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EXPLORERS

FEB / MAR 2020



**INTO
THE WILD
WITH
GURCHARAN
ROOPRA**

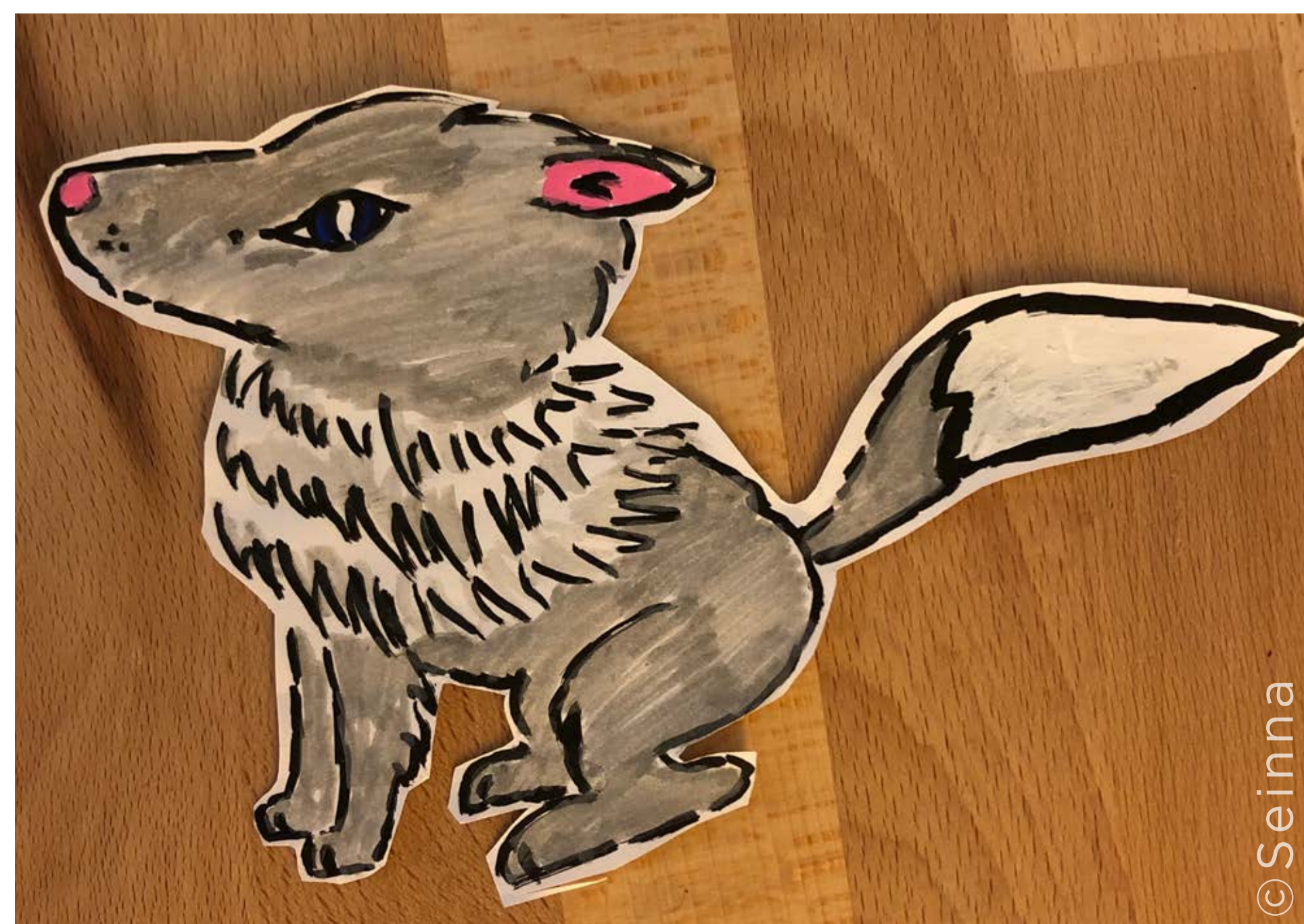
**SCARLET
MACAW**

By Sue Hains

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©Bree Hokana



©Seinna

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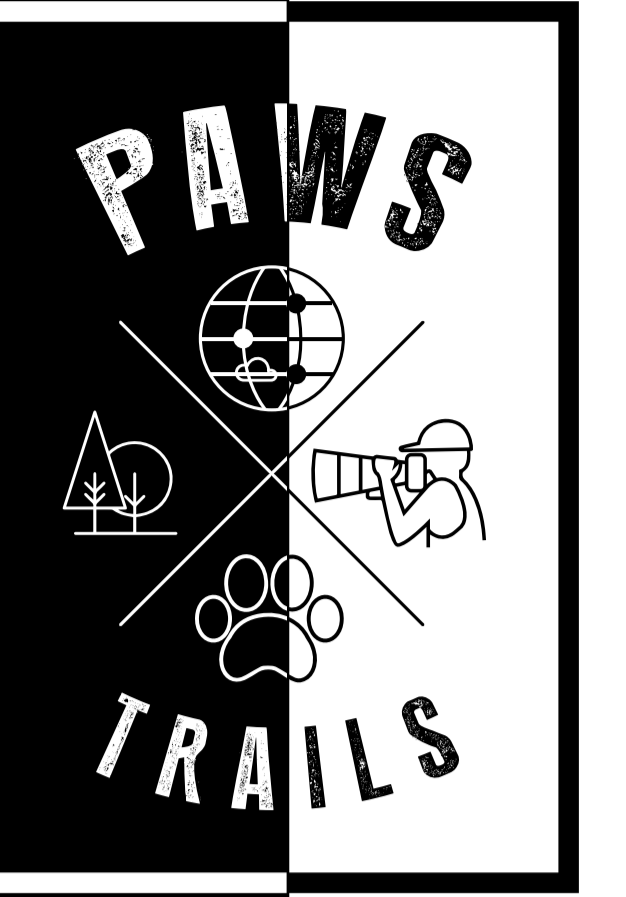
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Cover Story
by Gurcharan Roopra



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Hank Tyler
Editor

Volume 21 brings our readers exciting stories from around the world with a special focus on East Africa's Massai Mara Reserve. Enjoy the 255 pages of stunning and spectacular photography in this volume.

Gurcharan Roopra from Nairobi, Kenya tells his story of his passion for nature photography. In stunning black and white photos Gurcharan captures the essence of living in Africa. Living next to Nairobi National Park and Massai Mara Reserve gives him easy access to some of the best areas for wildlife in Africa.

Our conservation article focuses on the Angama Foundation's efforts in Kenya. Sue van Winsen tells of the Foundation's successful program operated by Steven and Nicky Fitzgerald. Magnificent photography of wildlife in the Massi Maara accompany this story.

Young artist, Sienna, from India, based in Dubai, displays a wide variety of clever wildlife artwork in a mix of media. Keep your eye on this budding artist.

Bree Hokana, a professional horse show women from southern California in America tells of her experience of visiting the Rocky Mountain state of Montana and Yellowstone National Park with her Canon camera capturing amazing wildlife images.

This volume's Thematic Gallery "Birds in Action" showcases twenty-five outstanding photos of birds by nature photographers from around the world.

Argentinian nature photographer Santiago Navarro takes us to New Zealand's Tongariro National Park where his sharp eye for landscapes and geological features brings magnificent photos of world-class volcanic landscapes and features.

South African safari guide and nature photographer Faizel Ismail describes in our Travelogue section his joy of visiting Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana in America.

Swedish wildlife artist Gunnar Tryggmo describes his up-bringing with nature and exposure to artists at a young age, as he developed his own artistic style. Gunnar has an international following, and his artwork is greatly admired in the United States where he is currently exhibiting at the Turner Fine Art Gallery in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.



PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Syed Basheer Ahmed
Little Owl
(*Athene noctua*)



EDITOR'S DEN

FOUNDERS' NOTE

The beginning of the year, the human race has woken up to the threat of a contagion. A new Coronavirus identified by late 2019 in Wuhan, China has so far infected more than 9,000 people and claimed more than 200 lives.

The virus has till now spread to 26 countries, leading to panic and the World Health Organization declaring it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Existing vaccines and treatments are believed to be ineffective in containing the virus, and the best defense seems to be isolating known cases and observing any people they might have come in contact with.

The fear is real and many global airlines have temporarily halted flights from mainland China. International travel brings the virus to new shores and the closed confines of an airplane can be the ideal conditions for the virus to spread.

But where did the virus come from? The most likely reservoir of this virus is thought to be fruit bats. This is not the first time, a super virus like this has moved to humans from bats. This begs the question - why does this not happen all the time? The latest research suggests that in areas with extensive deforestation, as the bats starve with a shortage of food, they start to shed these viruses.

We have been lucky in the past, the 2018 Nipah outbreak in Kerala, India being an example where the virus was contained quickly in a small area. But, it is just a matter of time before one of these outbreaks grow to global proportions claiming innumerable lives, and the 2019 Corona outbreak is already in 26 countries!

So the solution is clear - Plant back all the trees and forests that have been destroyed, or else, suffer the consequences.

These are the moments when the human race looks back at there own achievements and wonder if all that was worthwhile!

Look at the Bushfires still raging across Australia. Fires are raging from June 2019 and still continue to do so. The loss of animal life is immeasurable, with some estimates pegging it at one billion dead animals. This is the worst bushfire season ever and we cannot help but look back at the impacts of climate change.

We are left with no option in the face of nature's fury. The human race simply have to start living in harmony with nature, leaving a smaller footprint on the environment. PawsTrails urges our readers to influence your friends, family and community leaders to advocate and promote an eco-friendly lifestyle. Please make the change before it is too late - both for the planet and for us.
www.pawstrails.com

Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman

Founders - PT Explorers



COVER STORY

into theWild

with Gurcharan Roopra



Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*)



Gurcharan Roopra was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. The serene environs of his native place left a lasting impact and he became attracted to nature at an early age. After graduating in automotive engineering, Gurcharan lived and worked in the UK for ten years where he sorely missed the space and freedom of the bush. By 2012 he made up his mind and returned to Kenya for good. Return to the bush coincided with him developing an interest in photography.

What started off as a hobby took deep roots in his mind and soon his life started revolving around wildlife and nature photography. Time and the bush were great mentors where he developed and honed his skills to become one of the most noted nature photographers in Africa.

The more time Gurcharan spent in nature, the more passionate he has become towards Mother Earth and the many fellow beings on it. He is committed to the cause of a pristine earth and has devoted his time and energy to many conservation causes in Kenya. He is happy of the fact that his images have come useful for many conservation projects. One thing is for sure, there are many more exciting things to come from this gifted photographer!

<https://gurcharanroopra.com/>
[instagram.com/gurcharan/](https://www.instagram.com/gurcharan/)
[facebook.com/gurcharan.roopra](https://www.facebook.com/gurcharan.roopra)



White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*)

A hearty welcome to PT Explorers, Gurcharan. We are super excited to have you here! Would you please introduce yourself to our readers?

Hi, Firstly, Thanks for having me here. It's been a beautiful journey with you guys since Big cat trails when we first met.

I am a wildlife photographer who specialises in Savannah wildlife, thankfully living in Nairobi, Kenya which has the biggest bearing to this. I am a director in Rockplant East Africa, which keeps me super busy during the week. I studied Automotive Engineering at university hence making me a full time engineer and a weekend photographer.

Firstly, we'd love to know, where did your passion for wildlife photography arise from?

I always had a passion for photography, which started with rally, and went into landscapes while I lived in Scotland. I returned to Kenya in 2012 and that's where the passion for wildlife photography was born. Since then the passion has taken over and there is hardly a week that goes by where I don't pick up the camera.

What's the most elusive animal you've had to photograph and how did you meet that challenge?

I don't look at it that way, I go out there in the control of nature to show me whatever she wants. Take it being a leopard, caracal, serval cat, lion, zebra or any other animal, all I do is be patient with them and allow them to show me their natural behaviour. Last weekend





Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*)

I was photographing Ground Hornbills, having spent an hour or more with them, they would just walk towards me like I didn't exist, so busy in their life. That is the challenge I love! Adding more to it, it doesn't matter the subject, but it's the artist's job to get something different and interesting in their perspective.

Do you have a favourite animal to photograph? Why?

This changes from time to time, a few years ago the Zebra was my fav, thanks to their black and white contrast and public displays of affection. Currently giraffes are the subject I seem to have fallen in love with, I have been spending so much time capturing their interactions, beautiful details, watching what they do and how they do with each other. Not sure where I will go next.

As a wildlife photographer, how do you capture emotion and show the importance of conservation issues?

Emotion: This is always a difficult one as you can only see the emotion when you begin to understand the behaviours. I'm no expert, but the more time I spend out there the more I learn from the guides, later using this knowledge to time my shots better and work on capturing something different.

Conservation: I have always portrayed myself as being positive and making a change through happiness. Winning hearts and minds is a very important part of making a change. On the conservation front, I support charities that I have visited and which I feel

are making an impact, for example I am a big supporter of Amboseli Trust for Elephants, Anne Kent Taylor Fund and Mara Elephant Project. I have supported all the above either through events or directly where possible and will continue to do so. Without these guys being out there on a full-time basis I don't know what we would do, being so distant from it all.

Being a Mara wildlife photographer, you're aware of all the tourists in the wild. What are some things you take into account when it comes to issues around wildlife photography in the midst of all this chaos? What can be done about it to protect and conserve the wildlife in the Mara?

This is surely a great concern to me at the moment, and there is a major question looming. Traffic in the Mara is certainly a big issue, and how can we attend to this traffic without hurting our fellow guides and hoteliers. Reducing tourists will certainly reduce their income. We regularly discuss these matters with photographers and the thought that has come to mind is that photographers are a big reason of this chaos.

The regular tourist is happy to stand a fair distance away and watch what is going on, while the photographer is always on the challenge to get better and more detailed photos. I am also one of these photographers, I have tried to change this by heading towards wide angle photography, also finding other means of getting closer with minimum or no disturbance to the animals. I have found making the animal comfortable





Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*)

with me in the first instance is the better formula than disturbing; once comfortable the animals will give you hundreds of shots and get into its natural behaviour; when disturbed, they will give you a couple and go to hide in the bushes.

In the last several years, climate change awareness has grown. What do you think is a photographer's role and responsibility, in helping to talk about these concerns?

As photographers, we can highlight visually these climate change issues. One of my colleagues did an amazing job by taking a photo two years back, then today, go to the same location and take a photo again, however have the previous photo visible in the current photo using a lightbox so that the impact can be seen.

This season the Mara rains is probably an impact that we should all note, we are getting longer dry seasons and long wet seasons; so much rain that

you struggle to make your way around within the Mara. This is not something only regional to the Mara, but it's something that goes from country to country, continent to continent; it's something that we all are responsible to find a solution to.

Last week I was listening to my favourite radio show, and on it they were discussing that the current generation is blaming the older generation in having left us with this mess. My thoughts were it doesn't matter who's mess it is! It

needs fixing and who else is around; it's you and me, it's our mess, we have to fix it!

Amongst the uncountable experiences you've had in the wild, can you share with us some of your favourite moments?

A lot of my favourite moments in the wild have not only been about the animals but also about the company that you have there. We all know that sometimes you have to wait for hours





that amazing company can surely help passing hours like it was a few minutes.

Watching predators prepare their trap for a kill is always beautiful, as they can't talk we think they are less intelligent, but wow are they amazing.

This is an experience that will still with me for a long time: We once went out trying to return a lion back into the park, we got to a point where the bush was thick and we couldn't drive in any further, at that point we decided to go on foot along with a ranger. A few minutes into the walk, we came across a bush that started growling at us. We returned backward to approach the bush with the park facing us so that the lion would head in that direction, only to find that we hadn't come across a single lion but a pride of 6, we were certainly outnumbered, but thankfully the lions were well mannered and returned to the park.

After a dry season when the first rains come, they usually arrive with big thunderstorms, those skies are gorgeous and when the first rains fall, the excitement in all the herbivores is so amazing to watch as they run around chasing each other with so much excitement and energy.

Is there an animal that you are yet to photograph but would like to?

There are many for sure, the highlights in this question are Caracal and Pangolin. But there are also hopes of finding animals that I photograph regularly in specific sightings. I.e. Leopard on a dead leafless tree in the

middle of the savannah. The real answer would be that I'm yet to photograph a lot of moments the perfect one? Well as I grow I think that perfect moment will also grow and change along with me.

What are three things you never leave your house without for a photography trip?

Trust me there are a lot more than three things that I make sure I take to a photography trip! But the most important are..

- a. The cameras of course
- b. Charged & Spare batteries
- c. Extra memory cards

What are some of your future projects and goals?

There are a lot of projects in the pipeline this year, but most of them are to support teams with the skills I've acquired and helping put them out there for the mass to see and somehow make them think about conservation.

With wildlife it's hard to set a goal and work towards it, the best way is to go with an open mind and hope that nature gives you beautiful moments and a mindset that you can understand that moment to capture a great shot!

I recently made a new low level remote device that has given me some amazing results from my last trip in the Masai Mara, I'm hoping to explore the full potential of it this year. Watch this space.....

What do you think is one of the



©Gurcharan Roopra



African Buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*)



greatest difficulties for someone trying to get into the field of wildlife and conservation photography?

I see many Kenyan photographers trying to get into the wildlife photography scene, however the cost of equipment and lack of income are a big deterrent.

Whereas in commercial photography the earnings come sooner, wildlife photography is a soul feeder, the more time you spend with it the more you feel at peace with nature.

Earnings in this side are more difficult, you first have to provide significant results before any returns come.

When the gear is not there, you have to adapt your style to what you have, all my wide angle shots are taken with a 24-70, most of you out there who own camera's own the standard kit 18-55 lens, go out there and be creative!

What are your three top tips for photographing wildlife that are almost never taught?

A lot of us go out there to try and copy someone's work, I would say go out there and be yourself, portray your shots from your view.

Read photography guide-books and blogs, they really help and give you tips on how to look for moments and camera settings.

Nothing beats being out in the wild, go there, choose a subject and then stick with that subject till you get the best shot of your abilities.





Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*)



Can you share some words of inspiration/advice for young aspirants in this field?

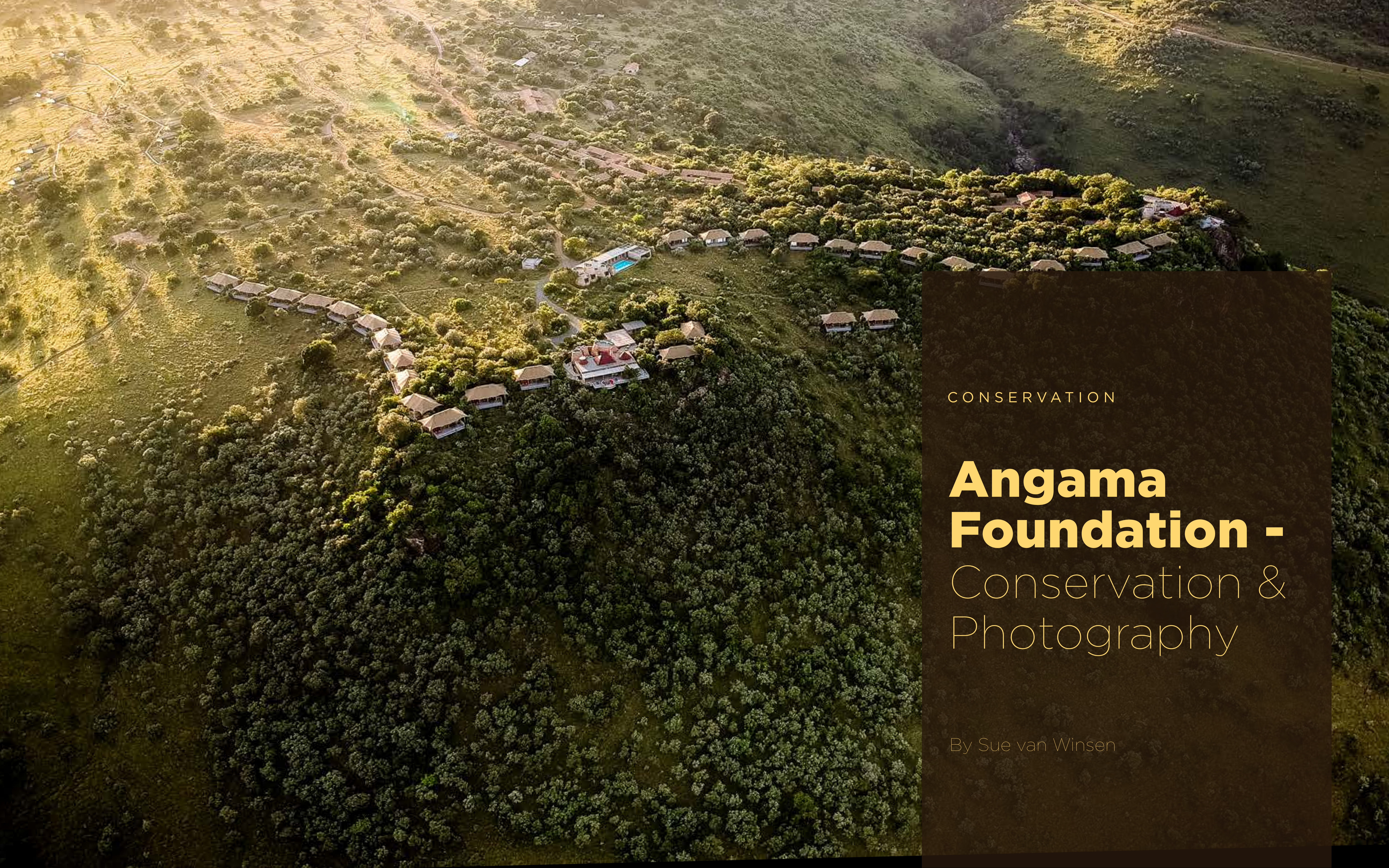
With technology and the world moving so fast these days, all of us want results superfast, but this is art (the composition) and craft (the camera settings). These skills are honed-in and we develop and improve on them through experience step by step. Don't go out there looking for results, go out there to be happy and enjoy, the rest will fall into place. Once you are in your happy place, then you can put more focus on compositions, that's the art that makes the pictures look good in my view - and please the park is not only about lions and leopards, there is so much else going on in this amazing ecosystem; learn about it, see the chain in the ecosystem. This will improve your understanding of nature and improve your photography too!



Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*)



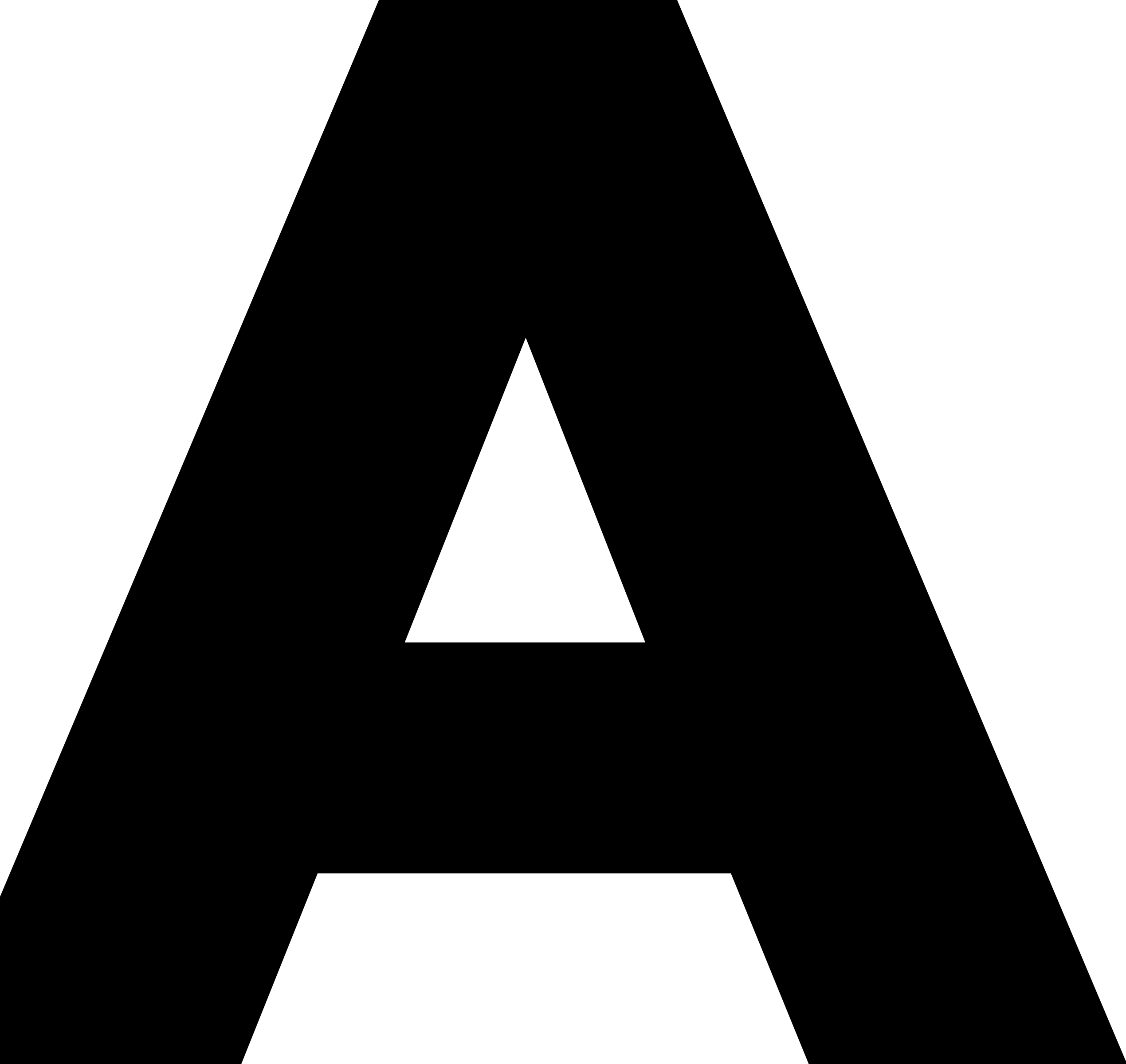
White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*)



CONSERVATION

Angama Foundation - Conservation & Photography

By Sue van Winsen



Angama Mara is founded on the deeply embedded principle of running a profitable business in order to make a meaningful and sustainable difference to the communities that neighbour the lodge, and the wildlife and land that surround it. In a nutshell, the Angama team believes in Benjamin Franklin's oft-quoted saying: 'Doing Well, by Doing Good / Doing Good, by Doing Well'. This has been a philosophy successfully adhered to and implemented by owners Steve and Nicky Fitzgerald over the past 20 years.

Each guest contributes a US\$ 10 per night donation to the Angama Foundation, a separate entity which has been setup in order to affect these efforts. The Foundation plans to achieve this primarily through three fields of work: Education, Healthcare and Conservation, and projects are identified and prioritized together with the lodge's neighbouring communities, the Mara Conservancy, and NGO's who have a track record of making an impact in the region. The Foundation is also open to micro donations facilitated through the lodge's Safari Shop

angama.com/about/angama-foundation/the-greatestmaasaimara.com/





2019 Winner - Juxtaposition by LeeAnne Robertson



WINNER OF THE GREATEST MAASAI MARA PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED

NAIROBI – NOVEMBER 28, 2019: The Angama Foundation is proud to announce Lee-Anne Robertson as the winner of The Greatest Maasai Mara Photographer of the Year 2019, for her image “Juxtaposition”, of a lioness with a wildebeest in her jaws.

Selected as the winner from ten finalists, Lee-Anne was awarded the grand prize – a five-night safari for two at Angama Mara with return flights from Nairobi, and US\$10,000 in cash.

The competition ran from January through October 2019, and received close to 1,000 entries over the course of 10 months. The 10 finalists will be on display for the next 12 months at the Kenya Airways lounge at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi.

Acclaimed wildlife photographers, Art Wolfe, Federico Veronesi, Michael Poliza, Nisha Purushothaman and Adam Bannister judged the entries, with Federico commending the photographer for successfully capturing the essence of such a dramatic moment with a lot of dignity in a powerful shot with a strong message.

Lee-Anne’s guide, Joseph Njapit of Zebra Plains Mara Camp, also won all-expenses paid trip to the UK to watch Premier League football, – together with guides Daudi Ledukan of Naibor Camp and Leshan Sayialel of Talek Bush Camp. The Greatest Maasai Mara Photographer of the Year competition encourages the creation and submission of beautiful imagery to showcase the Maasai Mara as a year-round wildlife destination,

raising the profile of wildlife photographers and supporting conservation initiatives in the process. Each entry includes a donation to one of the competition’s boots-on-the-ground conservation partners active in the Maasai Mara, and this year, the best entries from 2018 were also shown at exhibitions in key cities around the world, including Nairobi, Seattle, Cape Town, Melbourne, Brisbane, Dubai, Dallas, Atlanta, Indianapolis and Johannesburg.

With the support of the entry fees and the success of these exhibitions, more than US\$83,000 was handed out by the Angama Foundation to the Anne K. Taylor Fund, the Maa Trust, the Mara Elephant Project, the Mara Conservancy and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, more than five times the amount raised in 2018, with some photographers also earning as much as \$5,000 from the sales of their prints.

Entries for the 2020 competition open on January 1st, 2020, again with US\$10,000 in cash and a five-night safari for two at Angama Mara on offer for the winner. Photographs must have been taken in the Maasai Mara within the preceding 12 months.



2019 JANUARY Winner - The Artist by India Bulkeley Robertson



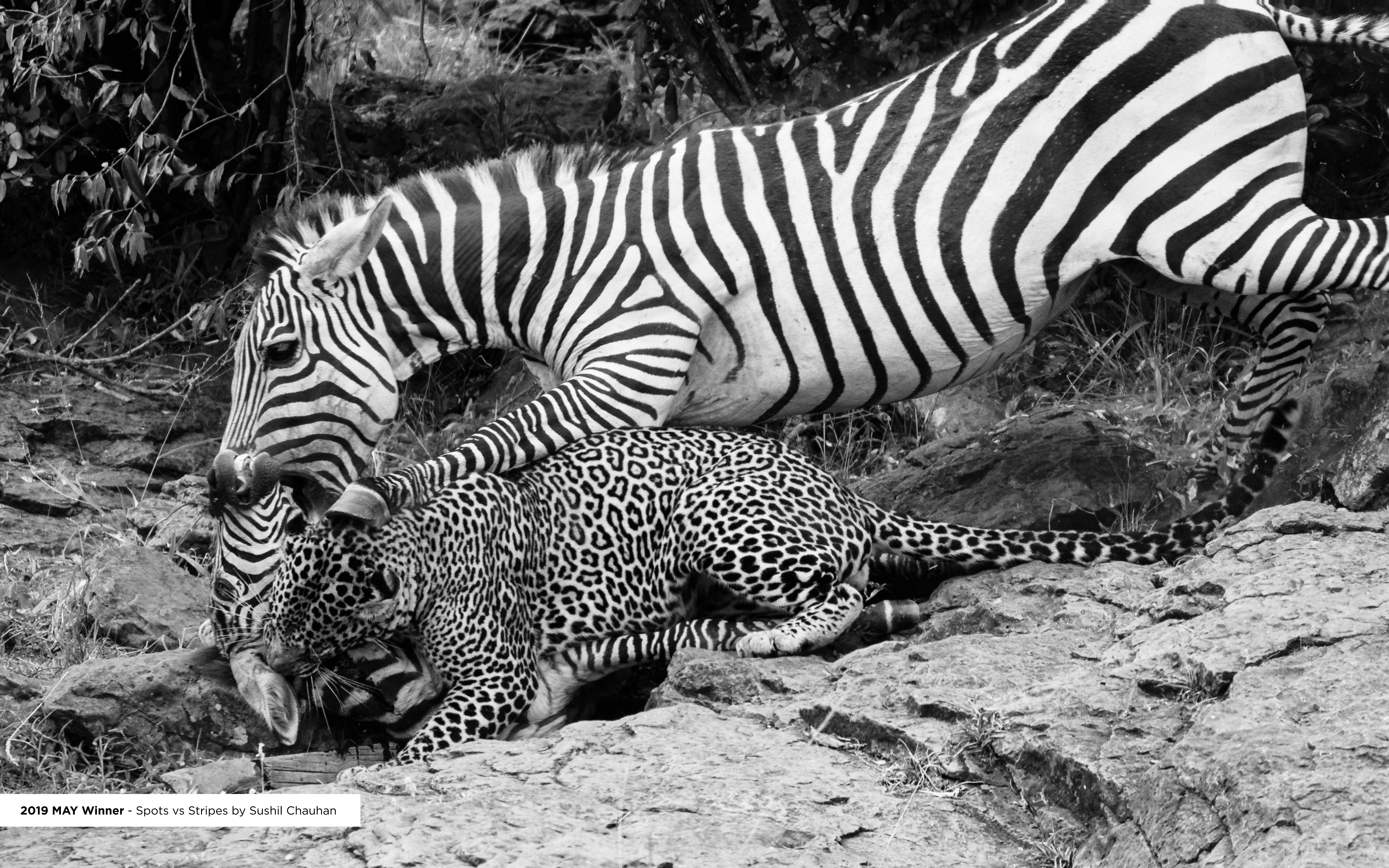
2019 FEBRUARY Winner - Balance by Gurcharan Roopra



2019 MARCH Winner - Microclimate by Trai Anfield



2019 APRIL Winner - April_Hidden Treasure by Graham Wood



2019 MAY Winner - Spots vs Stripes by Sushil Chauhan



2019 JULY Winner - Dusty Duo by Anna Anthony



2019 AUGUST Winner - Giraffe on Sunset by James Nampaso



2019 SEPTEMBER Winner - The Flying Hunt by Deepak Shankar



2019 OCTOBER Winner - Scavengers Den, Nitin Michael

SPECIES

Restoring the Magnificent Macaw to Costa Rica

By Sue Hains

Photos by: Roel De Plecker






Sue Hains moved to Costa Rica two and a half years ago and became a volunteer with DAWG (Domestic Animal Welfare Group, a non-profit organization dedicated to rescuing and rehoming cats and dogs), ASOMACAO, (a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of parrots in Costa Rica), and an informal volunteer group which meets twice a month to remove trash from two local beaches.

<https://www.aramacaocostarica.org/>

<https://m.facebook.com/friendsofthearamacao>







More than 1,000 years ago archaeological evidence from the North American Southwest shows the Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*) to have been important in the Native American society of the prehistoric people living in the Valley of the Mimbres, in present day New Mexico. The pottery for which the Mimbres people are famed show detailed scenes of daily life filled with the animals with which they shared their lands and depict Scarlet Macaws being transported to the Valley alive, being kept in aviaries, being trained, and being part of a captive breeding program. However, there is

no evidence that the Scarlet Macaw was ever a native of Southwestern New Mexico but had to have been acquired from Mexico or Central America, where they were indigenous, at least 750 miles to the south. DNA tests have now shown that those ancient macaw bones are of a Southern Mexico lineage

In southeastern Costa Rica, from about 1670 - 1710, lived an indigenous king named Pabru Presbere, whose name is said to mean "Chief of the Macaw," the word "Pa" being the Bribri word for the big, beautiful, blue, red, yellow, and

green birds, who legend says, followed Pabru where ever he went. When the Spaniards arrived in Costa Rica, they killed many macaws for their feathers and before long, killed Pabru as well. The story says that the "Pa" who were mostly red flew off to the Pacific Coast while the predominately green ones flew to the Caribbean Coast, the separation remaining to this day. The word for "the" in Spanish is "la" so Pabru's beautiful bird became known as Lapa in Costa Rica.

Yet prior to Pabru's reign, during the period from 300 - 500 ce, the Scarlet

Macaw was considered a helper to Bribri shamans. It was one of four birds that formed a foundation for the "awa" - those who sang at funerals. A macaw was sacrificed at a funeral ritual for important people and the singer performed with Scarlet Macaw feathers in his hair and decorating his drum.

Dating from this same period of time, archaeologists have found a beautifully carved volcanic stone metate in the shape of a parrot - further evidence of the Scarlet Macaw's presence and importance in pre-Columbian Costa Rica.





Time travel to the beginning of the 20th Century, where the naturally occurring Scarlet Macaw lived and thrived in over 80% of Costa Rica, especially in the aforementioned lowlands of the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. In Costa Rica it had access to the vast evergreen rainforest and its trees, whose fruit it ate and in which it nested. However, urban growth, slashing and burning the land for agriculture and raising cattle, which peaked in 1985, destroyed much of the habitat necessary for the survival of the Scarlet Macaw, while hunting for feathers and for the illegal pet trade added to the bird's declining numbers. Because land in certain areas had not yet become attractive to those groups, the macaws found themselves squeezed into two isolated remnants of their historic habitat - one in the Central Pacific Conservation Area and the other to the south in the Osa Peninsula. This stunningly beautiful, iconic rainforest bird, revered as powerful and supernatural in pre-historic times, this important keystone species, who, with its powerful nut-cracking beak played a vital role in maintaining a healthy and diverse tropical ecosystem by carrying a variety of seeds from one locale to another, one of the most charismatic animals in the country, was on its way to extinction - along with its rainforest home - in Costa Rica.

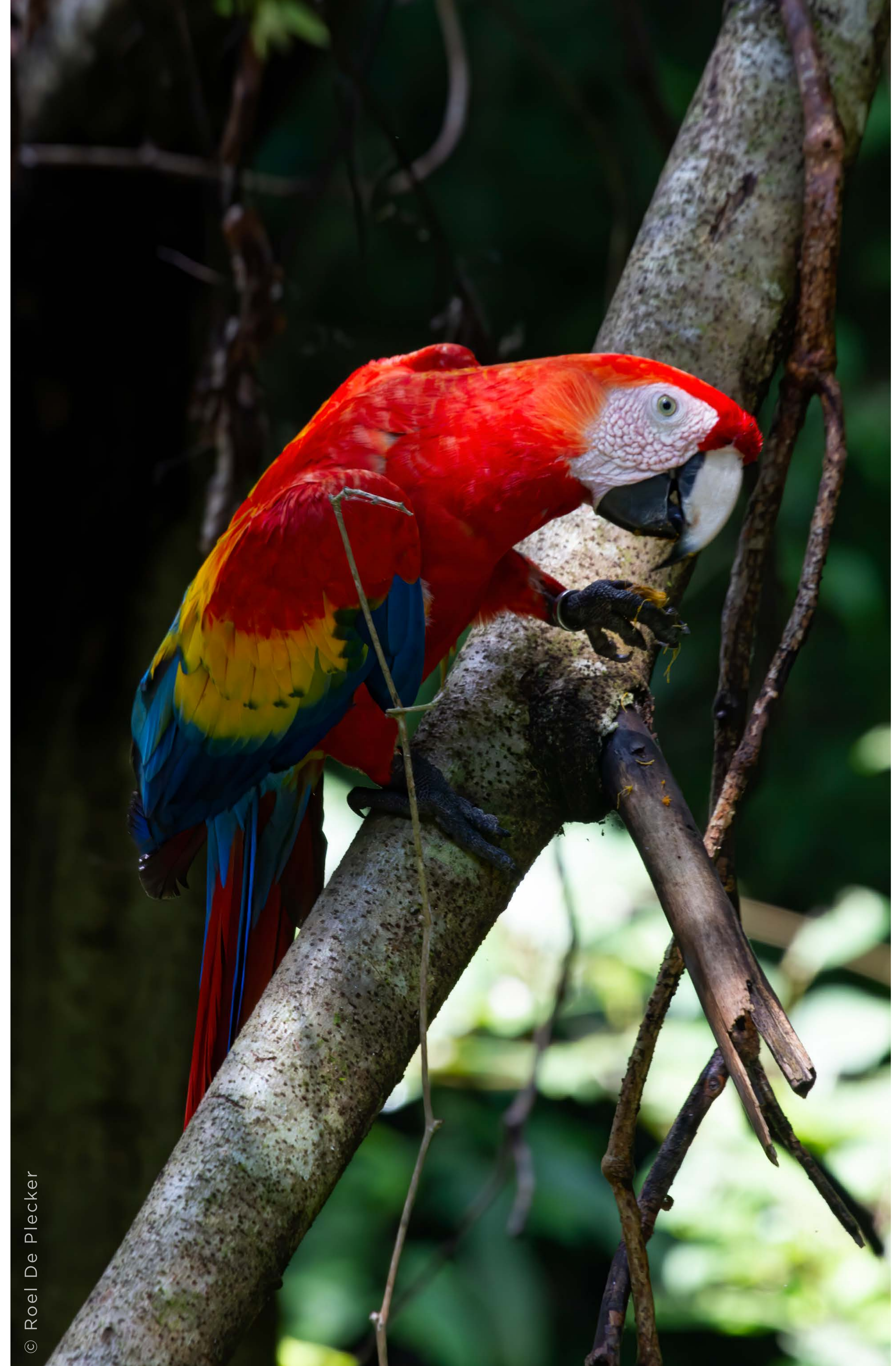
Travel forward in time again, if you will, almost to the end of the 20th century, when a retiring gentleman from Italy, Alessandro Poma-Murialdo, pursued his passion for parrots and learned about the importance of the Scarlet Macaw for the culture and the ecosystem. Successfully

raising and breeding them in a garden near La Sabana, Costa Rica, he presented his idea to restock the population with captive bred birds to the Ministry of Environment. Expanding his project, he founded Parque San Francisco, a private center to facilitate the reproduction of the Ara Macao - the Scarlet Macaw - to rescue other parrots from the wildlife trade, and to care for the physical and behavioral recovery of the birds so that they could be released eventually into the wild or transferred to other facilities.

November 2013 saw the inauguration of a project between Alessandro Poma and The Gaia Hotel & Reserve, whose mission was also to preserve the area's beautiful flora and fauna - which was disappearing under the developers' constant construction - by welcoming its first five transferred Scarlet Macaws from Alessandro Poma. GAIA soon set aside over 12 of its 14.1 acres of land in Manuel Antonio as a refuge for the protection of its native plants and wildlife.

In 2014, GAIA, Neotropical Parrots, located at Parque San Francisco, and various other organizations working on the conservation of the Scarlet Macaw came together to form ASOMACAO, an acronym for The Association of Friends of the Ara Macao, with a vision - in their words - "of becoming the leading organization for native parrots and macaws conservation in the Costa Rican Pacific."

With the strength of this combined effort and with donations from its supporters, ASOMACAO has been able to undertake a larger scale conservation program,



© Roel De Plecker





© Roel De Plecker

which includes macaw rescue and rehabilitation activities, captive breeding (with birds incapable of being returned to the wild), environmental education, and reforestation. Rescued birds may be from owner surrender of pets held in captivity for years or may be those saved from the illegal trade of exotic animals, or from birds injured in the wild who need medical care. Incoming macaws reside in a quarantine cage to assess their health and ensure they carry no communicable diseases before being moved to a larger aviary, where they can socialize or recover, prior to release, if release is possible. Freed Scarlet Macaws - Lapas Rojas, as they are now known - are fed at outdoor feeding platforms raised high into the canopy, until they learn to forage on their own. Birds which cannot be released to the wild are carefully watched to see if they pair with another macaw, in which case the partners are moved into their own large cage and provided with a nest in hopes they will mate and produce offspring.

ASOMACAO believes involving communities is critical to re-establishing the Lapa Roja to its indigenous range in Costa Rica. Their teams of educators and naturalists have created programs for elementary school students to involve them in learning about the plants and animals that surround them, to teach them about the interdependence of life, and to help them understand the causes and effects of deforestation, and depend on the development of personal connections with the students to achieve these goals. Older students from nearby schools have been engaged as volunteers to help with maintenance work on the

grounds or to prepare food for the macaws at Parque San Francisco. Yet other students from Mexico, France, Belgium, the USA, and the UK to date, have come to work as interns for ASOMACAO, helping to prepare food for the birds, assisting in the various school programs, interviewing people in small towns to learn if Scarlet Macaws are – or ever have been – seen, to follow the macaws to learn their routines and flight routes, and return to their countries carrying the message of conservation in Costa Rica. To build more community involvement, we rely on local people to feed our surveillance program with their sightings and comments.

ASOMACAO provided one of the teams in the fifth annual event, in 2018, of the Annual Bird Count at P. N. La Cangreja, which counted more than 300 different species. Information gathered by the teams of ornithologists, biologists, guides, photographers, and local community members counting the birds is used to aid decision making in managing and protecting flora and avifauna in the park and can reveal any changes in species' populations. In fact, the count revealed the encouraging information that the original Scarlet Macaw population is expanding their range there. Further, community participation in the count fosters an interest in protecting a wild area. ASOMACAO would like to conduct a similar event in Quepos, counting specifically the Scarlet Macaw.

ASOMACAO was a sponsor of a bike race, held by Mountain Bike Recreation, for the benefit of the Paso De Las Lapas Biological Corridor. The Paso De Las Lapas, which plays a critical role in the return of the Scarlet Macaw to its indigenous range, is one of forty-four biological corridors created by the government of Costa Rica, and connects an area of over 56,000 hectares to indigenous reserves and protected national parks between the Central Pacific coastline and the coastal mountain range and is used by Las Lapas daily as they fly from one area to the other.

There is still much work to be done with regard to breeding success, genetic diversity, and habitat quality to ensure the permanence of the Scarlet Macaw. With the continued efforts of ASOMACAO in rescuing, rehabilitating, and repopulating Scarlet Macaws, with the creation of more biological corridors, and with the work of a large number of groups conserving the treasure that is the flora and fauna of Costa Rica, the return of the Scarlet Macaw to its indigenous range has a greater chance of success now than ever before.





CUB'S CORNER

Colours & Craft

By Sienna



CUB'S CORNER

CUB'S CORNER



Sienna is an 11-year old child passionate about nature and wildlife.

In her spare time, she enjoys using anything and everything around her to create and develop her artistic vision.

I love all arts and crafts. I constantly draw, doodle, craft and write about different things especially the gentlest creatures on earth, animals. They inspire me the most.

I have always loved animals. I could play and talk to them for hours and enjoy their company.

As a little girl I loved observing animals. They are created with such perfection. Have you noticed how animals use actions to speak to us in different ways? They are also wonderful at expressing how much they love us. It is amazing that we are blessed with so many wonderful creatures on this planet.



Nowadays I love drawing animals in my diary. I often wish they would magically transform into real creatures along with all the mythical creatures I draw. Earlier I would draw and paint on different sheets. If an idea pops into my head I can't wait to create or draw it.

Once at the age of 7 we were at an ice Honey shop and I pestered my parents

for the little spoons and some straws that they were about to throw out. I couldn't wait to get home and begin. I asked mom for some masking tape and cotton and off I went into my world to create a little lamb. They were pretty shocked with what I came up with.

I use pens, pencils, clay, wool, cotton, masking tape, paint, old buttons and



anything I can get my hands on around my house, but I absolutely love to draw with my sketch pens.

My favourite animal has always been the dog. I have two furry friends in Australia called Cooper and Kedo. I feel very connected to them and they love me like a true friend. Did you also know that if you double a dog's age that would be his human age? I feel when they die I will miss them more than I miss a human being.

The Earth is a wonderful, beautiful and magical place and its colours are impeccable.

However man has really spoilt most of the beauty that God has created for us. Rainforest and animals that have existed for thousands of years have faded away and if we don't have the courage and take action to stop this in time all this beauty will disappear.

I have travelled to many countries and enjoyed meeting animals, birds and bugs in India, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand and many more places. Recently I visited Australia and amongst other things we visited the Daintree rainforest, the Great Barrier Reef and went whale watching in Brisbane.

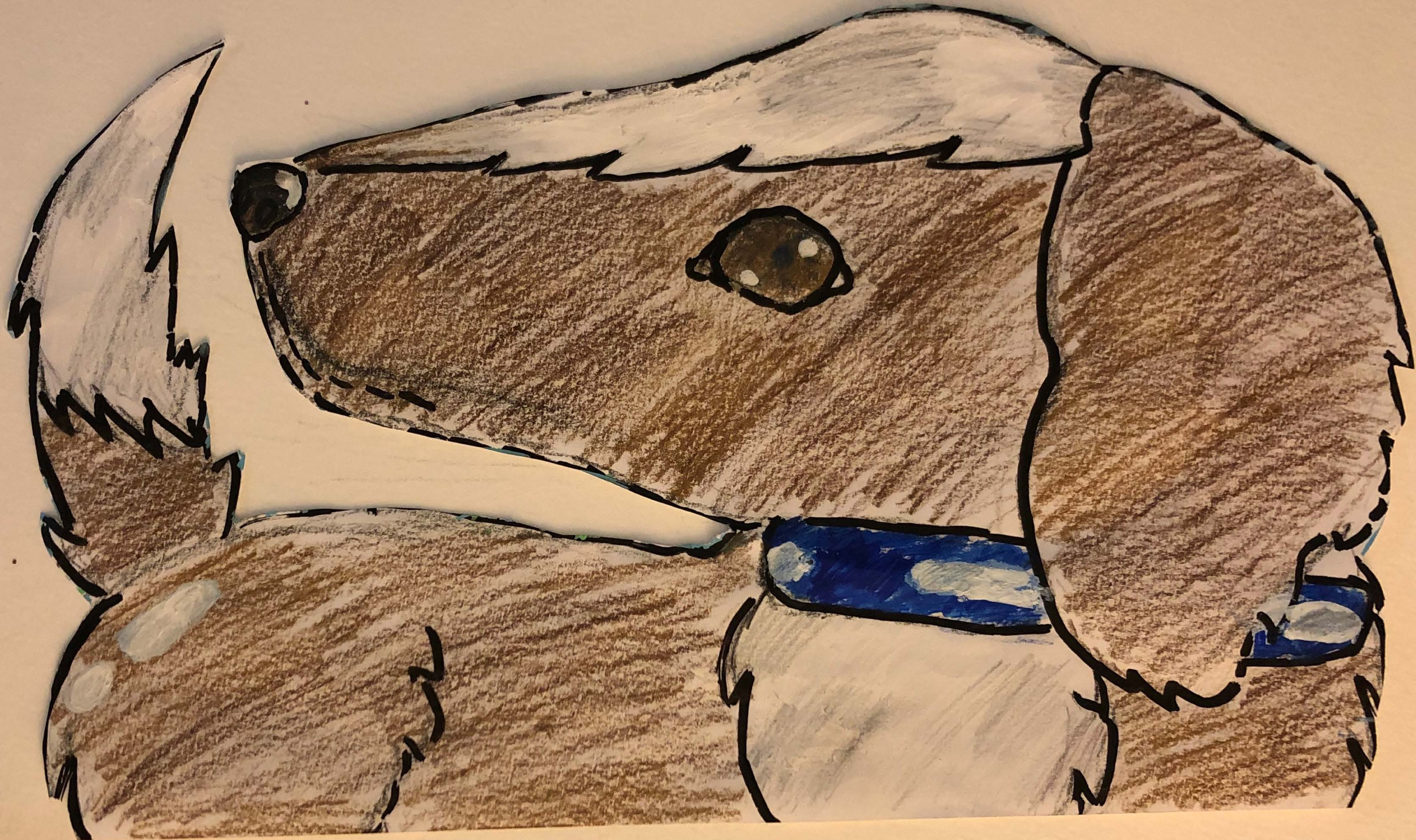
Through my journeys I have learnt how precious it is that we live in balance with nature.

We all have a role to play.

We are all connected.

We all need each other for a better planet.



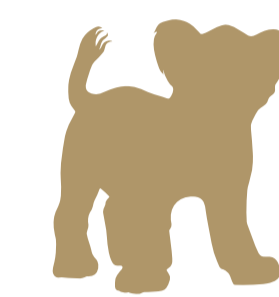




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Her Views & Visuals

By Bree Hokana

Moose (*Alces alces*)



Her Views and Visuals

Bree Hokana was born and raised in southern California and has lived quite a unique and different life. Her mother Dana is a world-renowned horse trainer and clinician and instilled in Bree the virtues of hard work and dedication. Bree has had a stellar career of showing horses and has many titles and accomplishments in the field, the most noteworthy one being the Leading Rider in the World three years in a row for the American Quarter Horse Association. She still shows horses travels across the country.

Horses were the reason she got into photography, although she is into different genres of photography. Bree considers wildlife and horses as her greatest passions and the hours of waiting to get the perfect shot most rewarding.

She is dedicated to learning new things and holds the belief that when you stop learning, you are no longer an asset to the world.

[instagram.com/breehokanaphotography/](https://www.instagram.com/breehokanaphotography/)

[facebook.com/bree.hokana](https://www.facebook.com/bree.hokana)



Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)



How did your interest in wildlife arise?

I grew up traveling with my family to Montana two to three times a year, and when you're there, you are in "wildlife photography central". While I have practiced just about all genres of photography, wildlife is where my love of photographing is. There is truly something so special about being out in the mountains, searching, waiting and looking for animals. I have seen some of the most incredible things while photographing animals; each time you go out it is a different experience. You always have the same goal; find the animal, and once you do it's the experience of a lifetime.

How do you describe your journey as a photographer and a person?

What a life I have been able to live... Before I could walk I was riding horses. I have traveled all across the country riding and showing World Champion horses. Which is why I began photographing in the first place. We had one of the top photographers come out and do portraits of us and our horses. I remember watching this wonderful lady and admiring how creative she was in capturing a girl and her horse. It sparked something in me. I began photographing soon after that, anything and everything that I could, like most inspiring photographers... But it didn't stop there, I kept after that love of photography. I am blessed to be able to do something that I love.

What is your view on Wildlife Conservation? How can we, as wildlife



Elk (*Cervus canadensis*)



Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*)

photographers, help to protect Mother Nature?

I think wildlife photography has allowed the world to see a lot of what it wouldn't see if it wasn't for photographers. I think photography can be inspiring to people and hope for people to want to do better.

Can you give our readers the best wildlife photography tips?

Patience! - Patience is one of the most important things you must learn in

photographing wildlife. It is something I have really developed. I have waited for hours, even years to achieve that "dream shot"... Which leads to another tip, don't give up! Sometimes photographing wildlife can have its ups and downs, you may not come out with your desired photo that you were wanting or picturing in your head. But that's when you have to remember, there will always be another day and another time to try. So keep at it!

And lastly, I would recommend making goals, I really believe that making goals

has made a huge difference in my photography, it holds you accountable to yourself. It will push you towards doing and being better. Set high goals and go after them!

What plans do you have in the future related to Wildlife Photography?

To travel more! While I'm very blessed to have been able to photograph what I have, I am always endeavoring to learn more and go to more places!

Tell us something about the gear you use and how it helped in your photographic journey?

Canon is how I was introduced into photography and it's still what I shoot with. I photograph with a Canon 5D Mark III. I have 24-105mm, 70-200mm, 100-600mm lenses.

I use a Benro tripod. Using this equipment has allowed me to get some of my dream shots.



American Bison (*Bison bison*)

© Bree Hokana



Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*)



Elk (*Cervus canadensis*)



THEMATIC GALLERY

BIRD IN ACTION

Show the personality of an individual or a group of birds in a memorable way.



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION

M S Ranganathan

White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)





THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION

Ganesh Namasivayam

Spot-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Tanishi S Nayaka

Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*)

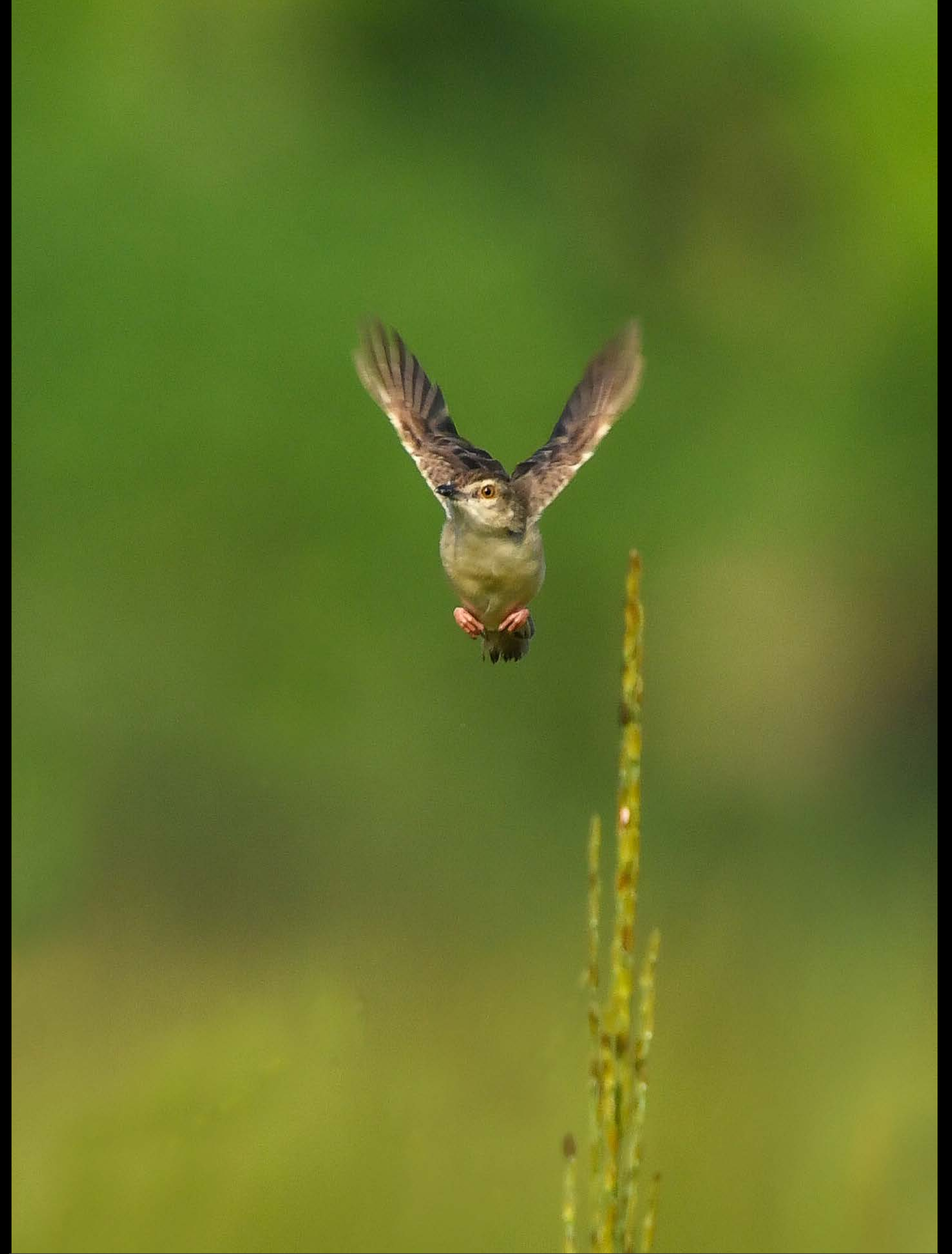


THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Siva Kumar

Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Vijesh Maroli

Ashy Prinia (*Prinia socialis*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Nidheesh.K.B

Tricoloured munia (*Lonchura malacca*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Nitin Shenoy

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Shyam Bhagra

Common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Padmanabhan Ranganathan

Oriental darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



M S Ranganathan

White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Ganesh Namasivayam

Shikra (*Accipiter badius*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Akhil Vinayak Menon

Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Ayush Bijalwan

Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Akhil Vinayak Menon

Greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



khaldoon Aldway

Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Shyam Bhagra

Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Nidheesh .K.B

Pied harrier (*Busard tchoug*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Amith Krish

Rufous-naped Lark (*Mirafra africana*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Rejith Muraleedharan

Pharaoh Eagle-owl (*Bubo ascalaphus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Nandhagopan Potti Rajan

Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Shreya Patel

Oxpecker (*Buphagus*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Mahesh S

Lesser Fish Eagle (*Ichthyophaga humilis*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Nidheesh K B

Jungle Owlet (*Glaucidium radiatum*)



THEMATIC GALLERY - BIRDS IN ACTION



Nidheesh K B

Great Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*)



THROUGH THE LENS

New Zealand's Tongariro National Park

By Santiago Navarro

© Santiago Navarro

THROUGH THE LENS



Santiago is an Argentinian nature photographer who lived in New Zealand in 2018 and 2019, currently living in Australia. He was educated as a photographer at CEF (Centro de Estudios Fotograficos -Photographic Center Studies) in Córdoba and he studied cinematography for ten years at UNC (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba-Cordoba National University).

He has also learnt from different courses about cinematography production, photography, filmmaking, script writing and stop motion animation.

He works with a Canon 5DmrkII and 5DmarkIV cameras, with 24-105mm L, 16-35mm L and 70-200MM L Lenses.

[instagram.com/santiagonavarrofotografia/](https://www.instagram.com/santiagonavarrofotografia/)

‘It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door,’ he used to say. ‘You step into the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there is no telling where you might be swept off to.’

– Frodo quoting Bilbo, The Fellowship of the Ring, Three is Company

It is with those simple, but accurate words that one can explain how, under their feet, the dark stones that shelter the floor of one of the most extraordinary places on our planet cracked, the Tongariro National Park on New Zealand’s North Island. Tongariro is New Zealand’s oldest national park, established in 1887





© Santiago Navarro

and covers 796 square kilometers. UNESCO designated this stunning volcanic landscape park a World Heritage Area, as well as an important sacred place for Maori culture. This national park is twice as special to New Zealand as it is known as what is called a dual World Heritage area. This then means it recognizes its important Maori cultural and spiritual associations and its famous volcanic features.

During the 1800's there was much of controversy over who owned the land. Many North Island farmers wanted the land however it had a sacred meaning to Maori Tribes. It would have been a great

loss to the Maori to lose this land. On September 23, 1887, the Maori chief Te Heuheu gifted the three sacred volcanoes to the crown. Together they then formed the Tongariro National Park. The parliament only officially established it in 1894. Over the years the park's size has increased, and it is now 78,618 hectares.

The park allows us to see the land as it once was, and it is also a cultural icon for New Zealand - there are many Maori legends that connect to this land. The landforms, ecosystem and volcanoes are recognized to have significant international importance.

Millenary stories of Mother Earth are exposed in the scars that the strong blows of volcanic fury dealt on the chisel of time. A land full of mystery, a landscape that transports us to a lunar stage, the always latent force of Mount Ngauruhoe that cries out with the breath of a dragon to wake up at any moment. An invitation to adventure, a mixture of reality and literature, there lies the heart of this story.

It was in mid-December of the year 2018 when I was in New Zealand that the real possibility arose of experiencing one of the world's most outstanding places opened up for me. The anxieties, the

illusion and the expectation that generated seeing, with my own eyes, one of the locations where the film trilogy "The Lord of the Rings" was shot. These expectations were exceeded at the beginning of the journey through the road to the national park, beauty is imposed on both sides, the large forests framed by volcanic chimneys and the mystical accent granted by the endearing clouds of New Zealand and its countless colors, with the first and last lights of the day, make this, one of the deepest experiences that a person willing to give their eyes can experience.

With friends, Marcos Sanzano and Kevin



Lepes, from cinematography school we, trekked the Tongariro National Park. Throughout the eight hours it can take to trek the 19 km to cross the park from side to side, taking the first steps in the Mangatepopo Road Carpark, the landscape will change, starting with a desert moorland combined with slopes covered with sparse vegetation, ancient rivers of lava cut the harmonious undulating forms of the hills and in the

distance, you can see the perfect cone of Mount Ngauruhoe, one of the most recent chimneys of the volcano Tongariro.

The track is quite easy at the beginning, then we will go along the path that borders the cone. After the first hour of the journey, a new landscape is revealed, when we look back we see that we have already ascended and behind us there is a valley in the distance. We are surprised at

the front to see a more somber panorama framed by large, pronounced and dark rocky slopes, for one of them is that the road continues and brings us closer to the great chimney that inspired Mount Dum in the movie "The Lord of the Rings." This track section physically stresses walkers, it is a climb similar to a staircase that tests our lungs and legs.

At this point, we stop to rest, while

contemplating the traces of a latent tectonic force, to become present again. When we begin to surround the iconic mountain on the side that will mark perhaps half the way, but not to be deceived, there is still a long access to go, the craters and peaks that must be overcome the rest of the way are presented.

During the trek across the volcanic





landscape I had the opportunity to pursue my photographic style. I think that clouds and sun are essential to see the infinite possibilities that light has to draw landscapes, bringing us closer to time as an element of space transformation and forcing us to select that portion of time and space that will best present the point of view you want to tell. The balance is between light and shadow and there is something mysterious that I try to decipher...

I believe that light and darkness fades into each other... My interest in photography arose at the time when the mountains of Cordoba burned from the fires and ruined the surroundings of my grandparents' field. I wanted to record the damage that the fire produced so I took a family camera to capture images and there I realized that what I recorded was not I filled my expectations of what I wanted to communicate and that is why I dedicated myself to study and practice. It

will be because of the remainings of that fire and the desolation that I felt, my wildlife photography style has high contrasts and dark tones dominating this part of my work. Light and darkness as opposites but parts of the whole.

During the time it takes to walk along a portion of Mt. Ngauruhoe you can see part of the geological activity of the place, steam jets meander in their escape from the depths of the earth; it is perhaps

in this section where the great craters and vapors plunge us into a lunar landscape. This largely horizontal section is of extraordinary beauty and imposition. Continuing with the tour and after some time we face again a small stretch of demanding ascent, this part of the road is highlighted by the ascent to what is called The Red Crater - practically the path bringing us to the top of the crater - which by itself it is impressive with its deep red color, but it also reveals one of



the best known postcards of this park; at this point our view covers almost 360 degrees almost the entire park. On the hillside descending to the front you can already visualize the famous and colorful lakes among which the Emerald Lagoon stands out, named for the color of its waters; these lakes not only surprise us by the extraordinary colors they give out, but also are surrounded by the steam that emerges from the bowels of the earth, a halo of magic and mysticism bringing us closer to the middle earth that JJR Tolkien related to us in his trilogy and that Cinematography Director Peter Jackson knew how to take to the big screen.

Beyond the horizon, to which we must

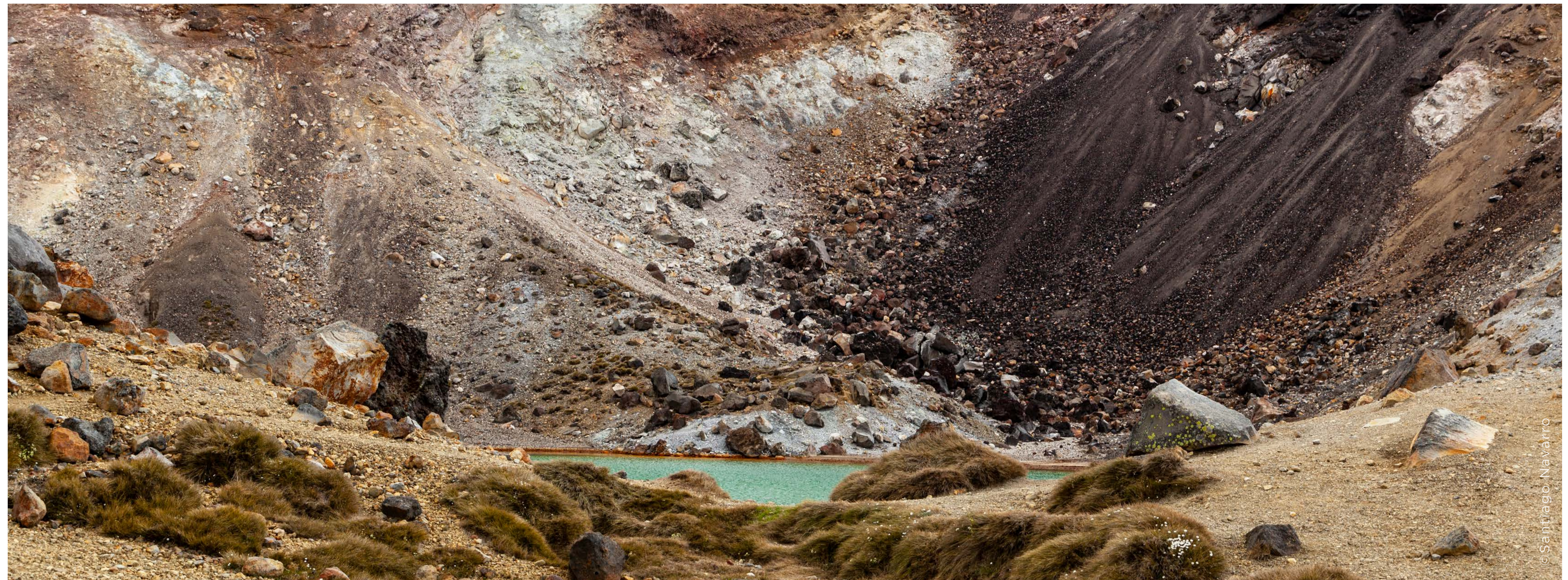
make a pilgrimage, is the great Blue Lagoon that flashes by the rays of sunlight that make its way through the clouds that have been with us for some time, but that dramatically increase the mood of the landscape with the dark glades that they give us. The path that takes us from the top of the Red Crater to the Blue Lagoon seems in sight not very long, but when we begin to descend the slope that will lead us to through the three colorful lagoons, we will realize the real dimension of the place. The lagoons here are sacred so please don't touch the water and don't drop stones to them. It is always good at this point to take the time to eat something and hydrate while our senses delight in everything the park is offering.

Already with energies replenished, we continue our way, surrounding the lagoons a couple of times to take photographs and then we set course for the Blue Lagoon. To get closer to this, a steep climb that takes place in a short time awaits us, the view as always in the park, is unmatched, surprises awaiting every meter we travel.

Already halfway there we return to realize how lucky we were that day, the weather is very unpredictable in this magnificent place, sudden climatic changes can occur that affect the route of the park, but for us it was an experience full of lucky opportunities, dense but intermittent clouds, without threat of rain, and with

the magic of the walker, we were transferred to the dark lands of Mordor. We did not suffer extremes of cold or heat, it was all perfect, however, it is highly recommended that, in addition to a good amount of water, sunscreen and food, wear enough layers in case the weather decides to test us.

Having already passed the valley that separates Mount Ngauruhoe from Red Crater, with its warm soil, we reach the shores of the Blue Lagoon, and we are at the beginning of the last stretch of the park. Drawn by time and the power of the earth, the Laguna is already part of our past little by little, ahead of us a winding downward path awaits us that will take







© Santiago Navarro

our feet to the end of the journey and adventure.

The descent does not present too much difficulty in itself, only the fatigue of the busy hours is felt. This road that plays on the slope of the park and that will be in continuous descent allowing us to see in the distance the magnificent and largest water mirror of New Zealand, Lake Taupo, an impressive view full of a green mantle of life framing the source of all vitality to the immense reflection of the sky in the calm waters of the mythical lake.

Unmatched images accompany us for much of the descent. Then, abruptly the sparse vegetation and yellowish grasslands are seen conquered by a lush green blanket of the beautiful variety of natural vegetation characteristic of New Zealand. Similar to the end of a book, the epilogue of this path, is a rest under a blanket that with its last words crowns a natural masterpiece, its last prayers are the last stakes that will fix in our mind and heart this adventure between geology and the mythology.

A place where the earth speaks to us from its depths, where the voice of another time echoes in the perishable present, the silent message of this earth, which goes beyond the perfection with which it molds everything in our sight, is overwhelming and splendid. It is a feeling again and being part of this extraordinary work to which we owe everything, Nature, Mother Earth.



TRAVELOGUE

Yellowstone National Park

By Faizel Ismail



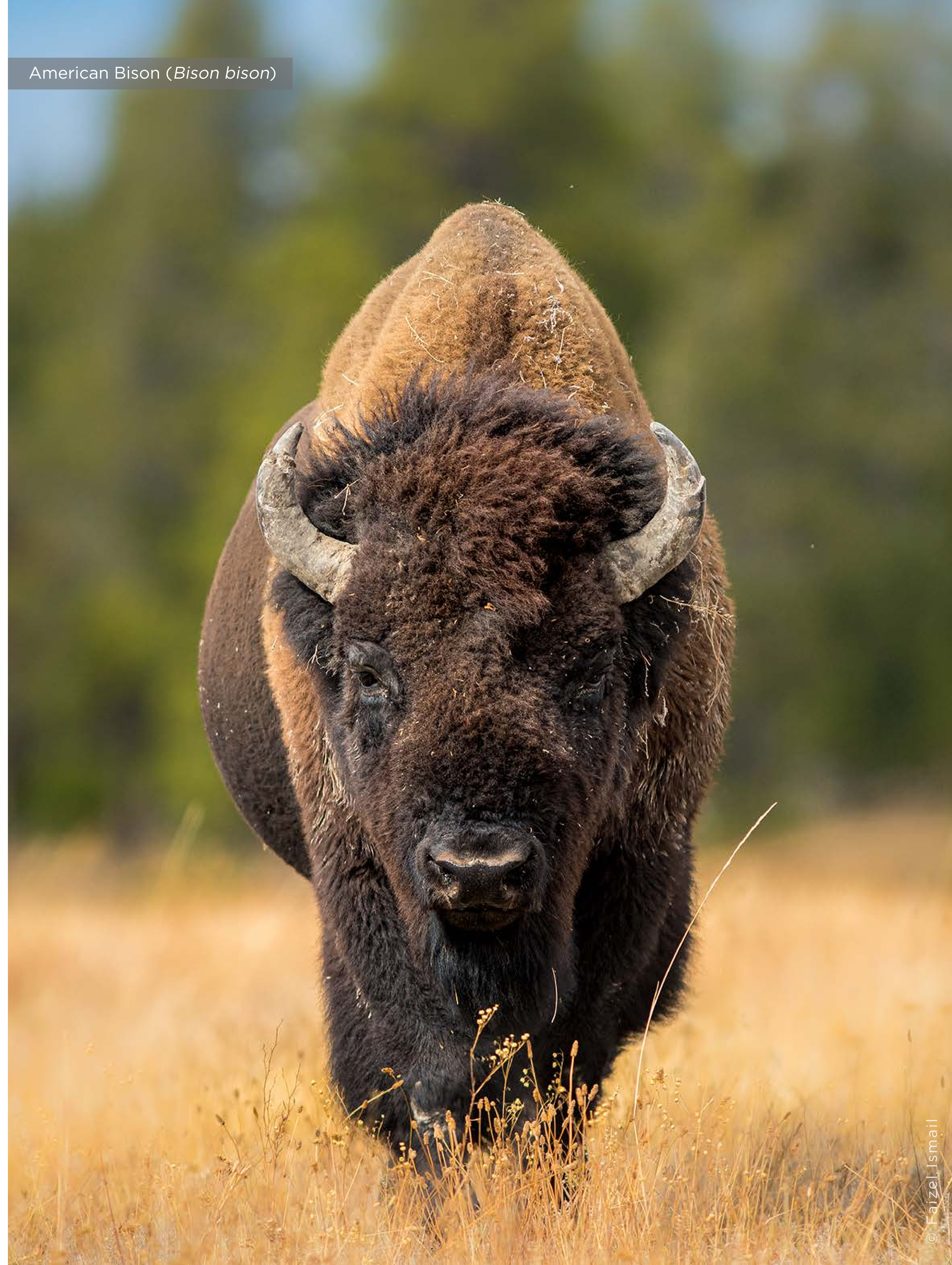
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TRAVELOGUE





American Bison (*Bison bison*)



Faizel is a wildlife photographer, writer, conservationist and international safari guide. Growing up in South Africa allowed Faizel to develop a deep love and connection to nature.

Through his photography and writing, he seeks to tell stories that connect his audience to our planet's last remaining wildernesses and the creatures that call these great wildernesses home.

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The year is 1806, John Colter, a member of the famous Lewis and Clark exploration, decides to split off from the main expedition party. Traveling by himself he begins to explore a vast, unknown, alien landscape. One which presented him scenes beyond his imagination. Upon his return he inspired suspicions of delirium. His sanity questioned while he stood resolute, recounting perilous tales of survival in an unfathomable landscape. Stories of fire and brimstone. Boiling mud, steaming rivers, explosions of boiling water. All spewing from a heretofore unknown earth. The stories he told were dismissed as the fancies of a mind far too long exposed, adrift in nature. His bemused colleagues nicknaming this supposed fiction "Colter's Hell". (Colter though, was obviously far from the first human to explore this incredible wilderness. Native American tribes had frequented the area for thousands of years, using its fertile hunting grounds). Many years later the area Colter explored became part of the world's first, and America's pre-imminent, national park... Yellowstone.

Can you even Imagine the fierce opposition faced as Yellowstone was established as the world's first national park in 1872? This, a time when neither the importance of biodiversity; those fierce, yet deceptively delicate wild spaces, nor the importance of preserving such places for the betterment of man was of paramount concern. Indeed, this was a time when communities saw the land at its simplest, basest form. That being a means to provide for their immediate needs. Dependent on hunting, fur trapping, and logging,

people hadn't the leisure to perceive these immense wildernesses as anything other than a resource to fill their coffers. Life at its meanest simplicity. A means of survival. Declaring a portion of land as large and vast as Yellowstone as a protected national park was likely deemed, at its most generous, foolhardy. In retrospect however, it was an act of great foresight. This act would give rise to National parks all across the globe, protecting our planet's last, greatest wild spaces. Yellowstone's importance, and significance as a national park is immeasurable. It has inspired countless generations. It has become a symbol of hope. A wilderness once inexplicably daunting was to become America's gift to the world. A gift harboring immense knowledge. Knowledge gained through the many studies we have carried out within the park. Incredible, is it not? When one considers the fact that this, one of Earth's greatest wildernesses lay, blatant, and unhidden in the heart of one of the world's most modern societies. The message and importance of this last fact must be reiterated: Regardless of location, even in the midst of the developed world, given half a chance? Nature will find a way. Life, like blood it seems, will out.

What of Yellowstone today? Networked with roads, and peppered with lodges? Bold boardwalks, plotted paths, and other amenities alien to the region in the 1800s? Apparent? Yes, certainly. Humanity is nothing if not fond of leaving footprints. However, these paths are hardly enough to legitimately impact the essence of this unimaginably formidable landscape. For regardless of our having applied maps, paths, and a sense of comprehension, it is







pure vanity to assume this is not the self-same great wilderness that mesmerized those early explorers. This fact has never changed, and I pray it never will. The great wilderness that is Yellowstone is as beautiful as it ever was, because it's just as wild, just as rugged as it ever was. Perhaps it's the very violent, rugged nature of its landscape that has fascinated us for generations? The raging geysers, tempestuous thermal areas. The sheer indomitability evoking the wonder of those first explorers to lay eyes upon this near-mythical expanse... and that's what the human spirit desperately craves: a sense of wonder. A glimpse of places that transcend imagination.

The opportunity to perceive and appreciate Nature. Undiluted. Life Transcendent.

Awe-inspiring as they may be, it is not only Yellowstone's temperamental geysers attracting us to her. This vast, raging landscape, indomitable indeed, is poetically, home to some of the most spectacular wildlife found anywhere on the planet. From its ancient bison herds to its world-famous echoing, ghost-like wolf packs, Yellowstone is as wild, and spectacular today as it ever was. Much like their ancestors, the great beings of today continue to carve out lives amongst her ancient geysers and hot springs. For eons having sought shelter in the shadows of the rugged peaks surmounting this breathtaking wilderness. These ancient scenes justifying the conviction that Yellowstone sets a stage unlike anywhere else on earth.

Uniquely diverse. Undeniably majestic.

The question though is how does a wilderness as ancient as Yellowstone fit into the modern world? A world increasingly alien. Now faintly illuminated, and explored almost idly through an infinite amount of tiny, synthetic screens? It is fact, however agonizing, that we live in a world driven by technology. Technology as a standalone may have many merits, this is undeniable. Having said that? It has become blatantly clear that despite its immediate merits and peripheral uses, our technological fervor has an infinite number of pitfalls. For one, our hunger for the latest gadget, with all the trimmings (let's not forget our insatiable appetite for social media.), has effectively disconnected us from the natural world. This willful numbing of the human spirit is at the core of what can only be described as a "de-evolution" of the human species. We have gone from a race of people that sailed the seven seas, that pinnacled Everest, to a species that's glued to our smartphones. Where kids once dreamed of being great explorers, astronauts, and adventurers, we now see them waging campaigns to be social media influencers.

An entire generation chasing "likes". An entire generation bereft "life".

This is why it's imperative now, more than ever, that we need places like Yellowstone. Places that remind us of just how incredible, how formidable our planet truly is. Places that reconnect us with not simply the natural world, but that sacred dialogue between the human spirit...and the Nature which breathed life into us all. A view, and perspective simply beyond the scope of our many, many toys. One





Elk (*Cervus canadensis*)

© Faizel Ismail

meant for the senses we were gifted, not the ones we've gifted ourselves. Spending time in this remarkable wilderness, embracing it as it embraces you, you quickly realize that its astounding beauty is only part of its eternal story... We are indelibly, incredibly the other part of the story that is Yellowstone. For Yellowstone transforms you.

It cannot help itself.

It transforms the way you feel, the way you see things, the very way you want to experience the world. This great wilderness sparks something inside you; they say to explore is a trait inherently human, that these embers of adventure are within us all, and maybe it takes a place like Yellowstone to set these embers ablaze. Perhaps places like Yellowstone make us better versions of ourselves. Perhaps it's places like Yellowstone that give us purpose.

To me Yellowstone is so much more than a place where I spend my days attempting to capture images of the beautiful creatures found within its vast boundaries. Yellowstone is a place where I feel complete. Where I feel whatever it is that means "home". When I spend time in this remarkable park it transports me. Places me at peace. I have found this to be true of all of our planet's great wildernesses. Nature's vast kaleidoscopes, her infinite palettes that make us feel beautiful by association.

Whenever I visit Yellowstone, I find myself getting lost in youthful wonder. I become that little boy peering through

the looking glass. Feeling dwarfed by everything around me. That's what makes Her so special. She humbles me, makes me fall in love, defines my insignificance on our planet's great stage. Because of that I love every second I spend there. I love watching the bison, these ancient gatekeepers meander through the hilltops and meadows as they forage. I love hearing the wolves howl in the valley as they prepare for the hunt. I love the haunting calls of bugling elk as they round up their harem, or feeling the sounds of the thunderous waterfalls echo through me. I love sitting in golden fields watching the coyotes hunt, or being left awestruck as an ungainly grizzly idly crosses my path... I love knowing that there are places like Yellowstone that help me find the part of me that makes me feel alive.

I recall the first time I visited Yellowstone... I cried. I don't know why I cried. Maybe because it was just so overwhelmingly beautiful? Was it that my soul had found a part of itself it wasn't aware it was missing? I know that sounds incredibly cheesy, but that's ok with me. I'd rather believe in the magic of a place. The heartbreaking, breathtaking, audacity of life. than worry myself with vanity. If that's what it takes to keep the light inside of me burning bright, I'm equal to the task. I've enough audacity to purchase that ticket.

It's a pittance. Nothing more. Much has changed since those first explorers discovered this incomprehensible wilderness. Much, save Yellowstone. At its essence this turbulent landscape has remained true

to its legend. In an ever-shrinking world, one disappearing before our very eyes, Yellowstone stands as a beacon, as a hope, that even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, our planet's greatest, wildest spaces will not only survive, but also serve as a necessary respite where the human spirit can find solace.

Earth is a book.

Life fills its pages.

Yellowstone spans its chapters.

We are but one line on a page of infinity, and we've oceans of ink to spare.

What, I wonder will our story be?

And will we, humanity, be here to read it?

Ask the species holding the pen.









Swedish Wildlife Artist
Gunnar Tryggmo

WILD ARTS SHOWCASE

G



Gunnar Tryggmo is an internationally known Swedish wildlife artist who specializes in birds and mammals from northern Europe.

Gunnar explains his early fascination with nature and how he became a wildlife artist. Watercolors are his preferred medium.

**<http://gunnartryggmo.se/>
[facebook.com/gunnartryggmo](https://www.facebook.com/gunnartryggmo)
[instagram.com/gunnartryggmo/](https://www.instagram.com/gunnartryggmo/)**

As a child I was commonly interested in all forms of handicrafts like woodcarving, drawing and reading. Living on a farm in the woodland with family members interested in hunting, fishing and outdoor life was easy to develop a love for the nature and its

creatures. With this in mind it's easy to see why wildlife subjects were the first inspiration source, and still are for me. I have early memories when I was about four- five years old, sitting in my grandmother's kitchen drawing birds on cover paper.





Kyösti Turtiainen, my uncle who was part-time artist early discovered my interest. He provided me with the right material and taught me the basic technique. He constantly encouraged me to draw and paint.

I think this and my little manic interest meant that my artistic skills developed fairly quickly.

During these first years my writing was a constant repetition of certain motives. I was quite targeted already as 8-10 years old. At this time, I was inspired by the Swedish artists Harald Wiberg, Bruno Liljefors and Gunnar Brusewitz. I participated in my first group exhibition at the age of thirteen in 1983. My art teacher at high school, Jean Wilton also invited me to exhibit together with him. I spent two years at art school with a broad focus on drawing painting, sculpture and art history.

I was born in the southern forest highland in Småland, Sweden with a diversity of dense forests, many lakes, creeks and small scale agriculture landscape. Now I live with my family in Viken north of Helsingborg on the southwest coast, close to very good habitats for shorebirds on the migrating route for lots of Arctic birds.

I try to spend as much time as possible outdoors, to find new subjects and inspiration for new paintings. My field work consists of drawings, paintings and photos.

Sometimes a painting starts with a certain occasion - the idea for the artwork is clear and finished directly. I may even finish the idea sketches for



the scenery and take some reference photos on location.

One thing I find very good with field sketching of living animals and birds are the natural time pressure, the bird

can be gone in a minute, this forces you to work fast and minimize the information. I think this gives a freshness which I find hard to create in my studio paintings. I spend much time

in Sweden's northern forests where the wildlife is very different compared to the coastline.

More often I have an idea of something

I have seen or have in mind which I think could work for a painting. In this case I can spend a lot of time collecting reference materials. It happens that field







© Julie Askew

sketches and images are not used until several years after they were made.

I also find it inspiring to make more finished piece in plain air. The most common techniques for my field studies are pencil and watercolor, sometimes also oil painting in smaller sizes.

I take a lot of reference photos besides my sketch work. With my way to paint I'm not in need of perfect images, just something to support the process.

The camera is also perfect to remember complicated bird plumages with.

I enjoy painting in both oil and watercolor. In watercolor I paint very small pieces, and up to 40 cm x 60 cm. I tend to paint oil in larger sizes (up to 2 meters) and lately I have made a series of very small plain air painting up to 7cm x 9 cm. From the beginning my idea was to finish one in twenty minutes but I have had to reconsider that into at least one hour.

I think it would be useful for every oil painter to do a watercolor now and then. Watercolor is very much a one way conversation; as an artist you have to be completely sure what you want to do before you put the brush to the paper. Otherwise you can get some unwanted surprises.

Oil painting is more of a two way conversation. You can put a color on the canvas, stand back and see how it works, add more, maybe manipulate it and so on. One step forward and one step back, like a conversation with the canvas. I like to paint quite bold streaks at the beginning and add details and



highlights at the end.

Sketching and drawing is the mother of all artistic work if there are any anatomy involved.

My favourite subjects tend to vary over time. In the beginning it was garden birds, Capercaillies, Black grouse, Moose and Roe deer; animals which were close around

the area in which I grew up. Later its been landscapes and seascapes, birds of prey, different kind of shorebirds and lately the mega fauna from Africa. Though it seems like some are going to follow me for lifetime -Capercaillies, Loons, Eiders, Elephants, Zebras and the big cats.

I have a small studio where I show new paintings, and recent field sketches, open for public by appointment. My representative galleries are: Art Gallery Vättern, Motala Sweden; The Wykeham Gallery, Stockbridge, United Kingdom; Kneeland Gallery, Ketchum Idaho, USA; and Turner Fine Art, Jackson hole, Wyoming, USA.

My paintings have been juried into Birds in Art, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin, USA eight times. Two paintings have been purchased to the permanent collection of Woodson Art Museum "The sun breaks through"; a 30x42" Watercolor from 2013 and "Frozen"; a 24 x 39 oil painting from 2015. Also, the Museum has several drawings, field sketches, composition sketches and watercolor studies in their permanent collection.

I was delighted to have my painting "Balance" selected for the 2019 "Birds in Art" exhibition. It's always a thrill to have a piece accepted for this exhibition. BiA are considered to be the top notch show for artists with birds as a subject.

My personal favourite is a watercolor depicting a group of sleeping avocets balancing on one leg, and one laying down about to wake up. The size is quite big: 66 cm x 102 cm.

This year I decided to go to the opening weekend in Wausau, I have not been there since 2016, and you have to take the chance when you are in the show. Around seventy artists from all over world gathering...A chance to meet old friends from far away and make new ones.

The opening festivities consists of an artists luncheon, artist preview, a VIP reception and dinner on Friday. Saturday starts with the public opening, artists in action, with some of the attending artists demonstrates their techniques. This year's Master Wildlife Artist was a friend from England, a pencil artist known as Alan Woollett who held his Master talk in front of a big audience.

My paintings have been exhibited in a number of art exhibitions and galleries in the United States, and of course here in Sweden.

I have been included in The Western Visions Miniatures and Wild 100 at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, Wyoming. 2011-14

I am always looking for inspirations for new ecosystems and habits to visit. In 2018, I participated in a wildlife art safari to Kenya together with an artist friend Peter Elfman and my middle son Kristoffer. The goal was to find inspiration for new art, complete fieldwork such as sketching, watercolor painting, and to take reference photos. To improve sketching scenes we had empty sketchbooks with watercolor paper ready to make a journal for the trip.

We landed in Nairobi and made the surroundings for one day before we headed north to Samburu and Buffalo springs; some wonderful days in this dry bushy park, including some species here that you don't find in the southern part of Kenya. This includes the Reticulated Giraffe, Beisa Oryx and some birds like Vulturine Guineafowl and Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow weaver.

Then we went over the highlands down to Lake Naivasha for birdwatching and a boat trip.

Our final destination was the more open space in Masai Mara.

We spent the rest of our Safari here with the big cats and parts of the great migration. Game drives during the daytime and painting in the evening and through the nights. Busy days that gave endless inspiration...

In February-March 2019, I had solo show titled "The Wild Wonder" at Turner Fine Art in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This was my first solo show in the United





States. We decided to let the exhibition consist of only watercolors, and the subject was Birds and animals from the US along with my normal Swedish bird paintings.

Kathryn Turner, a co-owner of Turner Fine Arts and also a wildlife artist, said, "Gunnar Tryggmo is a master of his craft, exhibiting a level reached only through a commitment of time and passion. In his native Sweden, Tryggmo is highly revered for his watercolor paintings that follow in the country's rich tradition of the medium.

"Traditional watercolor is a very challenging medium because of its unpredictable nature and transparency—it is not possible to undo a misstep," said gallery owner Kathryn Mapes Turner. "This is why Gunnar's commitment to painting in this medium is so impressive. The results of his commitment are pieces that are both bold and sensitive, painstakingly rendered with a distinctive lightness of touch and spontaneity."

In 2020, my wildlife art will be exhibited at the Turner Gallery show "A Touch of Nature" featuring 23 watercolor paintings from the Western United States and East Africa.









YOUR GALLERY

Saurin Munshaw

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)





YOUR GALLERY



Kamalak Kannan Bownaan

Lion (*Panthera leo*)



YOUR GALLERY



Sylvia Mairs

Baboons (*Papio*)



YOUR GALLERY

Andy Clark

Spotted Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*) and Common warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*)





YOUR GALLERY



Rafi Muhammed

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)



YOUR GALLERY

Agniswar Ghosal

Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*)





YOUR GALLERY



Surya Narayan Mohapatra

Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)



YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Sujit Chakraborty

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)



MURAD HABIB
GUIDED SAFARIES · PHOTOGRAPHY

YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Murad Habib

White rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*)

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EXPLORERS

UPCOMING
FEATURES



INTO THE WILD

With Steve Winter



SONY 600MM REVIEW

By Hermis Haridas



TALES OF A POLKA-DOTTED ZEBRA

By Nisha Purushothaman
