

# PRIMATES

EXPLORERS

APR / MAY 2020

WOMEN'S EDITION



**INTO  
THE WILD  
WITH  
SHANNON WILD**

**AMPHIBIANS**  
BY CYNTHIA BANDUREK

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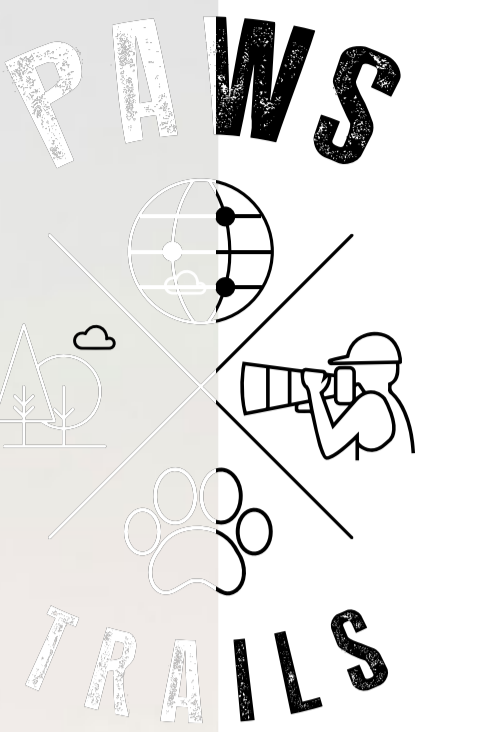
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Cynthia Bandurek  
Editor

In these hard times we are facing around the world, it is necessary to rethink our relationship with nature and with the rest of the humanity. We are not invincible as we think sometimes, we are vulnerable, and our fragility is increased by the progressive destruction of the Earth's biodiversity. Large-scale habitat loss, settlement of remote areas and wildlife exploitation have all magnified the chances of new diseases crossing from wildlife to humans, and we must understand that there is no possible human life without a healthy planet.

This volume, like each March - April number is dedicated to women. Women play a major role in photography and conservation around the world, and we are pleased to have this volume recognize women's contribution in the field. The articles and photos in this edition illustrate the key role women play to promote species conservation.

Shannon Wild is a wildlife photographer, cinematographer and speaker for companies such as NatGeo Wild, WildAid and United Nations. Catch her in the cover story feature.

Beccy Tanner, from the US brings us the story of the Bison, and how a project to recover its population with pure gene pool, can help to recover an entire ecosystem: the prairies.

From Oklahoma, the US and Tanzania, Jan Martin McGuire, shows us her beautiful art, and describes her journey to become an artist.

Claudia Sanz, from Argentina delights us with her magnificent and creative way of photography.

I too make my contribution speaking about the critical situation amphibians are facing around the world.

The Cub's corner, features Mia Patteri from India, who loves to paint her thoughts with colours and words.

Nithya Purushothaman writes about her experiences visiting and photographing at the Al Qudra lake in Dubai.

Seema Suresh from India describes her adventures with elephants in Corbet National park in north India.

We are grateful to all women that made this edition possible, but today more than ever, we need to fight together; join our efforts, passion, knowledge and heart to reach our urgent aim: revert the situation of the planet.



PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Graciela Tejeda Boglic  
Margay  
(*Leopardus wiedii*)



# FOUNDERS' NOTE

Sunday 8th March was celebrated worldwide as international women's day. We are dedicating this edition of PT Explorers a women's edition, a tradition we started in 2018. This is our third women's edition and every article, photograph in this edition is by women. Thanks to Cynthia for stepping in as the editor for this special edition.

PawsTrails is proud to have worked with ace women photographers, conservationists and artists worldwide. We have admired these women for the pathbreaking work they have done in favour of mother earth and all her many inhabitants.

At PawsTrails we are fiercely committed to promote, support, encourage women and highlight their achievements.

- One of our 2 Co-founders is a woman, an accomplished, awarded and well-published wildlife photographer and conservationist
- We publish women only editions of our flagship e-magazine PawsTrails explorers around World Women's day every year
- A women guest editor for our yearly women's day edition
- A women centric piece "Her Views & Visuals" in every edition of PawsTrails Explorers
- Women centric and single women exhibitions in Dubai, UAE
- Achiever awards for women at the PawsTrails international wildlife festival held in Dubai, UAE.

Humanity at this moment is going through tough times. The Corona epidemic which came to light in December last year is posing an existential threat to us. Never in most of our life times have we seen whole countries across different continents going into a near shutdown situation. We appeal to our readers across the world to follow guidelines and observe social distancing. PawsTrails has suspended all planned tours, exhibitions, workshops, outreach programs and closed the W in Dubai.

We sincerely hope that humanity will emerge out of this crisis, more strong, more wise and more in touch with nature.

[www.pawstrails.com](http://www.pawstrails.com)

**Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman**

Founders - PT Explorers



COVER STORY

# Into the Wild

with Shannon Wild



Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*)

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**Shannon Wild is an Australian based in Africa, working wherever wildlife calls. She's a passionate wildlife lover and conservationist at heart with a need for technical excellence in what she does.**

Since 2004 she's worked as a wildlife photographer, cinematographer and speaker for organisations such as NatGeo Wild, WildAid, United Nations as well as various wildlife NGO's and non-profits along with commercial campaigns.

In 2017 she founded Wild In Africa - Bracelets for Wildlife as a way to directly give back to some of the incredible conservation organizations she's worked with over the years. She presents internationally; feel free to get in touch with her if you have a speaking engagement to discuss.

She's also authored three books and planning on more in future.

She's most active on Instagram, where she posts almost daily including photo tips, settings and behind the scenes.

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Malagasy Giant Chameleon (*Furcifer oustaleti*)

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

Thanks so much for having me. I'm a wildlife cinematographer and photographer originally from Australia, now based out of South Africa, but working all over the world.

**What made you become passionate about Wildlife Photography?**

I've always been passionate about animals and wildlife in general, as long as I can remember, from the creepy crawly to the cute and cuddly. Discovering photography was a happy accident and I soon was able to combine those two subjects to find my dream career and pursue it. That was around 2004, so over 16 years ago. Before that I had a career as a graphic designer for many years.

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

So far it was filming a documentary on a rare Black Panther (melanistic leopard) in Southern India for over 18 months. It was an incredibly challenging environment to film in for many reasons aside from the fact we were trying to find and film such an elusive cat! 'The Real Black Panther' is currently being released all over the world now on NatGeo WILD channel and some streaming services.

**As a Wildlife Photographer, how do**



Crowned Lemur Black Lemur hybrid





Walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*)

**you capture emotion and show the importance of conservation issues?**

I believe that your passion and intention shows through in your work and certainly for me, understanding animal behaviour and being passionate about all the animals I encounter means I can convey that emotion whenever and wherever I shoot.

**What are the important factors to consider while having an interaction/ taking intimate photographs of wildlife? How important is it to understand their behavior?**

There isn't anything more important than understanding your subject in this line of work. It means the difference between even seeing the animal at all, let alone getting footage or a photo. Above and beyond that I don't want to just get footage or a photo, I try to capture exceptional content and document moments that will move the viewer. The only way to do that is through a thorough understanding of the subject, its environment and of course your gear, so that you're ready if and when those rare moments come together.

**Among the innumerable experiences you've had in the wild, can you share with us some truly memorable moments?**

One of the most memorable experiences I've had is seeing a baby elephant use its trunk to drink for the very first time. It initially dropped to its knees and planted its face into the water to drink using its mouth but after watching the

adults around, he finally worked out how to use his trunk to suck water up and then spray it into his mouth.

**Having photographed in so many wildlife rich areas do you have any favorite places or locations that keep drawing you back?**

There have been so many incredible places that I have been able to witness and document, so it's really hard to choose one above the other but Madagascar is definitely a highlight and so is the Arctic, a truly memorable place of stark beauty.

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

There are still so many animals and places I want to go and photograph and film. At the top of my list is definitely going to the Galapagos Islands to see the Marine Iguanas and also to the Pantanal to document jaguar hunting caiman.

**Have you ever witnessed something in the animal kingdom that you couldn't photograph due to having got too excited?**

I've never missed photographs or filming because of excitement but definitely because of being too far away or at the wrong angle or it happening way too fast for me to capture. That's just part of the challenges of this job.

I manage to contain my excitement internally in the moment so I can stay focused on the job at hand, but I'm dancing always inside.





Leopard Tortoise (*Stigmochelys pardalis*)

### What is in your bag?

Going into specifics of gear I would take too long. I have accumulated a lot of stuff over the last 16 years with a mix of still photography equipment and filming gear.

For stills I've always shot on Nikon and I currently have a D850 and a variety of lenses from wide through to telephoto.

For filming I use RED cameras and have several of those ranging from 5K up to

8k. I also use a variety of lenses on those cameras as well as audio equipment, various tripods, stabilization equipment and drones.

### In your belief, what poses the largest threat to wildlife conservation and what can be done about it as a photographer?

I think the largest threat to wildlife conservation is apathy and people thinking it's not their problem or they can't do anything about it. This

indifference is a lot of the reason why organisations struggle to get enough financial assistance to do the work needed in the field. Awareness and education is the key. As a photographer that's where I come in trying to build awareness and education that I can share with a greater audience, people who may never have the chance to see these species in the wild but can enjoy a photograph and learn about that animal or habitat and therefore want to protect it.

### Please share more about your Jewellery Line - "Wild in Africa"

I founded Wild in Africa - Bracelets for Wildlife in 2017 when I was off work very, very ill. I was bedridden for about 6 months and toward the end when I was able to get out of bed I was extremely frustrated creatively so began making bracelets as a creative outlet. I then turned it into a business to help raise money for conservation organisations that I had worked with personally and was able to offer financial support



Temminck's Pangolin (*Smutsia temminckii*)



through the sale of these bracelets. I'm now proud to have a wide selection of charity bracelets and various charities that we donate 50% of the purchase price to so our buyers know exactly how much money and where it's being donated.

### **Few words on your future projects and goals?**

I'm currently busy on my next wildlife documentary for National Geographic on lions in South Africa. It's about some very rare and very special lions, so it's a very difficult long-term project so we still have another year of filming ahead of us. I also have various workshops and speaking engagements throughout this coming year and into 2021 which will keep me busy including in Spain, Canada and the US.

### **What inspired you to share your knowledge in e-book format, and what has the response been to your books?**

I always post my camera settings on social media and I do this because it is one of the ways that I helped me teach myself photography by learning the settings of other photographers. While that certainly isn't everything and context matters greatly along with a photographer's decisions in the moment that lead to the setting choices, it still allows beginners to get a sense of how working professionals such as myself are shooting. That then encouraged me to write a variety of ebooks consolidating that information along with all of my tips and guidance in a very easy to read and visual format. I've also run photographic workshops in the past

in both pet photography and wildlife photography so these books are very helpful resources for those workshops.

### **What do you think is one of the greatest difficulties for someone trying to get into the field of wildlife and conservation photography?**

This is a very competitive industry because from the outside it looks very glamorous with its exotic locations and animals but it's a very difficult job and I feel people that don't make it are the ones that give up too soon or because it's too hard. My best advice for people wanting to get into this industry is absolute dedication and the understanding that it may take years or decades to turn it into a living. I've been doing this for over 16 years now and it's only in the last few years but I feel like I'm just starting to make a comfortable living with clients I had dreamt of such as National Geographic. I've had many, many opportunities to give up including sickness, life-threatening situations, and financial hardship and so I had many legitimate reasons to give up and the only reason I'm here is because I kept going despite every roadblock, every challenge and every hardship.

### **What are your three top tips for shooting wildlife that are almost never taught? Something new and fresh...**

Tip number one is to shoot wider while you're still trying to learn what makes for good composition. Then once you have the images downloaded you can play with different cropping and see which composition makes the strongest impact, this is a great way to learn what



David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, Kenya

@Shannon Wild

@Gurcharan Roodra



White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) with Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*)



Kenya Ivory Burn - 2016



makes a solid composition and to play with options so that you can start making those decisions in camera because you're seeing it while you look through the viewfinder.

Tip number two is get your safe shots first but don't keep taking the same shots over, start to experiment, that could be with composition or focal length or getting creative with shutter speed or depth of field. Do something different so that you don't end up with 20 photos that look the same when you could have discovered a really creative way of documenting the scene.

Tip number three is persistence, patience and practice.

**Some words of inspiration/  
advice for young aspirants in  
this field?**

My best advice for young aspiring photographers and cinematographers is reiterating what I said before and that is persistence. There is no better advice I can offer. While things like networking and knowing your gear and practicing are all essential elements, at the end of the day what's going to get you the opportunities and the work is to stick with it because then you'll still be there when the opportunities come when most other people have given up.





Giraffe (*Giraffa*)



Silverback (Gorilla)



Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*)



Kittiwakes (*Rissa*)

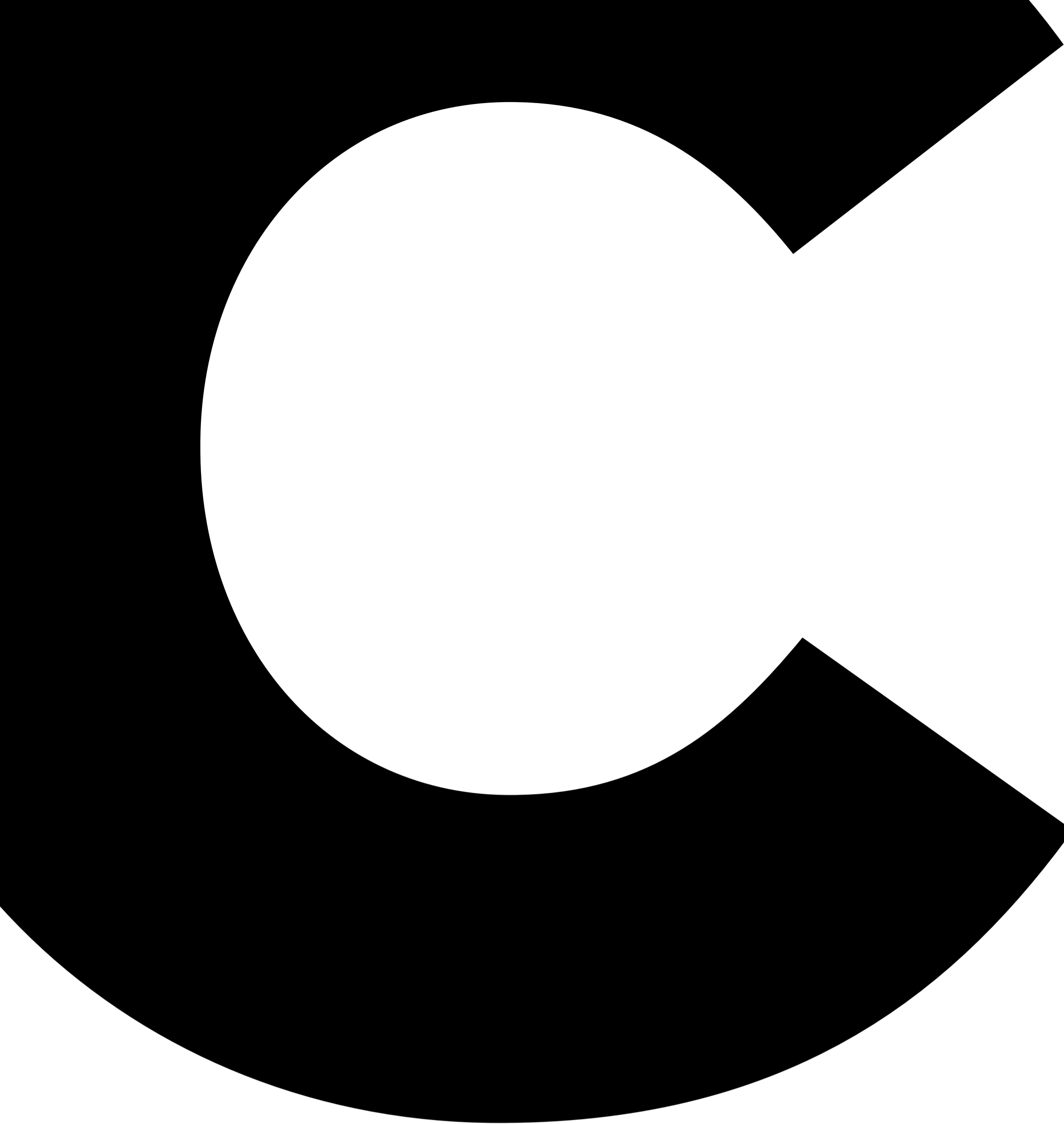
CONSERVATION

# The biological crisis of amphibians

By Cynthia Bandurek



*Dendropsophus* sp.



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

**She participated for seven years in an Amphibian Conservation Project in Argentina, monitoring its biodiversity in a Natural Reserve.**

**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.**

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*Scinax garbei*



@Cynthia Bandurek



Peters' Dwarf Frog (*Engystomops petersi*)





*Osteocephalus festae*

### The dramatic situation

Declining amphibian populations is a global phenomenon. Amphibians are currently considered the most threatened group of vertebrates on the planet, which are suffering some of the largest extinctions in the world. The main causes are a combination of local and global factors and all can be attributed to human impacts on the environment that directly or indirectly cause a loss of forest quality and thus its vital functions, such as climate change, destruction and transformation of habitats, introduction of non-native species, farming practices and in the last decades a new threat has been added: the irruption of emerging diseases such as chytridiomycosis and Ranavirus, which can cause the disappearance of populations in a few months.

Chytridiomycosis is an infectious disease that affects amphibians around the world. It is caused by the Chytrid Fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*). This silent killer has slaughtered amphibians around the world, for decades. In the 1980s, it started to devastate frog populations worldwide, and now it is considered the greatest catastrophe of biodiversity in terms of diseases, in our history.

There are hundreds of species of chytrid fungi, and most of them are unobtrusive decomposers. But *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* has a special taste for the proteins in amphibian skin. The fungus kills amphibians by degrading the keratin in their skin, making it harder for them to absorb the oxygen and trace minerals they need for good health and, in turn, causing heart failure. It basically eats their skins alive.





*Dendropsophus* sp



*Craugastor longirostris*

*Dendropsophus sp*

Not only is this fungus lethal, it's also devastatingly effective at spreading. Along the way, it evolved, spawning a highly virulent strain that's primarily responsible for the pandemic. The fungus can spread by contact or by water; and its spores can swim a short distance. And if conditions are right, the fungus can live outside of its host for weeks or even months.

This fungus was and even today is spread around the globe, mainly by the international wildlife trade.

Declines in amphibian populations bear significant implications for the functioning of many ecosystems, and as humans, we will suffer the consequences of it, and the same way with the decline of the rest of the Earth's biodiversity worldwide.

It's like a Domino effect, when you remove or affect one or a group of living beings, this triggers a cascading effect that affects other life groups. And at the end this affects the functioning of the entire ecosystem.

A recent research in Panama has shown that populations and body size of tropical snakes are being affected by the disappearance of amphibian populations.

#### **Amphibians are amazing creatures.**

Amphibians were the first group of vertebrates that developed legs and managed to get out of the water to conquer the land. Although they are generally considered by most to be simple and primitive animals, amphibians display a high diversity of survival

strategies that have allowed them to occupy a large part of terrestrial and freshwater habitats.

Amphibians are small vertebrates that need water, or a moist environment, to survive. The species in this group include frogs, toads, salamanders, caecilians and newts. All can breathe and absorb water through their very thin skin.

Amphibians also have special skin glands that produce useful proteins. Some transport water, oxygen, and carbon dioxide either into or out of the animal. Others fight bacteria or fungal infections. And at least one, in each species, is used for defence.

Evolution allowed amphibians, like other animals, to develop strategies for survival. Some of them developed the ability to go unnoticed both to their predators - in some cases - and to their preys - in others. This capability, which allows many of them to complete their life cycle, is called crypsis or cryptic coloration, and gives the individual the power to blend in with their surroundings.

In this design trial, nature allowed some toxic or poisonous amphibians, to have bright colors and flashy designs; these are warning colors, a strategy called aposematism. Instead of going unnoticed, they warn potential predators that they are preys unpleasant to eat, with bad taste or poisons. Eventually, predators learn that some combination of colors produce an unpleasant experience, and then they avoid repeating it. Bold, bright colors, like a traffic light, mark danger and need to stop.



*Boana cinerascens*



Hyloxalus sp.

And in this skill of simulation, mimicry appears, which happens when an animal copies another one's strategy, using it as a model. It is, for example for the case of animals that are not poisonous, wherein they mimic the coloration of those who are, avoiding predators by making them believe they are unfit for consumption, or dangerous.

In amphibians, body temperature varies with ambient temperature. They are ectotherms, meaning they can only rely on external sources of energy to regulate their temperature. In this incredible explosion of creativity Nature allows a frog adapted to extreme cold temperatures (the Alaskan Wood Frog) generate a strategy that prevent this freeze-pop effect by packing their cells with glucose (a kind of sugar) that reduces drying and stabilizes cells, a process scientists call cryoprotection. Concentrating sugar inside the cell helps balance the concentration of salts outside the cell that occurs as ice forms.

Language is one of the most complex tools with which beings can exchange experiences and share the perception of their environment. Just as humans use a wide and sophisticated order of phonemes, frogs and toads produce a rich variety of sounds, calls, and songs during their courtship and mating rituals. The callers, usually males, make stereotyped sounds in order to communicate their location, their mating readiness and their willingness to defend their territory; listeners respond to the calls by returning the call, by approaching and by going silent. These responses have been shown to be important for species

recognition, mate assessment, and localization. Pheromonal communication is widespread in salamanders and newts and may also be important in some frogs and toads.

### Final thoughts

There are currently more than 7700 recognized species of amphibian and new species are being added to the list each month, especially in the tropical areas. This is either due to new species discoveries or as a result of taxonomic revisions where a taxonomic split of one previously recognized species results in several new species.

But the situation of conservation is critical, amphibians have existed on earth for over 300 million years, yet in just the last two decades there have been an alarming number of extinctions; nearly 168 species are believed to have gone extinct and at least a 43% more have populations that are declining. This indicates that the number of extinct and threatened species will probably continue to rise.

That's why researchers and conservationist are urging governments around the world to pay attention to this problem by curbing the trade of wild amphibians, protecting amphibian habitats, combating invasive species that threaten amphibians, and supporting captive-breeding programs.

Conservation of each being is essential to ensure the existence of an intricate network supported by complex relationships, which allow the fragile



@Cynthia Bandurek





*Craugastor longirostris*



Zimmermann's Poison Frog (*Ranitomeya variabilis*)

balance of life and, therefore, our existence. This could be enough to consider their protection; however, there is another aspect that adds importance to conservation: the intrinsic value of life. That is, that it exceeds expressions based on valuations for the human being, to open scenarios in which the manifestation of life is a value in itself.

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New Granada Cross-banded Tree Frog (*Smilisca phaeota*)



*Dendropsophus sp*

SPECIES

# North American Bison

*Mighty, mighty bison  
helping create  
'a living ark'*  
By Beccy Tanner

Photographs by:  
The Nature Conservancy,  
Kansas Chapter





**B**

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**Beccy Tanner is a fourth generation Kansan, USA.**

**Currently, she teaches Kansas history classes at Wichita State University, writes and, in her spare time, leads bus trips on the backroads of Kansas.**

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On the windswept plains of Kansas, in central United States, a great and mighty experiment is taking place. It's on the same lands where just 150 years ago, mass slaughters of bison nearly brought the species to extinction.

Now, it is helping the bison and other wildlife species make a comeback. "The prairie is the most endangered ecosystem in North America," said Matt Bain, Western Kansas Conservation Program Manager for the Nature Conservancy. "And so, all these native species that depend upon it are worth

conserving. No other ecosystem has undergone such conversion and is still threatened.

"There is no more important landscape to preserve." In the Flint Hills, the Smoky Hills and Osage Hills of America's heartland, prairie chickens, meadowlark, and Henslow's sparrows call out to the horizon. Bison dot the prairie like a scene from Frederic Remington's Old West. They are considered historic grazers.

The 2,000-pound giants walk across ridges and clearings, noses to the ground,

biting blades of grass, grunting primordial sounds, deep and guttural, while the prairie birds and insects flit and fly across the grasslands. This is the America early explorers and first Kansans saw. This is the experiment the Nature Conservancy is nurturing. Out here. Out west. There is only wilderness. At night, few man-made lights interrupt the sky's horizon.

"There are some deep, black spaces out here," said Bob Hamilton, preservation director for the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma. The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, near Pawhuska, is in Oklahoma's Osage

Hills and is the largest protected example of tallgrass prairie in North America at about 40,000 acres and 6,000 buffalo. This year marks the preserve's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **The legacy**

In all of the symbols of the Old West, none are as iconic as the bison. When early travelers first saw the vast herds of American bison that once filled the Great Plains, they were, at best, flummoxed; overwhelmed by the sheer size and numbers. Spanish explorer Francisco







Vasquez de Coronado would write in 1541 when he came through that the Plains were filled with such a quantity of bison “that it is impossible to number them.” Three centuries later, George Martin, a printer and secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, concluded that being close to the sheer size of the herds sounded like “a continuous roll of thunder.”

No other animal has such a legacy in the United States. For in America, it is the national mammal. And, in Kansas, not only is it the state mammal, but is featured on our state quarter, our state seal and sung about in our state song, “Home on the Range. In North America, the scientific name of the animal is “**Bison bison.**” The word bison is Greek meaning ox-like animal. The American bison is native to North America, South America and Europe – the two subspecies are the plains and wood bison. Buffalo, (*Bubalus bubalis*) such as water buffalo are native to Africa and Asia. However, in the United States, many people use the term buffalo and bison interchangeably, which is technically incorrect.

#### **A culture that decimated herds**

More than 25 million to 60 million bison once roamed across the prairies. But for 19th-century American homesteaders and entrepreneurs -- who called them “buffalo”—the animals were a nuisance. The bison stood in the way of garden-like farms and the 19th century western mindset favored organized garden over untamed wilderness. Ridding the Great Plains of the bison would be more than a simple act of conquering the wilderness.

It would require removing not only the animals but the people of the prairie. The bison became the spark in cultural conflicts between Plains Indian tribes and the U.S. government.

Many of the tribes saw the buffalo as a sacred animal – using almost all elements of the bison in their daily lives. With the loss of the bison, Plains Indians struggled for survival.

Homesteaders often only saw the bison, the Indians and the seas of grass as obstacles.

“There was only the enormous, empty prairie, with grasses blowing in waves of light and shadow across it, and the great blue sky above it,” Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote of her family’s homesteading experience in Kansas in “Little House on the Prairie.” Immigrants, Civil War veterans, women and former slaves all came to the Great Plains out of a sense of starting over.

Some walked. Some came by covered wagon. Others rode on trains. In their path, stood the great herds of bison and endless prairie. The federal government launched a campaign to eradicate the animals following the Civil War. In less than 20 years, the buffalo culture was replaced by cow-towns and cowboys.

#### **Bring back the bison**

By the 1890s, many of the Native American tribes that had populated the Great Plains had been relocated to Oklahoma and the ranks of the buffalo had been reduced to less than a thousand.



© Boel De Plecker

© The Nature Conservancy: Kansas Chapter

The last buffalo killed in Kansas was in April 1887 in Cheyenne County. In the late 19th century, C.J. "Buffalo" Jones, a Garden City, Kansas buffalo hunter and promoter, was credited with saving the animal from extinction. He also was among several ranchers who tried crossing cattle and bison to create the "cattalo."

He captured a dozen wild buffalo and began building his own herd to sell to parks and zoos. He became friends with President Teddy Roosevelt and was appointed the first game warden of Yellowstone National Park. Slowly, the numbers grew.

In recent years, genetic testing has shown that some cattle genes appear to be present in more than 95 percent of bison tested. However, there are still some bison considered genetically pure of domestic cattle – those include bison from the Wind Cave bison herd in South Dakota which was initially started from 14 bison from the New York Zoological Society. The Nature Conservancy is currently working in partnership with Wind Cave to form a dozen satellite herds of the genetically pure animals across the United States.

There are approximately 362,000 bison in North America, according to National Bison Association website.

#### **The Flint Hills projects**

In North America, a huge sea of grass and wildflowers once stretched from Northern Texas through Manitoba. It has largely been plowed up, paved over or built upon. Between two and four of the



nation's prairie remains.

And, much of it is in the Flint Hills of Kansas and the Osage Hills of Oklahoma. The Konza Prairie Biological Station in northeastern Kansas is an 8,600-acre research prairie lab. Since the 1970s, it has examined the three main drivers that lead to healthy prairie and maintenance – grazing, fire and variable continental climate changes.

Its mission is to understand what's happening on the prairie, preserve what's left and do outreach and education with the public. The word Konza is named after the Kaw or Kansa Indians for whom the state of Kansas is named. "Mostly, what we have found is that prairies before Europeans came through were likely mosaics," said Eva Horn, assistant director of the Konza station. She has her doctorate in behavioral ecology. The Konza station, located south of Manhattan, has a herd of 400 buffalo that was originally part of a herd established at Fort Riley, Horn said. Its DNA has some cattle genetics.

The Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve near Strong City has a herd that varies between 75 to 100 head of buffalo. But the genetics in these Flint Hills bison are descended from Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota.

The Nature Conservancy has a goal to build a herd of genetically pure bison with more than 1,000 animals – healthy reproductive adult bison. "The reason we want to get to that level is to maintain genetic diversity for the long haul," said Brian Obermeyer, landscape programs

manager for The Nature Conservancy at the Tallgrass Prairie preserve near Strong City.

"This is an obtainable goal," Obermeyer said. "We are not that far off in building the herd to that size."

So, what's happened to the prairie since buffalo once dotted it by the numbers? Nearly all of it has been gobbled up by other uses – farm land, feedlots, towns, highways, oil fields, fences and wind turbines.

In these parks, the Nature Conservancy is developing partnerships with area ranchers and communities. Its doing research to compare differences with other grass-eaters, such as cattle – and the impact the animals have on the grasslands.

"I think in the past we have over-exaggerated how much superior the bison are versus cattle," Obermeyer said. "There are a lot of similarities. Bison are 95 percent grass-eaters. What that means is that they are going to be a little gentler on some of the plants than cattle might be. But cattle can be managed in such a way that it doesn't have as much impact." Bison create wallows, which are small depressions in the land when they roll on their backs to scratch, deter biting flies and help shed fur. Those wallows can be temporary wetlands when rain come. "They have the potential to create more wildlife benefits," Obermeyer said.

#### **Western Kansas partnership**

In western Kansas at the Smoky Valley Ranch, lesser prairie chickens and quail call out along with western meadowlarks.

The 17,000-acre ranch borders Little Jerusalem, a new state park that features more than 250 acres of giant limestone formations. The land's history dates back more than 85 million years ago to when this part of Kansas was a huge inland sea. Both the ranch and the park are home to ferruginous hawks, migrating golden eagles, pronghorn antelope, cliff kites and prairie dogs.

The ranch has a bison herd of 200 animals – from Wind Cave -- that roam over 4,000 acres.

"This is the kind of place we hope will inspire people to think about how important and unique the prairie is," said Matt Bain, the Western Kansas Conservation Program Manager for the Conservancy.

"As an eco-system, it draws attention to how impressive and how many treasures there are out here on the prairie," Bain said. "Little Jerusalem is breath-taking, and the plants and animals out here are the same way. They are all worth conserving."

The prairie in the Flint Hills is mostly tall grasses. But the prairie in western Kansas has short and mixed grasses. One of the premier animals besides the bison on the prairie is the prairie chicken. Once billed the "Prairie Chicken Capital of the World," the Flint Hills now hold dwindling numbers of the birds. The prairie chickens are often an indicator of the health of the prairie, Bain said. Annual prairie burning, close grazing, invasive trees, and the encroachment of civilization are all factors in their decline.

Another animal that has become a keystone species is the prairie dog.



“The prairie dogs and their presence indicate a lot of biological diversity – many other species depend on that habitat for their survival,” Bain said. Included in the prairie dog habitat has been the re-introduction of black-footed ferrets on the conservancy property.

Bison fit into the mix as one of the three ecological drivers in maintaining the prairie – grazing, fire and weather, which preferably, out west, means prolonged dry periods, Bain said.

The ranch also manages in roughly 13,000 acres a herd of 800 cow/calf pairs each year. But the most important work the Nature Conservancy is doing, Bain said, is developing partnerships. The philosophy of the Old West applies on the preserves, Bain said. “You have to work with your neighbors,” he said. “You can’t go about conserving what’s left of the native prairie without the relationship with other ranchers. Neighbors are more important than somebody that is a hundred miles away. Trust is important. You’ve got to make sure what you are doing is not negatively affecting your neighbor. That relationship is critical for what we are doing.”

#### **Preserving ‘a living ark’**

Oklahoma’s Bob Hamilton said The Nature Conservancy’s successful formula for preserving the prairie is recognizing diversity.

“We have catalogued about 760 different plant species on our property,” Hamilton said. “And, I think, only about 20 percent of those species are the grasses. The rest of the 80 some percent of plant species are broadleaf plants, wildflowers, what some people call weeds – to me, a weed is a judgement. They are all part of the ecosystem.”

The more diversity there is with plant species, Hamilton said, the more diversity there is with insects, birds and mammals such as bison.

And, it is all about keeping an eye to the future.

What is now the bread basket of America once was the tallgrass prairie.

The wheat fields of Kansas, the corn fields of Nebraska and Iowa were once where big bluestem, little bluestem, switchgrass, and Indian grasses waved across the horizon.

Those grasses created the backbone of the prairie, Hamilton said.

“We are all about building a living ark and maintaining all these different habitat types so all these species can keep coming along on the ride with us,” he said.

The prairie, Hamilton said, is all about space.

It’s about an unfettered horizon.

And, it is about inspiration.

“I mean, if you are not inspired, you are not alive,” Hamilton said.









CUB'S CORNER

# Colours & Craft

By Mia Patteri

CUB'S CORNER

## CUB'S CORNER



**Mia Patteri is an eight-year-old girl studying in second grade. She hails from Bengaluru in south India where she lives with her parents and her younger sister. Mia developed an initial interest in painting and writing when she started hand-making birthday cards for her classmates since her pre-school days.**

**Waldorf education has helped Mia develop her creative side and gives her ample opportunities to further her interests.**

It is a nice day,  
How I love to look outside the window  
And I say, Look at the birds chirping  
So nice that, when you hear them  
You just say -  
It's so nice.

I live in the big crowded city of Bengaluru in south India. My parents were careful to settle in the southern part of the city, which is comparatively less crowded and close to the biggest green space of Bengaluru, the Bannerghatta national park.

Living here helps us to visit green areas of the city easily and also allows us to see and hear many birds from our balcony.

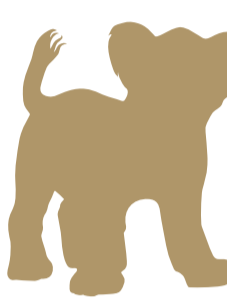
© Mia Patteri



Our balcony overlooks a small farm that has cows and attracts lots of birds. I love to sit in the balcony and watch the various movements on the farm. Till some time back monkeys used to come on to our balconies. I was scared of them then, but now I miss them.

My parents were careful to send me to schools which allow lots of free drawing, handwork, and creative work. I go to a

Waldorf school, and it has given me a lot of motivation and help to imagine, draw, paint and be creative although I am only in the second grade. My favorite time in school is the Arts and Handwork classes - we get to work with paint, colours, beeswax, molding, and knitting. I also enjoy the language classes where we experiment with free speech and role play. Our teachers tell us colourful stories





and we sing songs and rhymes in English and various Indian languages. All of these activities give me the inspiration to draw, paint and write.

I love gardens and flowers. The small flower beds in school, the plants in the balcony that my mother maintains all are very nice.

A flower is nice  
A flower is the best  
A flower is the one,  
that shows you the best...

I like painting and drawing different things, I have not decided what I like best. Sometimes I paint animals, my father talks about wildlife all the time and I too started liking animals. I like looking through the books that my father has with pictures of animals. I also paint things at home and sceneries. I use watercolors, acrylic and sometimes oil pastels. I love to do wet on wet painting.

It is nice to see the smile on my parents face when I show them a new painting or writing and when I gift them a card I have hand made for their birthdays, anniversary or festivals.

From when I was very small, I have loved beaches. Our family goes to some beach for a vacation every year. This year my parents have promised me that they will take me to a nice beach and get lots of paint and paper so that I can sit and paint there. I am very excited!









# Her Views & Visuals

By Adriana Claudia Sanz



**Adriana is an environmental magister and wildlife photographer. For more than 20 years, she has been dedicated to the care and protection of the natural environment.**

**She loves nature and photography. In her photos, she seeks to sensitize the viewer by calling to reflect on the environmental deterioration that grows day by day. In her photos, she combines art and nature, creating images that communicates her feelings while taking the photo.**

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# Her Views and Visuals



Plush-crested Yay (*Cyanocorax chrysops*) & Yellow-fronted Woodpecker (*Melanerpes flavifrons*)





King Penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*)

### How did your interest in wildlife arise?

When I was very young, my father gave me a space at the back of the house of only one square meter, where instead of the construction debris I had put plants with flowers and we had a toad, that was “my garden” as was written on the sign we had painted. I still remember waking up in the morning and hurrying to visit my toad and water the plants that always had flowers (surely my father changed them periodically). At four years old we moved to Patagonia and I went from living in a city of concrete to being surrounded only by nature, my fascination was immense, “my garden” extended beyond the horizon.

In the afternoon, my father took us on a walk through the Patagonian steppe in search of insects and lizards. We captured those we could to observe in detail and released them back quickly so they could reunite with their family. I lived a large part of my childhood in a peripheral neighborhood, where if you crossed the street, the countryside began. Such strong contact with wildlife plus the love for the nature that my parents taught me, I think has been decisive in my greater passion to take care of the environment.

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

For more than 20 years, I have been professionally dedicated to caring for the environment. My work constantly takes me to natural spaces that must be protected, or to places that unfortunately have been degraded and must be evaluated for re-composition and



Southern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga leonina*)



Missionary Monkey Frog (*Phyllomedusa tetraploidea*)

subsequent evolution. Photography is a very useful tool to study the changes that occur in the environment.

This is the way I got initiated with photography. At first as a work tool, but little by little, it attracted me more and more. When my second daughter started primary school, I decided that I could study photography, I started my photographic development with the camera I had at hand, a journey that I will never stop, since I have a lot to learn and discover, and I feel that my whole life will be insufficient to complete it.

That is why I work daily in nature photography, I study a lot, I take photos periodically and I also dedicate a lot of energy to the Argentine Nature Photography Association -AFONA-, since I believe that collective projects enhance individual actions.

**What is your view on Nature Conservation? How can we, as wildlife photographers, help to protect our Mother Nature?**

I work directly for the protection of the environment, so my opinion is quite sad to hear. Although several decades have been spent working everywhere to improve the environmental management of companies and the responsible use of resources, the destruction of ecosystems in general is much greater than the results of protection actions.

To improve this imbalance, in addition to the commitment of private companies and government institutions, the

commitment of all of us is essential. It is necessary that all the inhabitants of the planet to participate daily in the realization of actions of protection and care of natural resources. There is still much to do, and you must keep fighting hard and not lower your guard.

Nature photography can be useful for others to discover details, animals or places they probably would not know, except through our camera. Our photos should sensitize the viewer, transmit a message, so that those who see it feel the need to take care of that beauty they are looking through the photo, or who have the need to get to work to change and improve the situation photographed.

**Can you give our readers the best bird or wildlife photography tips?**

Patience. It is key in this type of photography to have a lot of patience. As you devote yourself to nature photography, you understand that taking a picture usually takes a lot of time and effort to wait for hours for that light, a look, a gesture, an instant.

If you think that taking pictures is easy and that is solved by pressing a button with the best camera, you may feel frustrated by not getting the results you were looking for. Having the best camera does not guarantee you to take better photos, it only solves the technical issues. Taking pictures is more than a “technological trigger.”

**Perseverance.** As we depend on the collaboration of nature to obtain the photo we are looking for, many times the



© Adriana Claudia Sanz

Ant (*Formicidae*, *Hymenoptera*)



Magellanic Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*)

Gentoo Penguin (*Pygoscelis papu*)



animal we hope to photograph does not appear or the weather conditions change and we return home without any photo. But we assimilate a lot of information, so that the next trip we have more chances to achieve the photo we want. If you are willing to give up everything while remaining in the chosen path for as long as it takes; if the inclemency and discomforts that arise do not affect you; if you have the ability to overcome difficulties; you will surely arrive to get to take the photos you are dreaming of. The road is not easy, but the gratification is so great that it is worth living. To do this you have to try again and again, and again, until what you want comes out.

**Time.** It is essential to have the necessary time to stay on the site for hours or days, until you find the moment when the photo you have in mind is produced.

While there are places where the opportunities are greater, the luck of being there as long as necessary without time limits will give the place additional potential.

Therefore, in addition to being in the right place, it is essential to take the necessary time to know its dynamics and thus be able to make the most of the place.

**Planning.** Each place or each species has its peculiarities. It is very important to know the dynamics of that ecosystem or the behavior of the species to be photographed in order to intuit and anticipate scenes.

**Do you have any recommendation on settings or gear for bird photography?**



Andean Lapwing (*Vanellus resplendens*)

I usually work with the diaphragm more open than the lens allows me and in the AV (Canon) or A (Nikon) aperture priority mode.

To take photos of static birds, work in single-shot AF mode, the center AF point, an ISO of at least 400 (depending on light conditions) and the speed is determined by the camera.

For birds in flight, I keep the aperture priority AV (Canon) or A (Nikon), the servo AF mode, center AF point, I raise the ISO to at least 800 (depending on the light conditions) so I can increase the capture speed.

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

My photography projects not only include my personal growth. I have the firm determination to carry out actions that can contribute to the development of nature photography in Argentina and help other photographers join this beautiful profession.

That is why, in addition to studying, traveling and taking photographs in every minute that I have available, I invest part of that time in working in the Argentine Association of Nature Photographers -AFONA-, a space created for photography lovers who also dream of a better world.

My immediate objective, in addition to contribute all that I can to the growth of the AFONA Association, is to tour my country intensely to discover, photograph and show in the best possible way the

beauties of Argentina.

#### **Tell us something about the gears you use.**

For wildlife photography I am using a Canon EOS 1DX Mark II, with the lens 100-400 f / 4.5-5.6 L IS II, or 70-200 f / 2.8 L, depending on the size of the species to be photographed. Sometimes I use extender 1.4x II or 2x II. Both the lenses and the duplicators are Canon.

For wildlife photography with landscapes, macro, plants or studio photos, I work with the Nikon D750 with a 70-200 f / 2.8 lens, 14-24 f / 2.8 angular lens or 105 f / 2.8 macro lens (all Nikon). When I work with the angle lens, I usually use degraded and / or neutral density filters, together or interleaved, as appropriate. To make studio photos I have flashes, diffusers, triggers and other accessories.



Andean Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola peruvianus*)





©Seema Suresh Neelambari Mohan

THROUGH THE LENS

# Elephants of Jim Corbett

By Seema Suresh Neelambari Mohan

*Our freedom, our happiness*

THROUGH THE LENS



**Nature & Wildlife Photographer, apart from being a free-lance journalist, Seema is one of the few lady wildlife photographers of India. She has her work published in many magazines and books. She has featured on various Television shows featuring nature conservation & wildlife photography. Her vibrant career has earned her laurels including “Lady icon of the year 2017” and “Photomuse Luster Award”. She is a part of various NGO’s working for nature conservation and is actively involved in organizing nature awareness campaigns and classes.**

**She is known for her skills as a mentor and a teacher when it comes to creating nature awareness among school and college students. Her photographs were part of more than twenty-five group exhibitions conducted inside and outside India.**

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[facebook.com/SeemaSureshPhotography](https://www.facebook.com/SeemaSureshPhotography)**

Jim Corbett of Uttarakhand is an amazing place, a heaven for those who can enjoy the beauty of elephants. It is a place with wonderful views of the forest in all seasons. Once or twice I go to the place every year. The first time I went there, accompanied by my mentor Mr. Praveen Mohandas. I was literally inspired by his photos of elephants. The Dikkala range

is the most mesmerising out of the six zones of Jim Corbett, including the river Ramganga, Sambar road, the walkways of elephants, and the grass lands giving you the opportunity to capture many attractive frames easily. When you see so many elephants in groups moving freely around, you treasure it in your life time memoir. In fact, I felt heart broken



*After a storm comes a calm*

whenever I see elephants chained and harassed in the midst of big crowds in other parts of the world. Corbett has presented me with many shots that prove freedom is the happiest state of being alive.

**“Our freedom, our happiness.”**

It was a hot summer evening. The moments of long waiting on the banks of the river Ranga were suddenly turned into a moment of anxiety, as herds of wild elephants jumped out of the woods covering the whole area in dust. They went down the river through the dirt and earthen pots, creating awesome opportunities for a photographer.

**‘After a storm comes a calm’**

He came across the Samba Road, his first appearance resembling a desert storm. He is known as “LAL KAN”.

He filled his trunk with dusty sand and sprayed the atmosphere. The dust stayed a while in the air while I was trying my best to frame him in my camera, and my eyes were petting him through the lenses.

I have seen even a very peaceful face of him in between. This is the photograph of this memory...

**“Under the sun... I am a small one.”**

A lonely tusker walking through the grassland at sunset. It seemed like a small spot distancing slowly when the earth started to darken. He was the only one under the sun in this big world.

Think of this as minimalism; when he became a baby elephant on a large land. Another moment the planted in my life.



© Seema Suresh Neelambari Mohan



*The Queue*

**“The Queue.”**

The image of the first Corbett voyage; it was winter and a misty day. The sunset was early. The curtain of mist came down as early as 4 o'clock. In the meantime, a small herd of elephants was walking towards the field, and in the fog of the snow, these calves stood in line. It was a good frame for me.



The War

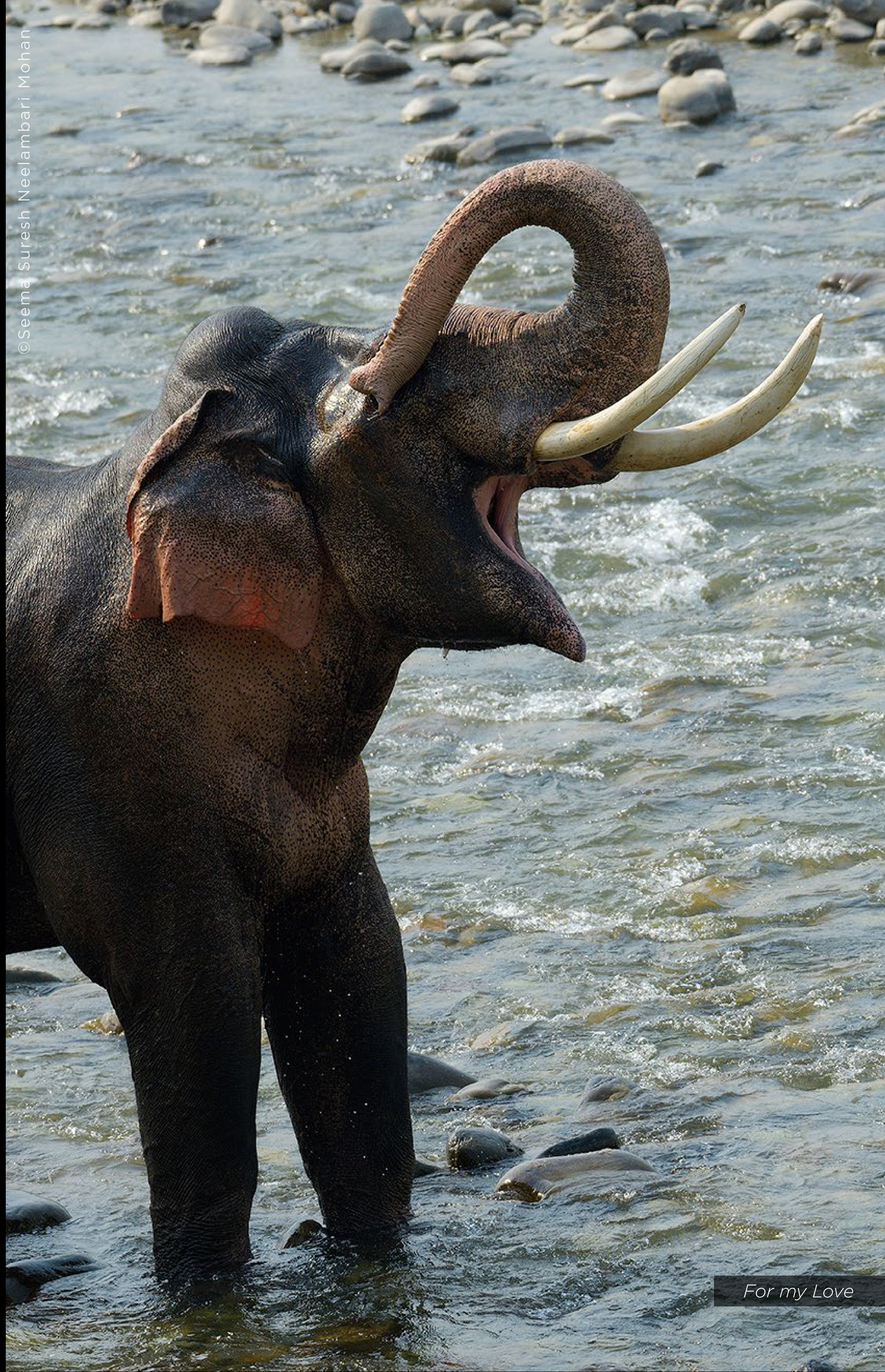
### “The War.”

The first time I have directly seen a great fight between two wild elephants. At nine o'clock in the morning, between a young tuskless and older one, began the war behind the waters of Ramganga. And then, just in front of the meadows, they both decided to match their strength. After a few minutes they came down to the river only for five minutes. Then both of them slowly got up on the shore, roaring, and pointing their tusks together, it was a test of strength once again. A bit of blood was spilled, test of strength continued for a while, but soon they called it quits and were gone.



The War

©Seema Suresh Neelambari Mohan



For my Love

©Seema Suresh Neelambari Mohan

**“For my lover”**

This is the moment when the beloved horn tries to flirt and tempt the female that is feeding next to him. He stayed for a long time near her, and then he went to the river Ramganga and showered himself. I could catch many of his rare movements comfortably from a delta nearby where he was playing in the waters, and just a little away, the female was slowly moving to the woods as a lover does.



*Life on the Banks of Ramganga*

### **Life on the Banks of Ramganga**

It's a regular sight in the early morning as elephants flock to the river. As they drink water and spray themselves, these images are fixed in my mind. Catching the life shots of elephants in the early morning before the sunrise always amazes me.



### Playtime

This is the typical scenario at Corbett, when you see clever baby elephants playing in front of you, it is normal that you become very affectionate. I captured these two cute baby elephants on a foggy evening, as they played pulling off the grass. What a lovely moment.

Playtime



TRAVELOGUE

# Al Qudra Lake, Dubai

By Nithya Purushothaman





**N**

**A true nature lover, who believes in taking action than preaching. An enthusiastic organic farmer who plants every available inch with flowers, vegetables and fruits, raising them chemical free and enjoys sharing the fruits of her labor with the birds and insects.**

**Nithya is a self-taught artist and is the website content manager and associate designer for PT Explorers magazine.**

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[facebook.com/nithyapurush](https://www.facebook.com/nithyapurush)**

Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)



Al Qudra lakes are a series of man-made lakes in the middle of Saih Al Salam desert. It is one of the six huge freshwater bodies created by the office of the engineers of His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

Al Qudra's main attraction is its freshwater body covering about 10 hectares and the lake banks are covered with fruit trees and green trees that give a very shady and cool atmosphere. It is one of the best examples for the human ability and eagerness for creating natural habitats. Near the lake, you can see world's largest designated cycle track. It is an awesome experience to cycle through the desert without any traffic disturbances, enjoying the tranquility of nature.

Al Qudra lakes are now the home for a large number of migratory and resident birds of nearly 180 species. Not just the beautiful birds, there are plenty of free-roaming wildlife animals like Foxes, the Arabian Oryx, Arabian Gazelles, Rabbits, Owls and several desert plants. Hundreds of migratory birds have taken shelter in this beautiful lake. As a photographer, I always reach there before sunrise or sunset, so that I will be able to shoot the beautifully colored sky along with the lake and the birds.

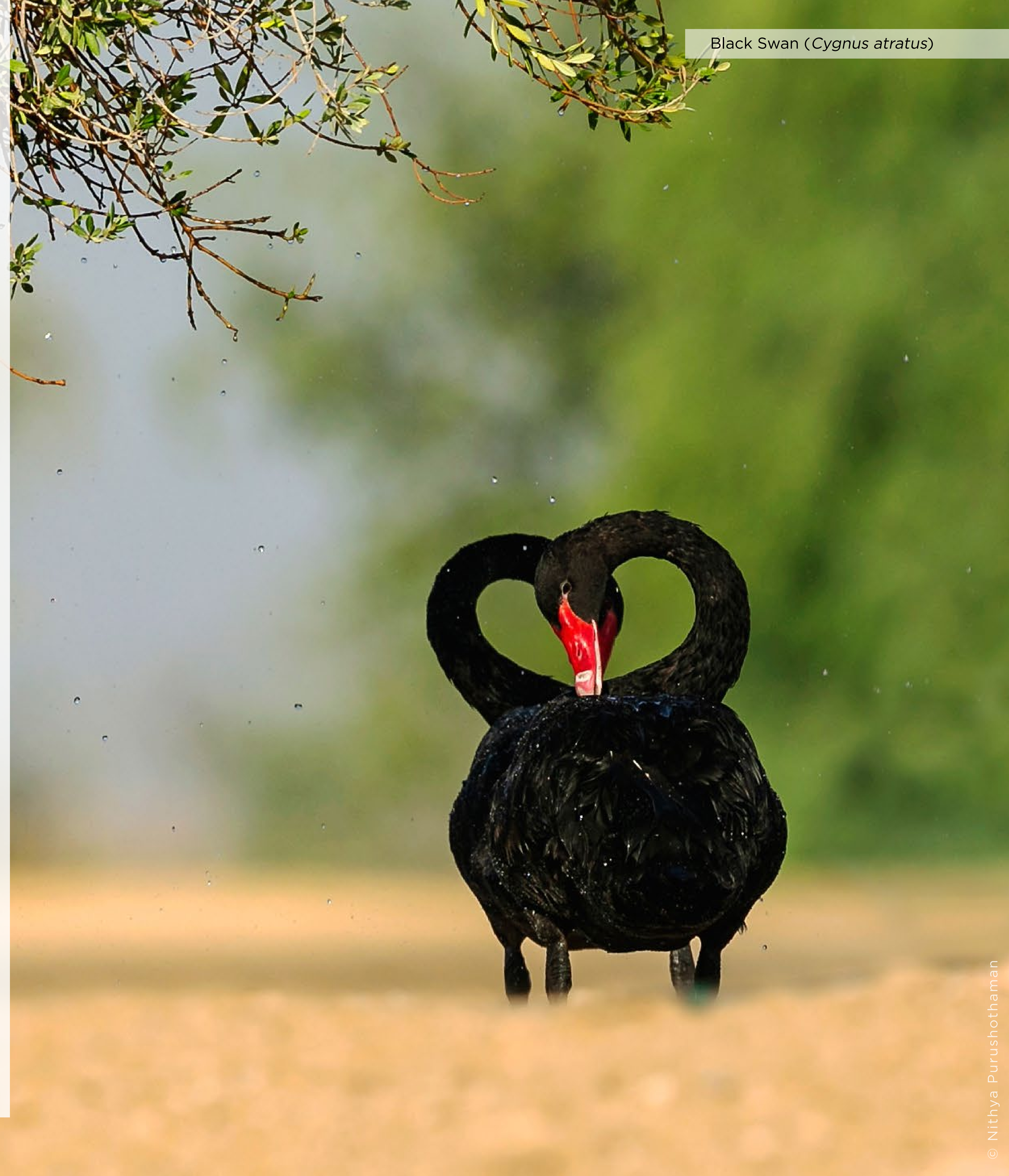
It is a peaceful place to sit and watch the birds play and fight and love each other and to listen to their enchanting music. I got ample number of opportunities to visit this place and photograph many of the bird species in action. Some of the birds I have seen in the lakes include the

Black Swan, White Swan (Mute Swan), Black-necked Swan, Whooper Swan, Egyptian Goose, Wood Duck, Cackling goose (Canadian Goose), Grey Heron, Flamingos, Black winged Stilt, Magpie goose, Egyptian Goose, Sandpipe, Houbara bustard, Crowned crane and many more. WWI have seen some of the species here which are in the endangered list too occasionally.

There are many animal and bird observation platforms. While observing the beautiful birds and their activities, I sometimes even forget to click pictures. If we have understanding of their behavior it will help us to take some great photographs. I always love to watch birds wherever I go, and here, it's not one or two species but plenty of species and I will never miss any chance to visit this beautiful man made heaven.

Though it is a human creation by the able architects of the office of engineers of His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, with his vision and love for the nature it is not inferior to a natural lake in all sense and beauty. That is why the huge number of birds and animals love to stay over there without any human intervention. That is also one of the reasons for the birds to select the lake and its surroundings to breed..

The water is always clean and the area is not at all polluted because it's quite far from the residential area. Anyone who visits here will find peace and pleasure and never know the passage of time, as he/she will be lost in the beauty of the lake and nature.





Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)







Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)



Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)



Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)



Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)



Emden Goose (*Anser anser*)





© Jan Martin McGuire

Artist, Naturalist, Conservationist  
Jan Martin McGuire

WILD ARTS SHOWCASE



**Jan Martin McGuire is an eminent artist specializing in wildlife art. She and her husband work tirelessly for conservation - donating many man-hours, boots on the ground - in both North America and Africa, and donate half a million dollars worth of artwork every year to raise funds for important conservation efforts on both continents.**

**[mcguireandhines.com](http://mcguireandhines.com)**

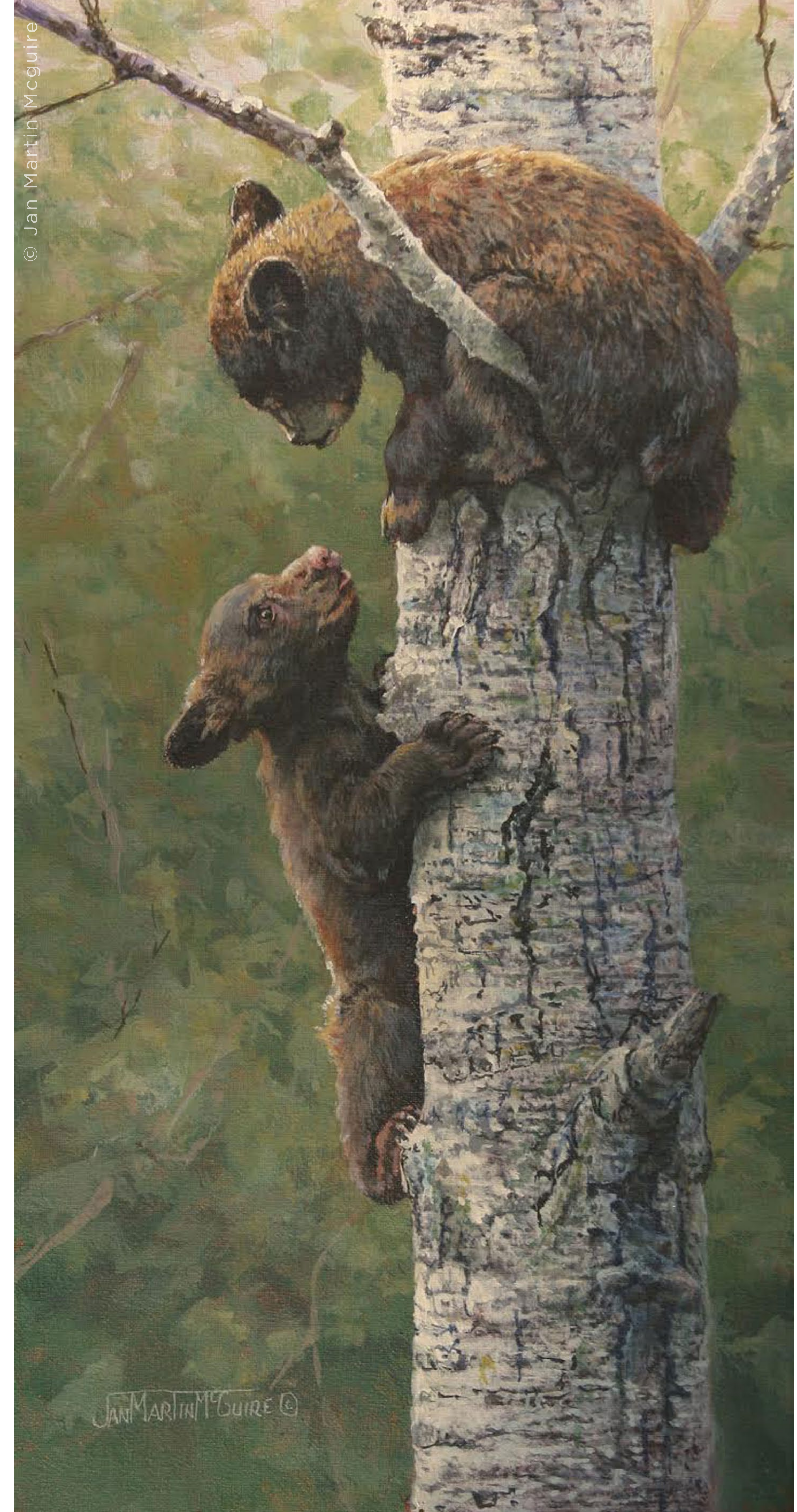
**[mcguireandhineslearn.com](http://mcguireandhineslearn.com)**

**<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=9W9ByiyxouQ>**

I was born in Colorado and was an inveterate tomboy. I left every morning, only came back home for a peanut butter sandwich for lunch and went right back outside until almost dark. The whole day was spent climbing trees, catching snakes, studying birds with my little Golden Field guide. When the weather was bad I would sit inside drawing wildlife. My parents were

neither artists, nor outdoors people but they gave me the best gift a parent can give a child. - They let me be myself. And -to add to that, they encouraged me with "How to Draw" books, pads of paper, graphite and colored pencils and also bought me the field guides.

There was an old curmudgeon who lived at the end of the street. He was a





© Jan Martin McGuire

Jan Martin McGuire ©

retired biologist. Somehow I pestered him enough that he let me go into his home. It was the most amazing place. Cabinets with skulls in them, drawers of eggs and nests, jars with perfectly preserved lizards and snakes, beetles and butterflies pinned on foam core. It opened the world of being a naturalist - one who loves nature - for me that I retain to this day.

When I was 12, my father who was an oil and gas lawyer, decided to partner with his brother in Oklahoma. We moved there with me kicking and screaming. I LOVED Colorado - I LOVED the mountains.

In high school I took art classes. My teacher was an artist, but was making ends meet by teaching, and he hated it. But I actually learned a lot from him - he loved to lecture and talk about artists, mostly current modern/abstract/contemporary artists. I learned to love artists like Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, and Clyfford Still. But the teacher and I butted heads continually. I have always had self-confidence and stubbornness, even though I actually really am shy. One time I was drawing while the teacher was lecturing. He said "Little Jan-ie put down your pencil or I'll send you the principal's office". I said "Fine. Send me to the principal's office for doing art in an art class." Needless to say he didn't. Many years later I was hanging in a museum show that he also had work in.

At that time I was also - as many teenage girls are - into horses. So they reflected heavily in my art during that time. As well as birds and other animals.

When it was time for college I picked the University of Tulsa, simply because I wanted to be where my horses were. Unfortunately the art instruction - as most universities were in the seventies - into modern art only. They refused to grade anything that they could tell what it was. After three years I quit. I had finally figured out: A) I didn't need a degree to be a fine artist, and B) the teachers couldn't make a living with what they were doing - so they taught. Again, my parents, though disappointed, supported my decision.

I had always thought when I was young and grownups would ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up, that it was a really weird question. I always knew I would be an artist. Being an artist is who you are, not what you do.

I met my first husband and moved to Bartlesville, where I set up a studio and began doing my art in earnest to try to sell. I worked originally in pencil, pen and ink, and etchings. Doing a few outdoor art fairs in the area, and began selling. I knew I could be successful. But I felt I was not portraying the nature I so loved accurately in black and white, so I set off to decide what paint medium to use. I tried watercolor - but was horrible at it as you have to plan it out carefully, and mistakes, or changing your mind was pretty close to impossible. I'm a messy artist, and the painting as it goes along quite often "tells" me when something isn't right so I change my mind. Not the medium for me.

I hated the drying time of oils (I am sort of an immediate gratification person,





and impatient.) I also hated the smell - and the fumes would be bad for my parrots that were in the studio with me.

I contacted an artist who worked in acrylic and asked if he gave lessons. He said no - but I could come watch him work, which I did. I was hooked. I have now been a professional artist for over 40 years and have never looked back. When artists ask me how to keep paint from drying so fast - I tell them to paint in oils. In fact I work in many, many layers and dry them even faster with a hairdryer.

I then discovered Robert Bateman, an artist that literally changed the world of wildlife art from the sporting art field of flying ducks, dogs pointing quail etc. He appeared with paintings like orca whales, mice in snow, vultures eating a wildebeest carcass. I begin taking workshops from him (and others) but I especially loved Bob's intellectual approach to what he paints; many times being inspired by the work of contemporary artists - like Mark Rothko, Franz Kline and Clyford Still. I went to so many workshops Bob began calling me his favorite stalker. Now he calls me one of his biggest success stories. I am honored to have my work hang next to his in museum exhibitions, and to be able to call him my friend.

The first 15 years of my career I painted only North American subjects, as I am a strict believer that an artist must experience what they paint. Feeling the wind in your hair, touching the sponginess of moss, listening to the sounds of the forest and inhaling the

earthy aroma of a herd of bison. All this "information" gets into your head and comes out at the end of your brush (or whatever tools that you use) giving verisimilitude to your work.

As my career progressed I moved from outdoor fairs, to exhibitions, indoor art shows, and museum shows. I now have my work in the permanent collection of several museums in the U.S. and one in London. I have collectors from all over the world.

I then decided to go to Africa (I had been to the rainforest in Central and South America and was doing paintings from there). I took three years to plan my first trip to Kenya in 1996 - and went back every year for 20 years. My husband James Hines, a talented nature photographer and I, began leading groups to Africa, as a way to get be able to afford these trips every year. In 2018 we decided to move there. We had talked about it for years, and knew we weren't getting any younger. So here we are now, in Tanzania and absolutely loving it! I felt when I got off the plane during my first trip that I was home. I could feel it in my bones - more accurately my DNA. And living here now proves that to me.

I am an ardent conservationist, and have been since I was young. I have worked with many different groups of people both in the U.S. and Africa in boots on the ground projects as well as routinely donating \$100,000 of thousands annually too many different groups for fund raising. I also hope my art opens people's eyes a bit more to the importance of our natural world. I do





still paint North American - but obviously my love of Africa has taken over and the majority of my work is now African subjects.

Life is slower here, and I no longer feel the need to be chained to the painting table 24/7 to meet the demands of all the art shows and to make my living. Here it is much cheaper to live. I still show my work in the U.S. but mostly now I work with a very large gallery here in Tanzania. I now have the time to go out into the field and photograph butterflies,

learn about plants, catch lizards - even getting bitten by cobra as I tried to save it from local men who were trying to kill it. I got anti-venom in time and now can add that to the list of my life experiences. In fact, I just painted an adult hooded Egyptian cobra (the one that bit me was a baby but their venom is just as lethal). I would have never given myself "permission" to have painted something like that before.

I had been wanted to do a book for quite some time that would span a wide

range of interest - artists, collectors and nature lovers. I wanted to incorporate the entire "journey" that a wildlife artist goes through to create a finished work. I focused the book around one painting "AT THE WATERHOLE" that has a family of elephants at a waterhole near a Baobab tree, with various birds in the scene as well. PART I is called "The Journey of the Experience" using photographs, journal entries and sketches to tell specific stories that revolved around the subjects of the painting.

This took MUCH longer than I had expected, almost five years! Going over 20 years worth of trips to Africa, looking through the journals and sketchbooks, and photographs, mainly in film format so they had to be scanned. It was HUGELY time consuming to decide what to use and not use. PART II is called "The Journey of Creating the Painting". This section shows the "stages" I went through to create the painting. It isn't a "how to" by any means, but just gives an insight into my creative process. I have so many, many stories from my trips,



and now living here I know there are many more books to come!!!

James, my husband (who is a nature photographer and videographer doing a lot on our YouTube channel) and I use to lead groups to Africa. We kept saying we would love to live there. And then one day we decided we weren't getting any younger and if we were going to do it, the time was now. We sold our house, all our belongings and moved to Tanzania.

We chose Tanzania as we have friends here that could "show us the ropes". I brought all my supplies with me, and on subsequent trips back I, or sometimes friends, will bring more.

Fortunately, the paint I use is very color intensive so they last a long time. I love it here. While we don't live out in bush (for many reasons) we do live just down the road from Arusha National Park.

I haven't seen tons of wildlife at my studio since we are in a village - but lots of incredible birds and reptiles. Even had the experience of getting bitten by a cobra (I got anti-venom in time so I'm fine). I love everything about living here and only wish we had moved here sooner.

I say that my art will be my immortality, living on long after I'm gone. Being a naturalist is my fountain of youth as even though I've studied it for 60 some odd years, I learn something new about nature every day. There's not many things you can say that about.



YOUR GALLERY



Adriana Claudia Sanz

Black-browed Albatross (*Thalassarche melanophris*)



YOUR GALLERY



Belen Etchegaray

Southern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga leonina*)



YOUR GALLERY



Cynthia Bandurek

Shreve's Sarayacu Treefrog (*Dendropsophus sarayacuensis*)



YOUR GALLERY

Gaythri & Mansur

Bateleur Eagle (*Terathopius ecaudatus*)





YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Graciela Tejeda Boglic

Giant Anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*)



YOUR GALLERY

Nithya Purushothaman

Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*)



YOUR GALLERY

Suaad Al Suwaidi

Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)







YOUR GALLERY



Poonam Nayaka

Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*)



YOUR GALLERY



Hema Chandna

Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*)



YOUR GALLERY



Salma Al Suwaidi

Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)



YOUR GALLERY



Athira Mohan Krishnan

Giraffe (*Giraffa*)



YOUR GALLERY



Marg Wood

Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*)



YOUR GALLERY



Cristina Harboe Trugeda

Cougar (*Puma concolor*)



YOUR GALLERY

Claudia Andrea Huizenga

Weevils (*Curculionidae*)



YOUR GALLERY

Alby Sebastian

Western Reef Heron (*Egretta gularis*)





YOUR GALLERY



Seema Suresh Neelambari Mohan

Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)





YOUR GALLERY



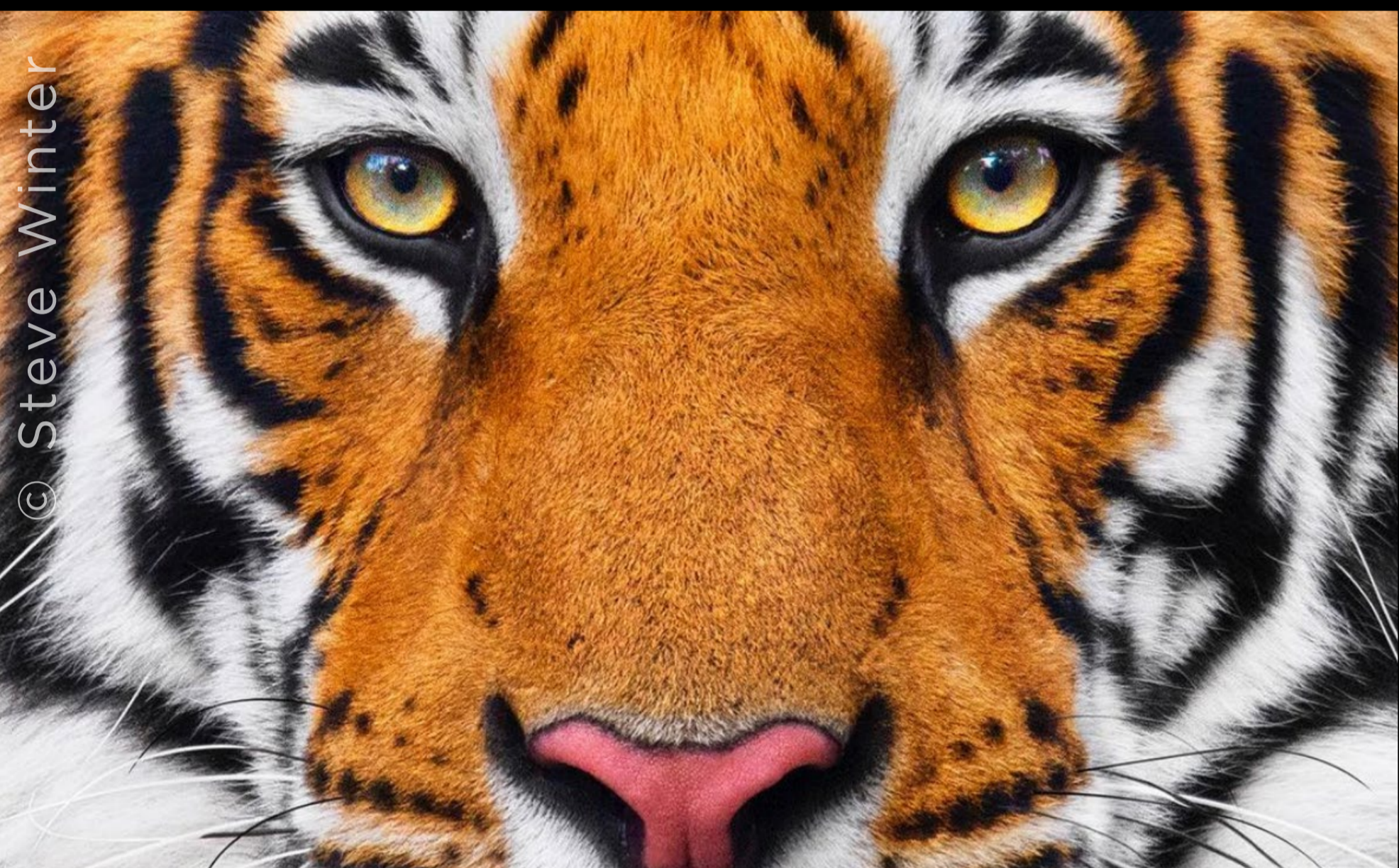
Romina Viscarret

Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

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EXPLORERS

UPCOMING  
FEATURES



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## INTO THE WILD

With Steve Winter

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## SONY 600MM REVIEW

By Hermis Haridas

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## TALES OF A POLKA-DOTTED ZEBRA

By Nisha Purushothaman

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