, Mountain Lion, Cougar, Florida Panther, are all names for *Puma concolor*, the second largest cat in the American continent.

The Spaniards, when exploring the different corners, a few centuries ago, were surprised to find only females of the species, as they expected the males, to have manes, like the African Lion. Of course, it took them no time to find they were wrong. Anyway, the puma became the American “lion” and the Jaguar, the “tiger”. Their average weight is 65 kg for males and 35 kg for females. They

can live up to 15 years and reach sexual maturity at approx. 18 months, although young males might not mate until they are twice that age. The smallest ones can be found in warm weather and the larger ones in the colder areas. They can jump 12 meters horizontally and six vertically, making it a powerful hunting machine. They come equipped with very sharp claws, and large canines, which are its mortal weapon. They do not hunt in packs and there is no collaboration between them. A female with large cubs will also hunt by herself, and the cubs learn by imitation. Usually their first kills are

smaller or newborn animals.

Their prey is very variable, and it includes the largest mammals (unfortunately also livestock), birds, rodents and insects. In some areas, its main prey is the European Hare, which was introduced approximately 80 years ago into South America.

Their hunting techniques vary but they are great stalkers and ambushers. They are very fast in short sprints but will not engage in long chases. This top predator's range is one of the

largest in the world, as it can be found all the way to the Yukon in the North, to the Magellan Strait in the South. Its adaptability allows it not only to live, but also to thrive in completely different environments.

It can be found in the tropical forests, in the deserts, in the snow-covered mountains, in the 12,000 feet highlands of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Peru, the steppes of Patagonia. Literally everywhere in the continent with the exception of Tierra del Fuego and North of the Arctic Circle. If I had to bet, I'd say









that with the climate change, it will soon be found in the Arctic too.

The Puma shares some of its territory with the Jaguar, in the tropical and sub-tropical areas, Grizzly Black Bear and wolves in North America, but it is the apex predator in the South of South America.

Depending on the environment, and of course, prey availability, their individual ranges can be very small, sharing territory, and sometimes kills with other, or they can cover hundreds of kilometres by themselves.

Females give birth to an average of 3.5 cubs that usually stay with their mother for over a year. They start sharing her prey when they are just a couple of months old, but continue nursing for over six months. Females tend to share and/or overlap territories with their mothers, and usually males, are either killed or chased out of their mother's territory by a dominant male. Sometimes, the dominant male will kill the cubs to defend its territory. Young males are the colonizers of new territories as they move out of their mother's area. As they go into new territories, they run into conflict with ranchers and urban areas, so the number of adult males is significantly lower than

the females. Some of the females, as their territories get crowded, do the same, and since they breed all year around and have a very good weaning rate, if not bothered, they can rebound into some areas where they were wiped out, in just a few years. Puma numbers are down, and they are considered of least concern by the IUCN Red list of endangered species.

The main reason for the puma's resilience is that it is able to hide in plain sight. Pumas prefer the pre-dawn and dusk lights to hunt and avoid humans whenever possible. The second reason is that they are willing to live where very humans, do, whether it is a tropical forest

or a cold desert highland. The very few incidents with humans, considering that we are present in all of its range, have been usually triggered by our behavior, as we run past them unaware of their presence, as this provokes its hunting behavior. If seen, it will avoid conflict, and will run away; hey, most of the times.

As I am telling this story from my experience, do not take this for granted. If you see a puma, and it is not moving away from you, please, do not behave as prey and run away. Make eye contact, make yourself bigger and do not walk away unless you can keep your eyes on it. In puma territory, don't let your children





run in front or behind you.

After some facts, I will get a bit personal, as pumas are one of my favorite animals to spot and photograph, and this for me means Patagonia. I love Patagonia and especially during the winter. Days are short, the light is beautiful and although it is cold, the wind, a daily presence during other seasons, sometimes gives me a break.

Looking for pumas, getting out of the truck and stepping on frosted grass, hard ground and freezing temperatures, before sunrise, is the time when I am really happy. It is very hard to describe what I feel but I guess the atmosphere sort of wakes up a primitive part of me, that lies dormant, that keeps to itself when sitting by the pool or shopping for groceries when I am home.

The day usually starts driving around, in a remote part of Patagonia, and if I am really lucky, I can find a puma to follow. If I am not, then I grab my gear, some food, a backpack, and of course a sturdy monopod, my weapon of choice in case a puma tries to get frisky. Usually, I start walking up and down the hills, trying to find tracks, a fresh kill, or any signs of the puma, with the help of a good pair of binoculars. A fresh kill usually means that the puma is very close, especially if it is a big mammal, as it will eat and defend its kill from other puma and other animals such as Foxes, Condors and Caracaras.

Pumas tend to be active until the sun is high enough for their prey to spot them easily and this is when I would rather find them. A female with young cubs is always





good, as like any infants, the cubs play during parts of the day. The female leaves them behind in order to hunt, and calls them to lead them to the kill or to change dens. Of course, they have different personalities and experiences, so some are very confident, and will approach or not avoid you, walking by you, without paying much attention. Others are careful, cautious (males tend to be more skittish) and will start moving away from you even if you are several hundred meters away. This, of course, makes every approach a challenge.

In southern Patagonia, one of their main prey is the Guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*), a relative of the Llama. In the winter, they tend to concentrate in large herds, as they come down from their summer grazing areas. Large herds mean more sentries, and the alarm call of the Guanaco can be heard for several miles. If you hear them, you know that they are looking at their predator. When they are spotted, the puma starts moving without hiding themselves so it is easier for me to see them. However, the “ideal” puma is the one that I have seen before the Guanaco has. When this happens, adrenaline kicks in, as there is always a chance of catching some action, whether it is stalking, a chase or a successful hunt. This sounds very easy but very few have been able to capture this on camera, and unfortunately, I am not one of them! I have been close a few times, witnessed unsuccessful chases and stalks, or arrived a couple of minutes after they made the kill. I am still looking for that moment when the predator springs on top of the prey. Maybe next time, because, there will be a next time.



CUB'S CORNER

The Little Masai Warrior

By Brian Tira



CUB'S CORNER

EXPLORERS

CUB'S CORNER



Brian Tira, a 14 year old, was born and raised in Kenya. A scion of the Masai tribe Brian's childhood was practically in and around the Savannah of Mara. His father is into photography and wildlife conservation and hence Brian was exposed to both wildlife and photography at a very young age.

He picked up photography after he got a camera at age four and has not looked back since. He has been photographing the wildlife at Mara for a decade now. He has improved leaps and bounds over the years and is an avid wildlife photographer now raising awareness for conservation and his tribe.

Some of his work can be seen at [instagram.com/brian.tira/](https://www.instagram.com/brian.tira/)

I was always fascinated with photography and cameras. The magic that they created used to keep me spellbound at a very tender age. I started photographing when I turned four in the year 2009. It was around this time that my father started explaining the basics of handling a camera. He instilled the value of patience required in photography in me very early. The first ever camera that I was given was a Fuji Film camera. It was my prized possession. I kept using it regularly, photographing whatever I could learning the basics one by one. I started realising



© Brian Tira

that there is a lot more to making a good photograph than just looking through the viewfinder and clicking. I was delighted with my initial gear and quite proud of it too. I showed it off to all my friends. At that time when all my mates were passionate about football and other games, I was always running around with my camera. It was later that I saw a photographer using a very sophisticated camera - a Canon 7D with a very long lens. My curiosity knew no bounds as I wanted to know more about that gear. I subsequently found out that the lens

was a 600 mm one. That camera and lens became a dream for me. I was obsessed about getting one and after repeatedly requesting my father he finally bought me a Canon 7D and a 400 mm lens. When I first started using it all the images came out bad and not as expected. I then realised that there was a lot to learn. I was taught the different settings and I worked hard to learn them. It's a difficult task to master all the facets of a professional DSLR camera but I have learned a lot and most of my pictures are far better than the earlier ones.







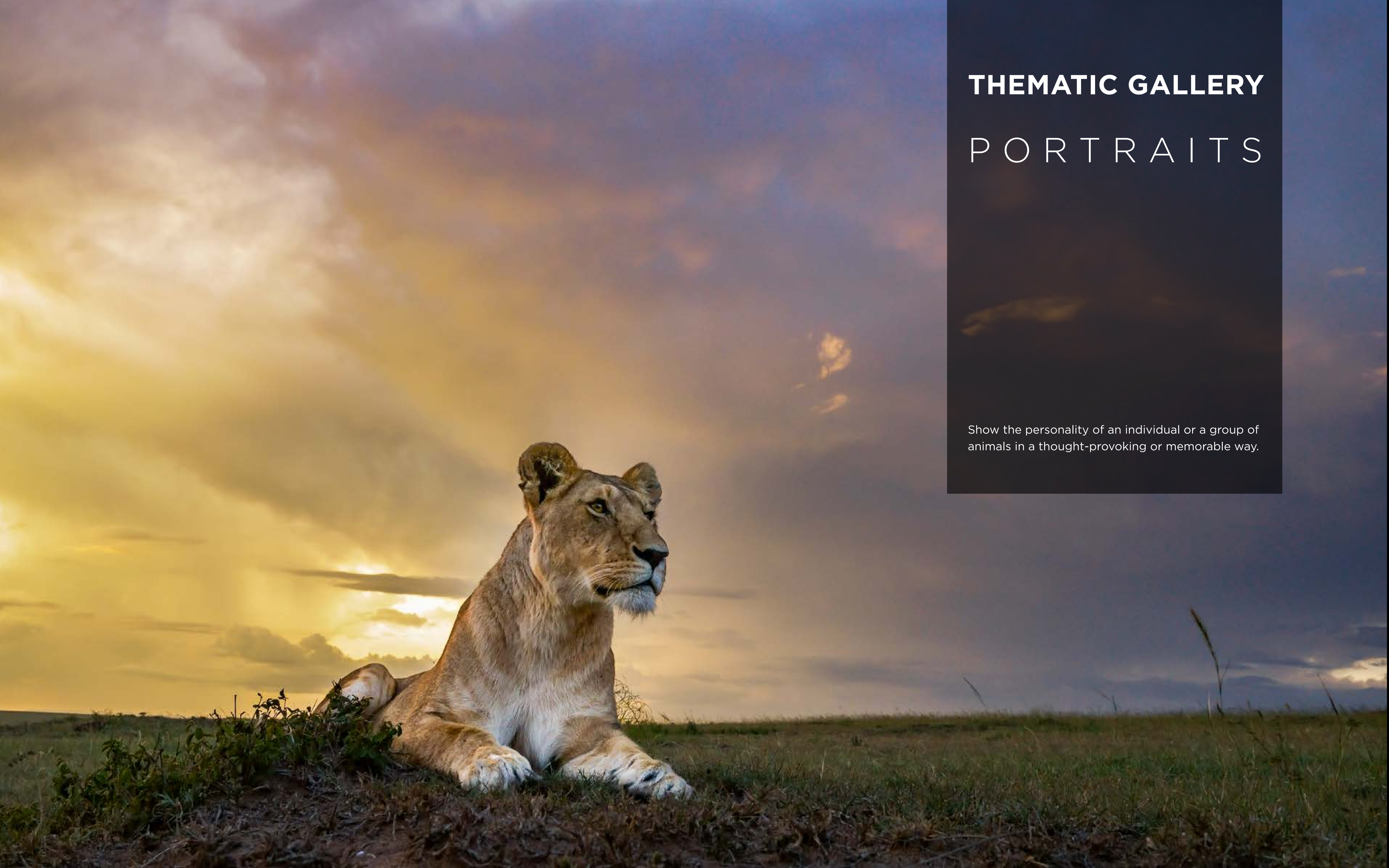












THEMATIC GALLERY

PORTRAITS

Show the personality of an individual or a group of animals in a thought-provoking or memorable way.



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Nandhagopan Potti Rajan

Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS

Manan Parekh

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Diana Rudenko

Black-and-white Colobuses (Colobus)

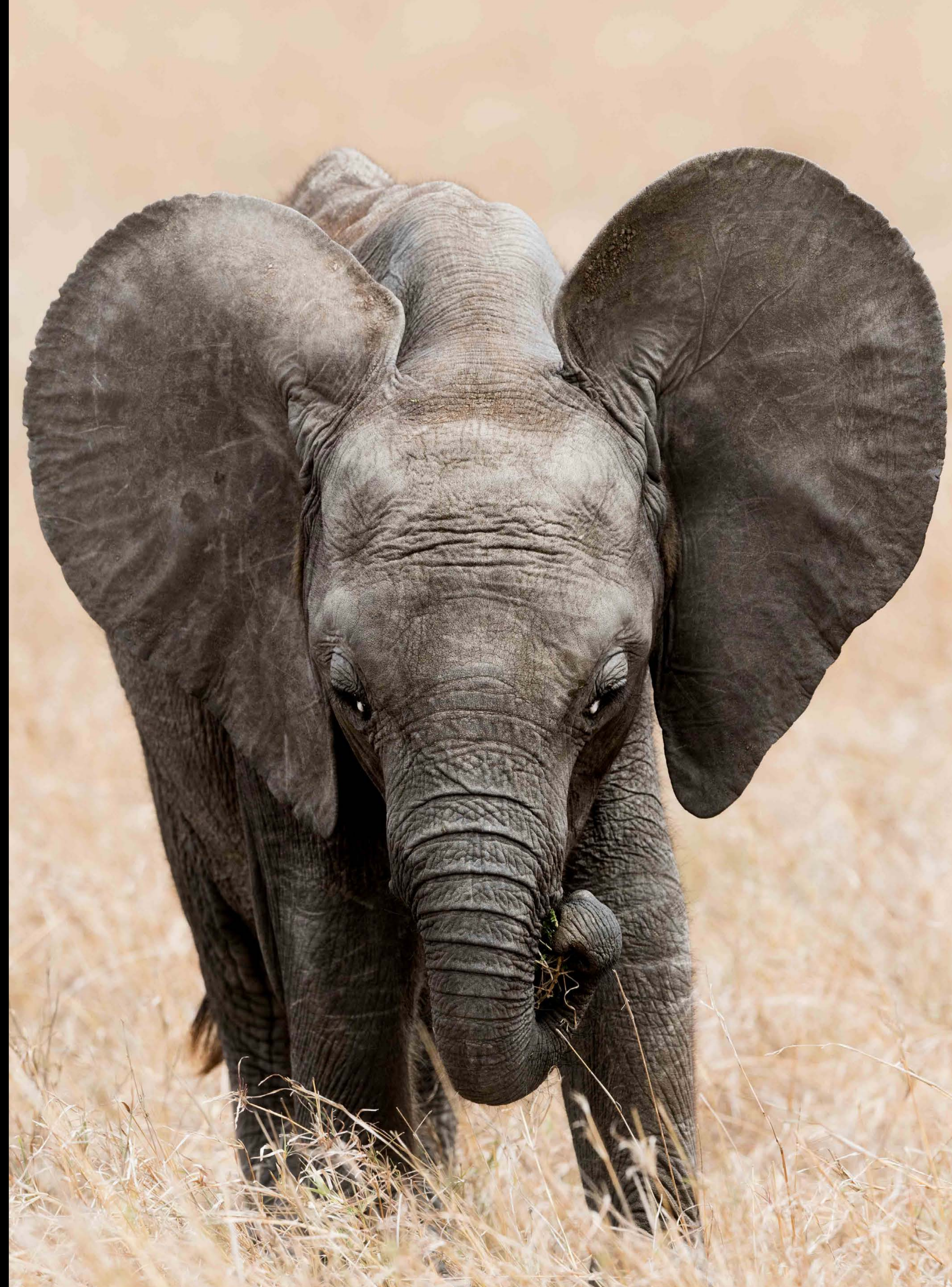


THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Amardeep Singh

Sinai Agama (*Pseudotrapelus sinaitus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Athira Mohan Krishnan

African Elephant (*Loxodonta*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Ganesh Namasivayam

Hoopoes (*Upupidae*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Prasanna Hunswadkar

Giraffe (*Giraffa*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Pavan ML

Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



EXPLORERS

Nili Gudhka

Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Arindam Halder

Rhesus Macaque (*Macaca mulatta*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Yashwanth Pavanan

Vervet Monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Amith Krish

Lion (*Panthera leo*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Alok Katkar

Gray Langur (*Semnopithecus*)

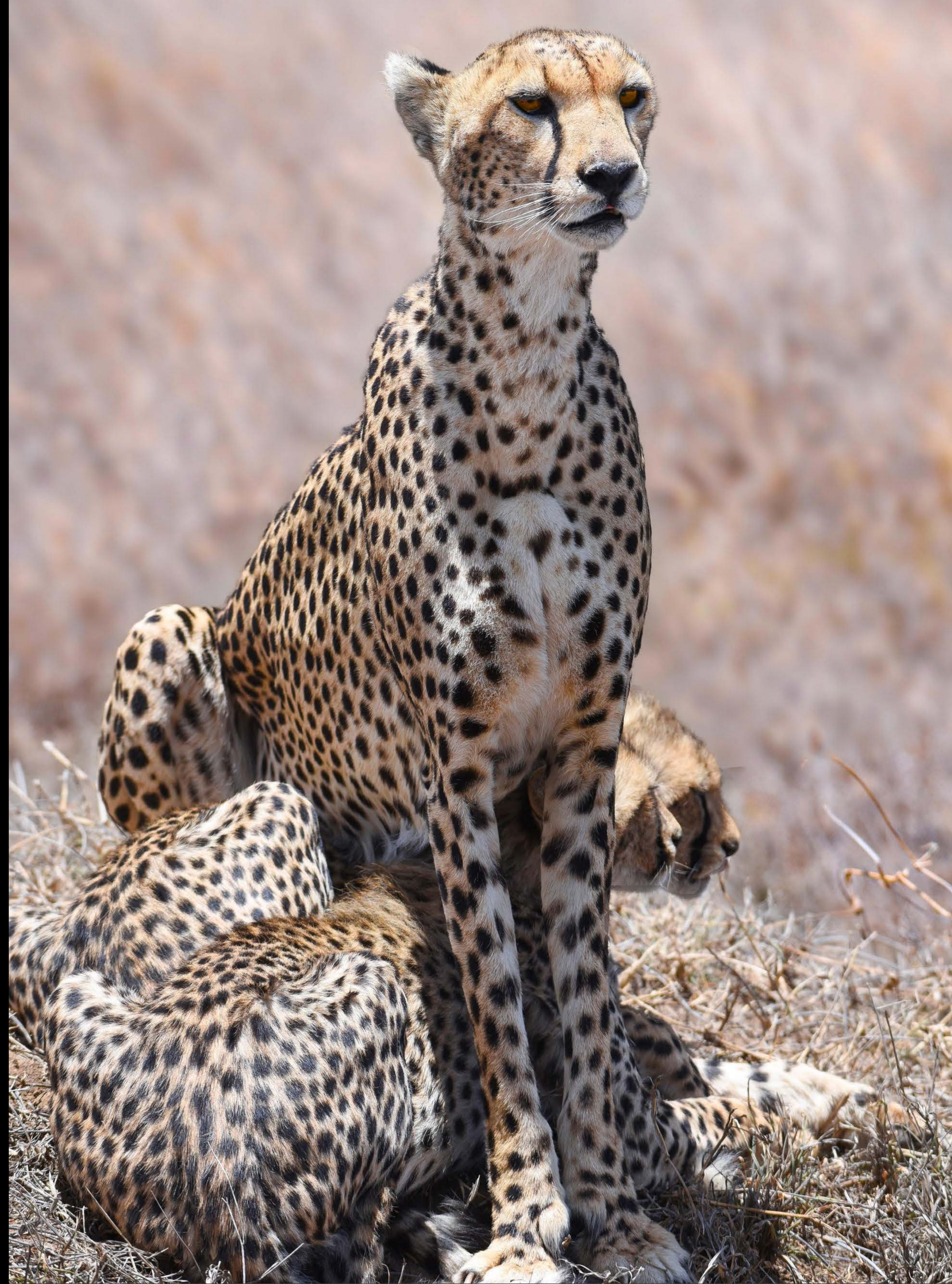


THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Imran Awan

Waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Ori Ventura Wiesman

Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Vikas Datta

Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Nandhagopan Potti Rajan

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



EXPLORERS

Surya Narayan Mohapatra

Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Remya Warriar

Honey badger (*Mellivora capensis*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Siddharth Patel

African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Pavan ML

Changeable hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - PORTRAITS



Tilak Raj

Lion (*Panthera leo*)



THROUGH THE LENS

5 STARS OF MASAI MARA

By Nisha Purushothaman

© Nisha Purushothaman

THROUGH THE LENS





An avid traveler and photographer, Nisha Purushothaman is one who firmly believes that people need more awareness about the planet and should travel and see the already fragile eco-system first hand and contribute their part in conserving the earth's resources.

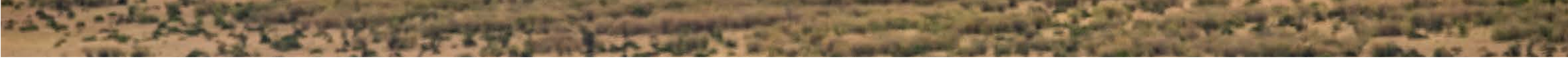
She loves to be defined as a naturalist, conservationist photographer. She is a five times finalist in Nature History Museum - London's Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. Her works and articles have been published in various international publications. She is the co-founder of Paws Trails Explorers and NAT Institute.

**[facebook.com/NishasPhotography](https://www.facebook.com/NishasPhotography)
[instagram.com/nisha.purushothaman](https://www.instagram.com/nisha.purushothaman)
<http://nishas.info>
pawstrails.com**

This fascinating coalition of the five male Cheetahs was formed in The Masai Mara towards the end of December 2016. This is the largest male alliance in the history of Masai Mara. They have naturally become the center of attraction for the media, researchers and tourists in no time.

In the last three years I have seen them in each of my Masai Mara expeditions. So much so that if any of the guests on tour with me did not insist to stay and see them, I started avoiding them. The main reason being that more than half the tourists in Mara at any given time would be floating around these five cheetahs.





Lately they have become extremely bold and innovative with their hunting strategy. This year during the migration I saw them walking among thousands of wildebeests, one after another, as if they are satiated and had no plans to hunt, when suddenly in a fraction of a second, they make a turn, and in no time, two kills and two wildebeests end up becoming the feast. They moved fast and hardly kept anything for the scavengers, finishing everything as fast as they could just leaving the skin and bones behind.

Once the feast is over they often look for nearby water bodies to quench their thirst. It's a visual treat to see them in line drinking water. If it's a big meal that they have consumed, then its sleeping or

relaxing time for a day or two.

In this November, we spent two days with them. As it was not migration time, there were not many wildebeests around. The first day we spotted them in the rain targeting a topi with its young fawn. Both of the topi turned out to be extremely lucky, and managed to escape.

Frequently in these kinds of situations there is bit of bullying that occurs among them. I was waiting for some action, and as expected, things heated up and two of them got into a flying fight in the rain. As usual one cheetah was on the scene playing a mediators role and brought things under control.

Once the irritabilities got sorted out, they rubbed their nose and necks, lied down for a while before continuing the journey. By then it was time for us to wind up the day's activities too.

The next morning we were with the Black Rock pride; three lionesses and eight cubs. It was amazing to watch them playing on and around the rocks; the cubs giving a very hard time for their mothers. It had been a dream for me to see a lioness holding a cub and walking towards me, and this time around that dream turned into a reality right in front of my eyes. After that they moved into the bush once the sun moved upwards, and we moved from there.

That's when we spotted the five stars again. They were targeting a group of resident wildebeests. It was a long wait. The moment the wildebeest spotted the Cheetahs' presence, they started to run away. This cycle repeated again and again. In this scenario, we had two choices: take a chance to go for lunch and come back, or skip lunch and wait for the action.

We opted for the second one. Though it took hours for the Cheetah to get into action mode, we got a chance to witness the full sequence and managed to document it too. I have seen them hunting many times before, and often it takes a maximum of three to five minutes. But this time it took them more than 20





©Nisha Purushothaman



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minutes to kill the wildebeest. The bizarre part was that, two of cheetahs got hold of the neck, one of them started to eat it from the back of the front leg and another one from the back of the back leg, while the fifth one was watching the surroundings. It was not at all an easy task for the cheetahs to manage the wildebeest for almost 15 minutes before

it started to slow down. I felt sad, but at the end of the day that's nature.

I was using a Nikon D5 along with a 400mm F2.8 and as second body Nikon D850 and 70-200mm. For the hunt I was using 400mm which has an amazing focus tracking; every moment of the

hunt was documented in a perfect and controlled manner.

By then the vultures, foxes and hyenas started entering the scene. Thankfully it was a single hyena - comparatively a smaller one - and the cheetah chased him away in no time. It looks like he got

a bit scared, then waited for his turn at a distance.

After an hour's time we spotted a young male lion in a distance. Then all the eyes moved towards the lion. We expected more drama. The lion looked a bit suspicious about the full scene from a



©Nisha Purushothaman



©Nisha Purushothaman

distance. Then he sat and watched them remotely for a while. The cheetahs were conscious too. But they kept eating till they finished as much as possible.

By then the lion had gained a bit more of confidence and started walking towards the cheetahs, and they ran away in a fraction of a second. Before the lion reached near the carcass, the vultures and the rest of the scavengers covered the scene and the lion walked away.

That's when our guide, John rushed from there and all he said is "look at the rainbow". There was a beautiful rainbow formation and the cheetahs were right below that. It was just for a short span, but we still managed to get couple of shots.

I've got a lot more stories to share from the six-day long safari, but I'm saving that for another edition.



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TRAVELOGUE

Ecuador. A land of biodiversity

By Cynthia Bandurek





Weevil (*Brentus sp*)



C

Cynthia Bandurek is an Argentinian Biologist (Ecology), Field Naturalist, Nature photographer and wildlife artist. Devoting herself to Conservation Projects, Cynthia has worked for more than eleven years at the Argentine Museum of Natural Sciences 'Bernardino Rivadavia'.

She is now working at Darwinion Botanical Institute - CONICET. Author of the Book: "The world of small, An approach to the universe of arthropods from an artistic, visual, and evolutionary perspective."

Cynthia is PT Explorers' Contributing Editor for South America.

<https://cynthiabandurek.com>

https://www.instagram.com/cynthiabandurek_artphotography/





I have a special feeling for tropics, they are literally an open laboratory where you can discover the incredible ways creatures find to complete their cycles of life.

This year, I chose Ecuador to explore and photograph its treasures hidden in the rainforest. I travelled alone and made arrangements to stay with local Ecuadorian families, in July 2019.

Ecuador, the land of four worlds, is one of the countries with more natural variety per square kilometer. Its four worlds are: Amazon; Andes with its Chocó Forest and its moorlands; the Pacific coast; and the incredible Galápagos Islands.

Ecuador is not only diverse in its nature with 8 % of animals and 10% of plant species of all the world but also in its culture with 13 indigenous nationalities. I experienced two of the four Ecuadorian worlds - the Chocó Forest and the high Amazon Rainforest.

Chocó forest.

Chocó is a neo-tropical biogeographic region located from the region east of Panama, through the Pacific coast of Colombia and the coast of Ecuador, to the northwestern corner of Peru.

The high rainfall, the tropical condition and its isolation (separation of the Amazon by the Andes Mountains) have contributed to make the biogeographic region of Chocó one of the most diverse in the world since its diversity is very large: 9,000 species of vascular plants, 200 mammals, 600 birds, 100 reptiles and 120 amphibians. There is a high level of endemism - approximately 25% of plant and animal species.

My experience in the Chocó Forest.

The first place I visited in the Chocó

Forest was Pachijal region (Western Piemontano forest natural region) and I stayed for ten days at Pachijal Town, a small and beautiful place in the middle of the jungle. The whole region of Pachijal River was designated as Protected Area, in 2012.

I had the fortune to stay at Nestor's family house, and it was an incredible experience to share time with this beautiful, humble and generous people, learn about their culture and listen to their history; so different from mine, but with big values about life. Now they are my family.

This zone is about 500 meters above sea level, wet, and exuberant rainforest. I explored the jungle at day and at night looking for fauna to photograph, sometimes with Nestor and sometimes with his sister and his brother, Jacqueline and Andrés. I fell in love with this place, this town, its nature, its landscapes and its people. Time runs in a different way, and I love that; I love the slow pace in their lives.

I am fascinated by arthropods and frogs and Pachijal turned out to be an amazing place to photograph them. One of my goals in Ecuador was to find and photograph the incredible biodiversity of tree hoppers, with those amazing and strange designs. I was able to find some of them, as *Membracis sp*, *Alchisme grossa*, *Entylia corinata*.

Among frogs, during my nocturnal hikes I was able to find and photograph, the beautiful Crystal frog like *Esparadana prosoblepon*, and others like *Boana picturatus*, some *Pristimantis*.

Treehopper (*Cladonata machinula*)



Andean Snail-Eater (*Dipsas andiana*)



Tropical flat snake (*Siphlophis compressus*)



After ten days in the Chaco, I ascended to the Western Montane Forest at 1,500 meters above sea level near Nanegalito Town.

It is amazing to see how the ecosystems change with the height, the reason why Ecuador is so diverse; there are lots of different environmental conditions in a small surface. I stayed at Guaycapi Reserve for four days, photographing mainly birds, especially hummingbirds. Ecuador has more than 130 species of hummingbirds.

Then I arrived at the most popular town in the Choco Region, Mindo: a small town located in a valley at 1,200 meters above sea level, with its magnificent cloud forest. Famous for its high diversity of birds – about 500 species and more than 170 species of orchids – it's also the zone with more plant endemism in the world. Nowadays, Mindo boasts a total of 101 amphibian and reptile species. One of the endemic species of Mindo is the Pinocchio lizard (*Anolis proboscis*), named that way for its long 'nose'. This species was considered extinct, until new specimens were found in its natural habitat. Mindo was named in October 1997 as the first Area of Importance for the Conservation of Birds of Ecuador and South America. Mindo is part of the Biosphere Reserve of the Chocó Andino of Pichincha, declared by UNESCO as such on July 26, 2018.

At Mindo, I stayed in the Nelson's family house, and again a beautiful experience with wonderful people, that are my family now!

I explored the zone near the town alone at day and some nights with Nelson as

a guide but also, I visited some private reserves nearby, as Milpe Reserve, Séptimo Paraíso Reserve and Bella vista Reserve at 2,300 above sea level with its magnificent cloud forest!

Highlights of Chocó.

I was able to photograph a variety of species:

- Arthropods like strange membracidae (tree hoppers), and katydids as *Panancathus varius*
- Basiliscus (*Basiliscus galeritus*)
- Some frogs (*Esparadana prosoblepon* and *boana picturatus*)
- Hummingbirds: Purple-throated Woodstar – (*Calliphlox mitchellii*), Andean Emerald (*Amazilia franciae*)
- Some lizards (*Anolis gracilipes*)
- Snakes such as: Andean Snail-Eater (*Dipsas andiana*)
- Other birds such as: Green honeycreeper - Male (*Chlorophanes spiza*), Toucan of chocó (*Ramphastos brevis*)

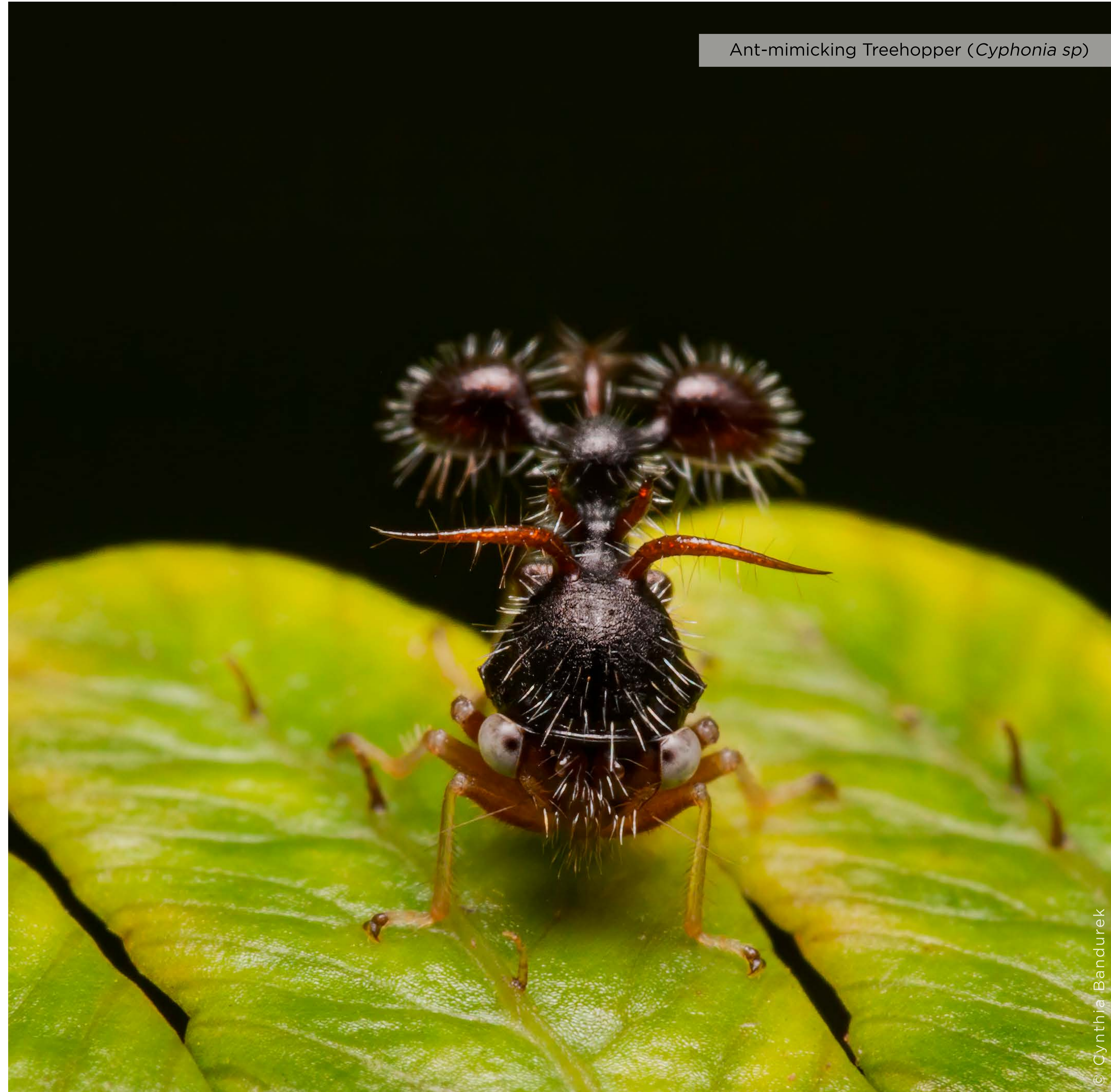
Situation of Conservation of Chocó Forest

The Chocó Forest is a megadiverse region, but it does not escape the sad reality of nature worldwide. Only 2% of Ecuadorian Chocó Forest survives today, and still receives pressures by the expansion of logging, the extension of the agricultural frontier and the conversion of natural forest to African palm plantations.

Ecuadorian Amazon.

The relief of the Amazon is made up of a series of hills that originate in the form of a mountain range in the Eastern Andes and descend to the plain of the Amazon. There are two geographical regions: The

Ant-mimicking Treehopper (*Cyphonia sp*)







Treehopper (*Membracidae*)

© Cynthia Bandurek

High Amazon and the Amazon Plain.
My experience in the high Amazon.
I visited the region of high Amazon, near Puyo town, at Tamandúa Ecological Reserve at 1,000 meters above sea level. I shared eight days with a Kiwcha family. An unforgettable experience, knowing their culture, their knowledge about the rainforest, their ancestral knowledge about medicinal plants, and especially their different way to conceive life. The Amazon rainforest is majestic, to see its greatness and the power of nature from the top of the mountain was an outstanding feeling, fog and clouds cover the environment for most of the day, giving it the appearance of an enchanted forest.

Exploring the jungle from inside during day and at night with George, my Kiwcha guide, managed to fill my eyes with tears of emotion on more than one occasion. I love to explore the rainforest at night, a completely different world to during the day. At night you can always find nocturnal species with outstanding adaptations like stick bugs that resemble moss, katydids that resemble leaves, frogs that mimic vegetation patterns, and several living beings with majestic designs. It is probable that the night in the jungle can give you some of those unexpected moments in the wild, maybe you can witness an amazing and complex natural history event.

Highlights of the Amazon rainforest!

- Frogs (*Boana almendorizae*), Upper Amazon Tree Frog (*Dendropsophus bifurcus*)
- Snakes such as *Cleia cleia*
- Spiders such as: Orb weaving spider

(*Micrathena cyanospina*)

- Stick bugs: like moss mimic stick bug

Situation of Conservation

The Amazon is considered the most important source of fresh water and biodiversity, due to its regulatory function of the planet's climate and global greenhouse gases, but the expansion of agricultural and livestock activities, the increase in mining concessions and the growth of hydroelectric plants are some of the factors that affect the world's largest forest. Also, the timber exploitation and the petrol industry.

Amazing Ecuador

Ecuador with its big biodiversity given by its tropical climate and its great diversity of niches in such a little surface; it's a wonderful country to visit specially if you love nature and you like to know different cultures.

The National System of protected Areas of Ecuador covers four regions of the country and consists of 56 natural reserves that protect approximately 20% of the surface of the country.

There are currently 18,198 species of vascular plants and 4,801 species of vertebrate species in Ecuador in need of more protection.

My experience there was unforgettable. I managed to come back with 9,000 pictures of its magnificent biodiversity, with my soul filled of beautiful memories, my mind with lot of new knowledge and my heart filled with some wonderful people.

Every corner in the rainforest is an open

Saracuyu tree frog (*Dendropsophus sarayacuensis*)

book to learn about natural history, evolution and biology. I am just amazed by all the secrets that inhabit this place making it the most amazing place on earth.

I plan to return soon to Ecuador's marvelous lands!

I want to take the opportunity to thank the special people that helped me a lot in this beautiful adventure and without them I could not have made this trip: Nestor Paladines, and all his family: Jacqueline, Andrés, Fanny and Aguinaldo. Also, to Nelson Apolo Jaramillo (@ecuadornaturetours) and his wife Edith, to Fernando Cardenas Ruiz, and Jorge Luna and his mother (the owners of Guaycapi Restaurant and Reserve)





© Emmanuel and Paula Laverde



Bateleur Bushveld Camp
Kruger NP Aug 2019

An Artist inspired by Africa
Alison Nicholls

WILD ARTS SHOWCASE





Alison Nicholls is an artist inspired by Africa. She lived in Botswana and Zimbabwe for several years and returns to Africa regularly to sketch in the bush, work with conservation organizations and lead Art Safaris for Africa Geographic.

She is a Signature member of Artists For Conservation and the Society of Animal Artists, and is a member of The Explorers Club and the Salmagundi Club. She makes a donation from every sale to African conservation, and is a member of the International Advisory Council for African People & Wildlife (Tanzania).

www.artinspiredbyafrica.com

<https://www.instagram.com/artinspiredbyafrica/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AlisonNicholls/>

Sketching from life

As the group of bull elephants browse around me, I watch them carefully, pick one out, and start sketching him in pen. I'm working fast because he's constantly changing position but I'm also trying to add only the lines I need,

keeping my sketch simple. I'll usually add watercolor later, using just my memory and imagination, but for now I need to concentrate on adding another elephant, to complete my composition. The day is warming up, spurfowls pick through the leaf litter, and all around are





AlisanNicholls ©

the sounds of elephants feeding. I am in my element, sketching from life.

Why is sketching from life so important? It teaches me about anatomy, making me a better artist; it gives me a real understanding of people's lives; I learn about the behavior of different animal species; I gain confidence and sharpen my concentration; and it allows me to slow down and take in everything around me. Whether I sketch people, a landscape or animals, I have to see and understand my subject, so when I look back at my sketches I am immediately immersed in the scene again, remembering the temperature, sounds and smells as well as the subject of my sketch.

I frequently start by sketching the body of an animal, because its head is likely to move a lot more than its body. For example, when I started Spotted Hyena Watching Impala, the hyena was lying with its head on the floor, looking straight at me. I sketched its body and as I finished, the impala appeared and the hyena looked back at them. I quickly sketched the hyena's head and made some minor amendments to the body position, but then the impala noticed the hyena, snorted an alarm and disappeared. The hyena got up and walked away.

Further along the road I saw the impala and added simple impala shapes into my sketch. Back at camp I added the watercolor, using memory and imagination. Knowing what to sketch first and what can be added later is a skill I have learned through years of trial and half-finished sketches!



AlisanNickolls©

Materials

While living in Zimbabwe and Botswana I experimented with many different sketch materials. Charcoal and pastel are great sketching materials, but our camping trips weren't kind to artworks that might smudge, so I abandoned attempts to work with those in the bush. We had a double-cab (pickup) and were usually bouncing around on thick sandy roads in the Kalahari, moving campsites every few days and I needed materials

that dried fast and could be packed up quickly. One time I had carefully positioned myself on the roof rack to sketch when a pack of African wild dogs (*Lycaon pictus*) appeared on the salt pan in the distance and I had literally a few seconds to get down with my paints before we were bumping along to get a closer view.

Nowadays my sketch kit consists of a long pencil case and my sketchbook. The pencil case contains pencils; pens;

bulldog clips; 3 paint brushes with tubes covering the bristles; an eraser; a small water container; and a Winsor & Newton field set of watercolors. I've become adept at sketching in tiny spaces in a vehicle, or standing up with my sketchbook in the crook of my arm, paints in the same hand and my brush in the other. Back at camp I'll add a brush stand to keep my brushes out of the sand, a large mixing palette and large water container. This has been my setup

for 10 years now and it perfectly fits my methods and style.

Art and Conservation

For several years I've made donations to conservation from every sale of my work and it's no surprise that an artist who sketches and paints wildlife would do so, but my work with conservation organizations has helped me as much as I have helped them. I've been able to vastly increase my knowledge of





June 12, 2014



sketch artist the colorful robes of the Maasai were impossible to resist, but I also appreciated that I was able to see real life in a rural community, and was able to jettison any lingering shyness about being watched as I sketched. Sometimes I had to ask people to continue going about their business because I'd look up from my paper to find the people I had been sketching were now standing behind me looking over my shoulder. Sketching takes time and this is appreciated in rural communities where the pace of daily life is pleasantly slower than what I'm used to back home. I send laminated copies of my sketches to everyone who appears in them and have really enjoyed the relationships I have built with people in local communities and with APW's Tanzanian staff. I visited again in June this year, have plans for more art-related programs there in the future, was delighted to be asked to join APW's International Advisory Council recently.

Purple zebra and other anomalies

I have learned to be careful which sketches I show to children in rural communities because they'll look at my sketchbook and ask 'where did you see this purple zebra' or they just tell me, while looking at a blue elephant sketch, that I have painted this animal wrong. It was particularly interesting to bring large canvas prints of some of my paintings to APW and hang them as an exhibit at a school, along with art by the children in my classes. I explained why I choose certain colors - reds and oranges to show the heat of the day, or blues and purples for shadows. The children were very interested and asked

complex conservation issues and my art has changed too. For example, I thought I wasn't interested in sketching people, but in 2011 that all changed when I visited African People & Wildlife (APW) in Tanzania. I had approached them in 2010 with the idea of visiting them on the Maasai Steppe to sketch on site, learn about their work and put together

an exhibition and lecture series in the US to raise awareness and funds.

APW works to 'find the balance for communities and nature' by partnering with local communities to create effective, sustainable solutions that improve the lives of rural Africans while protecting the natural world. When I

visited in 2011, 2012 and 2014, I taught art classes in schools and at the APW Children's Summer Camp; learned about APW's work, including their hugely successful Living Walls which prevent human-wildlife conflict; and of course, I sketched for hours every day. To my great surprise, I found I really enjoyed sketching people. I admit that for a



a lot of pertinent questions. We followed up with an environmental quiz and when a child answered a question correctly, they were able to choose one of my laminated sketches to keep. I think all the realistic-colored animal sketches were chosen first.

Alison Nicholls

My route to becoming an artist started in my late 20's after my husband, Nigel, asked for a transfer with his company, Arup, to Zimbabwe, in 1994. It was here that I reconnected with my childhood passions for art and wildlife, and picked up pencils and paintbrushes. We had no internet, no home phone, no cellphone, and no email, but we had a garden full of amazing birds and insects to draw, so I practiced drawing in the sunshine. Moving to neighboring Botswana in 1996, I worked part-time (wearing my other hat as an IT consultant) and painted part-time. It's interesting to look back on those early paintings and see hints of my future watermedia style. Leaving Botswana in 2002 and moving to the East coast of the US was, ironically, the time when I decided to paint African subject matter full-time. I worked primarily in pastel for a few years but think of 2006 as the year I really turned professional as a watermedia artist. Sometimes I wish I'd started painting earlier in life, but then I wouldn't have had the life and work experience which has helped me navigate the online world, so important in marketing my art. My connections with conservation organizations began in 2007 after being awarded an Artists For Conservation Flag Expedition grant, which allowed me to spend

6 weeks at Painted Dog Conservation in Zimbabwe, tracking and sketching highly endangered African wild dogs or painted dogs. This led to my contacting APW in 2010 to conduct a similar series of visits. Nowadays, connections with conservation organizations are a vital part of my work and have led to the creation of a body of conservation-themed paintings which can be seen on my website. In turn, conservationists connected me with rural African communities, and as a result I'm devising an art-mentoring program for young people who show promise as artists (if you would like to get involved, please feel free to contact me). In 2015 Nigel and I became shareholders (very minor shareholders, I might add!) in Limpopo-Lipadi, a private game reserve in Botswana's Tuli Block, on the banks of the Limpopo River. It's a beautiful place to relax and sketch, and hopefully my art-mentoring can play a part in Limpopo-Lipadi's Motse Community Project which aims to ensure that local communities benefit from the existence of the reserve. Even though it sounds like a cliché, moving to southern Africa changed every aspect of my life, allowing me to now say I am an artist inspired by Africa.







YOUR GALLERY



Ranga Nathan

Steller's Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*)



YOUR GALLERY



Venkataramana Murty Pappu

River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*)



YOUR GALLERY



Satheesh Soman

Jungle Owlet (*Glaucidium radiatum*)



YOUR GALLERY



Munib Chaudry

African Fish Eagle (*Haliaeetus vocifer*)



YOUR GALLERY



Raghavendra Josh

Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)



YOUR GALLERY



Raghavendra Joshi

African Elephant (*Loxodonta*)



YOUR GALLERY



Mahesh S

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)



YOUR GALLERY



Kamalak Kannan Bownaan

Slender Mongoose (*Galerella sanguinea*)



YOUR GALLERY



Mahesh S

Leopard (*Panthera Pardus*)



YOUR GALLERY



Haarish Mohammed

Orange Minivet (*Pericrocotus flammeus*)



YOUR GALLERY



Agniswar Ghosal

Smooth-coated Otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*)

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UPCOMING
FEATURES



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