

PT

EXPLORERS

APR / MAY 2017



WINGED BEAUTIES OF KUUSAMO

By Olli Lamminsalo

NEPAL'S THREATENED BIRDS

By Carol Inskipp and Hem Sagar Baral

D5



At the heart of the image



Outperforming the vision

Getting the shot with the Nikon D5

The Masterpiece Maker

With the new Nikon D5, you hold the culmination of decades of refined optical innovation in your hands. Redesigned from ground-up, the Nikon FX-format flagship challenges the limits of professional imaging performance for acquisition speed and low-light performance.

Next-generation Autofocus

Incorporating three times the number of autofocus (AF) points from its predecessor is the new Multi-CAM 20K AF sensor module. This sensor module alongside the latest dedicated AF engine complement one another to achieve superior and reliable AF performance with 153 focus points,

99 being cross-type sensors, with over a third of these points selectable for quick and easy framing of any shot. The advanced AF system is coupled with a new 180K-pixel RGB metering sensor, alongside an Advanced Scene Recognition System, to achieve optimally balanced exposures and accurate white balance in challenging lighting conditions.

Defy Darkness

The Multi-CAM 20K AF sensor module provides a detection range as low as -4 EV¹, and boasts the widest ISO sensitivity in the history of Nikon cameras with the range of 100 to 102400². With both the AF sensor module and wide ISO range working in tandem, what was previously considered difficult in low-light conditions can now be captured whether shooting stills or recording video.

Going to the Extreme with Professional 4K UHD

For the first time in Nikon's FX-format line up, video recording in 4K UHD is introduced, together with Full HD and



HD videos. Combining dot-by-dot information readout with the advanced processing of the EXPEED 5, the D5 delivers detail-rich, high-resolution 4K UHD videos.

Changing the Way Professionals Shoot

Career-defining work demands the highest levels of reverence for image quality at extremely high sensitivities. With that in mind, Nikon designed an all-new 20.8 megapixel FX-format CMOS sensor and EXPEED 5 image-processing engine for the D5 to produce pictures with rich tonal gradation, and a refined signal to noise ratio. For wildlife adventures or critical moments of sporting triumph, the D5 is capable of shooting at speeds of 12 frames per second³ with AE/AF tracking, capturing up to 200 frames⁴ (14-bit lossless compressed RAW) in a single high-speed burst.

Designed Around Your Work

Built around the needs of professional photographers, both on the field and in the studio, the D5, with its range of connectivity options, both speeds up and streamlines workflows. Enveloped in a magnesium alloy body, the DSLR remains light and strong in any surroundings, while protecting internal elements with comprehensive dust and water droplet resistance. Its high-resolution, 3.2 inch touch-screen monitor caters to a speedy change of focus points during live view, and quick viewing during playback. To cater to diverse preferences, the D5 is also available in two versions supporting either XQD cards or CF cards with its dual card slots.

The new Nikon D5 comes with:

- Effective pixels:** 20.8 million
- Image sensor format:** FX
- ISO sensitivity:** ISO 100 – 102400. Expandable to ISO 3280000 (Hi 5)
- Focus point:** 153 points, with 99 cross-type sensors
- Dimensions (W x H x D):** Approx. 160mm x 158.5mm x 92mm
- Weight:** Approx. 1405g, with battery and two XQD memory cards but without body cap and accessory shoe cover; approx. 1235g for camera body only

NEW:

- EXPEED 5 image-processing engine | 4K UHD video recording support | Multi-CAM 20K AF sensor module | 180K-pixel RGB metering sensor

¹ For the central focus point, and at -3 EV with all focus points, at ISO 100 and 20°C/68°F. ² Expandable up to Hi 5 for an ISO 3280000 equivalent. ³ Possible in Continuous High Speed (CH) release mode with shutter speeds of 1/250 s or faster. ⁴ When using a Lexar Professional 2933x XQD 2.0 memory card.

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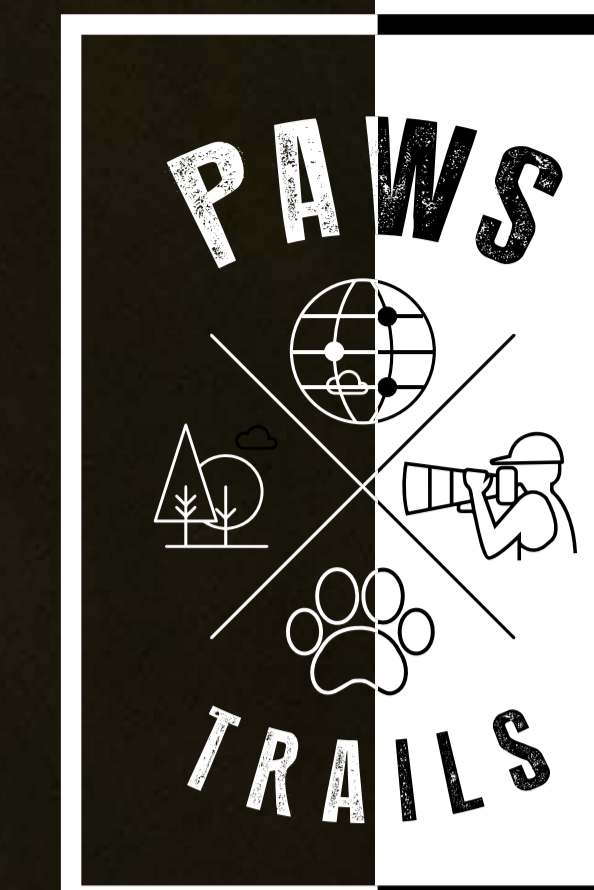


©Clyde Odonnell

©Nisha Purushothaman

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Review - Nikkor 200-500mm
by Hermis Haridas





Hank Tyler
Editor

Amazing photos of animals and plants fill the pages of PT Explorers.

Working with the contributors of photos and articles is a wonderful experience. There are many very talented nature photographers who are willing to share their exceptional wildlife images with our readers.

Clyde Odonnell's article on Madagascar captures his love of nature, exploring news regions of the world, sharing his experiences, and most importantly always striving to capture the best photographic images. Biologically unique island like Madagascar are unfortunately in the news because of timber harvesting, poaching, and encroaching farming that destroys natural habitats and vegetation that serves as a buffer zone around National Parks, Reserves and Sanctuaries.

Carol Inskipp's decades of ornithological research in Nepal has promoted a better understanding of Nepal's bird species, stimulated birdwatching and guiding among Nepalese, and helped ecotourism. By identifying and focusing on threatened and endangered species, we hope this will promote more conservation of natural habitats in Nepal. Sagar Giri's amazing photos are spectacular. Sagar is one of Nepal's leading wildlife photographers.

Karen Phillipps is unique in Asia. Born on the island of Borneo, Karen has devoted her professional life to illustrating nature field guides and wildlife paintings. Her most recent book with her brother Quentin on the *Mammals of Borneo* is outstanding, and is filled with abundant ecological facts and numerous detailed illustrations.

EDITOR'S DEN



©Soumitra Roy

PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Soumitra Roy
Green Vine Snake and
Kingfisher, Chandpara,
West Bengal

FOUNDERS' NOTE

We are excited! Our first international exhibition drew admiration from all around. We believe we met our goals on this one. We gave a platform for a handful of dedicated photographers. We introduced the viewers to stunning imagery. We got the experts to share their experiences, reveal the secrets on wildlife photography.

It's not an easy life for a photographer. The equipment is expensive, travel takes effort and money, alternative professions suffer, shooting your dream image can prove elusive. After all this the remuneration you can expect from photography in this digital age is not much. The value of a single image has fallen drastically. There is no dearth of a type of image today since the digital revolution. For amateurs today, photography is an expensive hobby and not a source of income. Even Professionals are lucky to break even and that too if they venture out into associated fields like expeditions and classes. We at PT Explorers understand these and are committed to do what we can, hence this endeavor to provide a platform for deserving photographers.

Finding a mentor can be difficult as Wildlife photographers are a not an easy lot to catch hold off. But once you find one that can make all the difference. This exhibition was all the more richer because of the association and patronage of Nikon - a brand which is at the heart of the image. Nikon like PT Explorers, understands the needs and difficulties of photographers and willingly arranged a session under the tutelage of Nikon School. There is no replacing the experience gained by spending days on end in the wilderness staring at the world through your third eye. Participants in the session were eager recipients of this experience and were enriched by it. It is our determination to conduct many more of these sessions around the globe and touch the lives of as many photographers as possible.

But these were only our secondary objectives from the session. It is one of our stated objectives to introduce viewers to stunning imagery. From our collective experience as photographers we have seen how images can be conversation starters. A great image can be the catalyst that introduces an unconcerned or ignorant person to a species or a new place or ecology. Conversations lead to understanding of issues and threats faced by these elements of nature. A person with awareness is more likely to be mindful and reduce our contribution to the destruction and also possibly join the cause to conserve what is left. This, after all is the crux of the existence of PT Explorers. Inspire each one to be a crusader for mother earth. This will be the central theme to all our exhibitions.

View online gallery: www.pawstrails.com/take-action/exhibition/the-wild-trails-2

Encourage photographers, **Inspire** viewers, **Create** Crusaders, **Protect** Nature.

**Hermis Haridas &
Nisha Purushothaman**

Founders - PT Explorers





COVER STORY
**WINGED
BEAUTIES
OF KUUSAMO**
BY OLLI LAMMINSALO



Olli Lamminsallo is a Finnish ace photographer who lives in the eastern border town of Kuusamo. It is his love of birds that uprooted him from Helsinki to Kuusamo.

He is the go to guide for bird and landscape photography in this European hotspot.

**kuusamonaturephotography.fi/
facebook.com/KuusamoNaturePhotography/
instagram.com/kuusamonaturephotography/**

Tell us a bit about yourself and also how long you have been “behind the lens.”

I'm 56 years old, I live in Kuusamo, and I shoot with Canon.

Birds have been an important part of my life for the past 40+ years, and I've photographed them more or less actively since 1973. There were periods, when I wasn't behind a camera that much, such as when I was starting a family, but since the beginning of the 90s I've been a keen bird photographer. In 2003 I acted upon my longtime dream and moved from my native Helsinki, the capital of Finland at the south shore, to Kuusamo in the northeast, near Finland's eastern border with Russia. Kuusamo is one of Europe's most famous hotspots for bird and landscape photography.

This is when I turned my birding hobby into a career by becoming a birding guide. Around 2005-2006 more and more people visiting Kuusamo started to have digital SLR camera bodies, and I started to guide bird photographers too. So much so, that today my job is all about guiding bird and landscape photographers. I've also set up an extensive network of photo hides with opportunities to shoot many species, and I rent these to photographers. I swear by cooperation and can warmly recommend this to all photographers, professionals and amateurs alike: connect & network!

Each passing year makes me more aware of the importance of the welfare of wildlife and nature in general - birds, mammals, forests and all. I never miss an opportunity to speak a bit about it, be it on the radio, in an article or in the social media.







©Olli Lamminasio

What would be your top 3 tips for shooting great landscapes?

Get to know your target, your subject, the object of your photography, and know it well. Go back again and again.

Shoot in different seasons, and at different times of the day.

Make a habit of checking the weather forecast first thing in the morning, and again late in the evening.

We all have our likes and dislikes. Is there anything you don't like about Nature photography?

As an interest, nature and wildlife photography has grown fast, bringing in a lot of new people, but also those who have no respect for either nature or wildlife. I see too many cases where the goal is to get the picture by any means. It's an unfortunate phenomenon and should be addressed whenever noticed.

Birds are certainly a prominent subject across your work. What triggered this interest ?

A lifelong interest in birds has helped me gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of their behavior. The better you know your target, the more of good opportunities you get. And having often been close enough to a super shot, just short of success, makes you try again and again.

What started first - birding or photography?

Birding. I was a small boy in the early 70s and got interested in birds. Bought my first camera in 1973, a Canon FTb. Birds were a hobby, an extra interest in my life for decades but now, unfortunately, less so. I often say that I ruined a great hobby by making it my job. But no, seriously, watching and following birds is still as alluring as ever, and I get into it as much as possible.

Don't try to get too close to the birds. Observe them, and let them grow used to you. You're guaranteed to make better pictures this way.

Your favorite bird species and why?

So many: Golden Eagle, owls, Galliformes (our gamebirds) and probably the Black Grouse is the number one. The Black Grouse display season lasts two months and is a sure sign of spring after a long winter, even if snow is still half a metre deep on the ground.

I shoot Black Grouses in snowy settings a lot, yet I've still not taken my best shot. Luckily my clients share this interest in the Black Grouse and I get to chase my top shot. I'm aiming for a blurry picture with out-of-focus motion, taken just after sunrise, with loose powder snow flying in the air and the fighting males etched against a dark backdrop. Maybe I'll get lucky this spring.



Bird photography is almost always about the action. How do you manage to get a good pose during this short span? What should one look for? How would you prepare for such shots?

It's true that most photographers chase action shots. Know your target's behavior, spend a lot of time with it, and return to the same subject often enough - all this will improve your chances at succeeding. And don't forget to study the camera's technical features really well.

You are obviously a bird person. If you were to be a bird in your next life, which one would you pick?

I'd like to come back as a Black Grouse alpha male, the one that rules the lek site year after year.

Conducting courses and capturing your best shots - how do you find the balance between these two? Also, how do you think training others helps you grow as a photographer?

When I'm out with clients, it's always their show. This of course puts some restrictions on my own ideas. But on the plus side, I get to be out there, year after year, working on the same fascinating species (about 50 altogether), at different times of the day and in all kinds of light conditions. I've learned a lot about the birds' behavior, which helps me with my own photography. Besides, being open-minded and



©Olli Lamminaslo



receptive with others is a two-way street - I guide about 150 people each year, and in return, somebody always teaches me something new.

What equipment do you use and why? What's your favorite Nature photography lens - the one you just can't do without?

Canon camera bodies 5 D Mark 3 and 1-D X. My favourite lenses would be the 16-35mm 2.8, 24-70mm 2.8, 70-200mm 2.8 and 200-400mm, plus the 1.4 extender.

I shoot a lot with my clients in the hides, and due to the flexibility it offers me, the 200-400mm is absolutely the top lens. I seldom miss any of the longer tele lenses anymore.

If you had to share one important lesson you think every bird photographer needs to learn, what would it be?

Don't try to get too close to the birds. Observe them, and let them grow used to you. You're guaranteed to make better pictures this way. Be considerate, also to other photographers.





SPECIES

Nepal's **Threatened** Birds

By Carol Inskipp and Hem Sagar Baral



White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*)



C

Carol Inskipp is the author of many books on Nepal's birds and their conservation. She and Hem Sagar Baral are the main authors of the National Red List of Nepal's Birds.

Hem is the Chief Executive of the Zoological Society of London's Nepal Programme and has carried out much bird conservation work in Nepal.

All photographs are taken by Sagar Giri.



© Sagar Giri

Rufous-necked Laughingthrush (*Garrulax ruficollis*)



Asian Openbill Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*)

Nepal may be a small country, roughly covering the area of England and Wales combined, but it harbours an extraordinary variety of landscapes, habitats, wildlife and cultures. The country is home to as much as 8% of the world's bird species. Its diverse physiographic features range from the Arctic high Himalayan peaks to the tropical lowlands. Also important is Nepal's geographical position, a region of overlap between the Palearctic realm to the north and the Oriental realm to the south.

A large percentage of over 23% of the country's landmass is designated as protected areas, with 11 national parks, two wildlife reserves, one hunting reserve and six conservation areas.

Positioned between China in the north and India to the south, east and west, Nepal is a land-locked country lying between the Indian subcontinent and Eurasian continent. Most of Nepal's land mass lies in the Himalayas, forming the central part of the range. Over a small lateral distance of around 200 km, the country undergoes vast altitudinal changes from 60 m along the southern border, up to 8848 m at the peak of Sagarmatha (Mount Everest).

Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis* is Nepal's only endemic bird species. It is fairly widespread and occurs from east to west Nepal. Spiny Babbler inhabits dense secondary scrub with scattered trees, often favouring abandoned terraces. The species is probably under-recorded as it is difficult to observe and is more often heard than seen, except in the breeding

season, when males often sing from branches in the open.

In February 2016, the Zoological Society of London published online the first comprehensive status assessment of all Nepal's bird species using the IUCN categories and criteria. This type of species assessment is internationally recognized as the world's most authoritative and objective method for classifying extinction risk. Species distribution maps were produced for all of Nepal's bird species except vagrants. The same mapping system was used previously in distribution maps produced

A total of 14% of perching birds (passerines) and as many as 25% of non-passerines were found to be threatened. Larger birds are therefore more threatened than smaller birds.

in 1990, so that comparisons could be made between pre-1990 and post-1990 bird distributions.

Many species showed an increase in distribution in west Nepal and the distributional range of a number of species was significantly extended, for example **Himalayan Cutia** *Cutia nipalensis*. This must be mainly due to better coverage as the west was poorly recorded up to at least 1990. However, despite improved coverage in central and eastern Nepal, the distributions of many species, for example **Red-headed**

Red-headed Trogon (*Anastomus oscitans*)



©Sagar Giri

Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus* were found to have reduced compared to pre-1990 distributions. This is probably due to loss and deterioration of habitats, which has been greater in central and eastern Nepal compared to the west.

A number of species is now found only or very largely in protected areas, for example **Swamp Francolin** *Francolinus gularis*, **Bengal Florican** *Houbaropsis bengalensis*, **Jerdon's Babbler** *Chrysomma altirostre* and **Grey-crowned Prinia** *Prinia cinereocapilla*.

As many as 168 species (19%) of Nepal's bird species were assessed as nationally threatened. These comprise the large number of 68 (40%) which are considered Critically Endangered, 38 (23%) Endangered and 62 (37%) Vulnerable species. A total of 22 species (2.5% of the total) was considered Data Deficient.

Among the different habitats, lowland grassland specialist birds are the most threatened group of birds, with 55% of lowland grassland specialists threatened. These include the Critically Endangered **Slender-billed Babbler** *Turdoides nipalensis* which is confined to Chitwan National Park and some community-managed forests/grasslands in the park's buffer zone, where it is resident and not known to undertake movements. It inhabits tall

grass and reeds, especially near water. Wetland birds are the second most threatened group with 25% of species threatened, followed by tropical and subtropical broadleaved forest birds (24% threatened). The latter group include the spectacular Endangered **Red-headed Trogon** *Harpactes erythrocephalus*, a very uncommon resident found from Pokhara valley in west central Nepal east to the Makalu Barun National Park buffer zone in the east. It inhabits dense, broadleaved evergreen trees and bamboo in tropical



Oriental Pied-hornbill (*anthracoceros albirostris*)

©Sagar Giri

and subtropical forests, a habitat type which is now very limited and highly fragmented.

A total of 14% of perching birds (passerines) and as many as 25% of non-passerines were found to be threatened. Larger birds are therefore more threatened than smaller birds.

The most threatened of non-passerines

are the storks (over 70%) including the Vulnerable **Asian Openbill** *Anastomus oscitans*. Like most other storks and many other waterbirds, this species is severely threatened by loss and degradation of wetlands, loss of suitable nest sites, and illegal hunting and disturbance. The stork is also seriously at risk from food shortage at some sites. It may also be threatened by pesticides and locally also by water pollution from industrial effluents.

Around 45% of birds of prey are threatened including all of the vultures. Nepal is home to nine vulture species; the Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus* has also been recorded as a vagrant. The Critically Endangered **White-rumped Vulture** *Gyps bengalensis* was formerly a common and widespread resident up to 1000 m; it was also the most common vulture in Nepal. The population decreased by 91% by the mid-2000s. Poisoning by scavenging carcasses containing diclofenac, a drug used to treat livestock ailments, has been shown to be the major cause of the species' decline. The second Vulture Conservation Action Plan in Nepal (2015-2019) is now underway and has helped prioritize and streamline vulture conservation activities in the country. For example, in 2006, a ban was introduced on the production and importation of diclofenac for veterinary use. In response, the species is showing signs of recovery at some sites; however, the current population trend is still uncertain and may still be declining.

Among the passerines, the babblers are the most threatened group; around 36% of species are threatened. This

large group of species includes the Critically Endangered **Rufous-necked Laughingthrush** *Garrulax ruficollis*. It has a restricted distribution in Chitwan National Park and in community forests along and west of the Narayani River and in the park's buffer zone. The species favours a moist habitat of grassland and forest edge and is seriously threatened by habitat loss and alteration.

While Nepal is rich in biodiversity, it is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. The country's rapidly increasing human population is putting huge pressure on natural resources and wildlife; even meeting basic human needs is a struggle. Protected areas staff often lack sufficient resources to implement regulations and improve their own management skills. Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation are the most important threats to Nepal's



Spiny Babbler (*Acanthoptila nipalensis*)



Slender-billed Babbler (*Turdoides longirostris*)

birds. Despite these challenges, the Nepal Government has produced a 2014-2020 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to safeguard Nepal's rich biodiversity.

One of the action plan's important targets is a significant reduction (by at least 75% of the current rate) in the loss and degradation of forest. Another valuable target is the promotion of alternative energy sources, such as biogas, solar energy and hydropower and fuel-efficient technologies. Communities throughout Nepal have demonstrated that they can effectively protect and sustainably use the forests under their care as community forests. The action plan promotes the extension of the community forestry programme.

Nepal has a National Wetland Policy and its effective implementation is urgently needed. This policy aims to put people at the centre of conservation and natural resource management. The government action plan includes a target for the development and implementation of an effective mechanism to control the widespread and very damaging practice of gravel and sand mining from rivers and streams. Reducing pollution of wetlands is recognised in the action plan as very important and can be achieved by enforcing the Industrial Policy (2011). Strict enforcement of Nepal's already existing pesticide regulations would greatly reduce the threat from pesticides to people, wildlife and the environment.

Effective grassland management is vital for biodiversity conservation; grassland birds are often highly sensitive to

changes in habitat quality and the micro-environment around them. Burning is an important management tool for the conservation of threatened grassland birds and should be carried out on a rotational basis before or after the birds' breeding season. Livestock grazing in protected areas is very damaging and should be stopped. A community managed grassland is working in Chitwan National Park buffer zone, along similar lines to that of community forestry and fulfils the needs of local village people. The setting up of more community-managed grasslands would be very beneficial.

Reducing over-exploitation including hunting, trapping and over-fishing is another important conservation step. The number of legally protected birds is currently only nine; recommendations for a much-expanded list have already been made.

More conservation awareness programmes are urgently needed, especially in buffer zones of protected areas and targeted at local communities. Highly successful owl conservation programmes have already been carried out by the national NGO, Friends of Nature and could act as models for other awareness programmes.

The Zoological Society of London are warmly thanked for allowing reproduction of this article which is based on the National Red List of Nepal's Birds

<https://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/asia/national-red-list-of-nepals-birds>



CONSERVATION STORY

Madagascar - A Biologically Rich & Diverse Island

By Clyde Odonnell



© Hank Tyler

Madagascar, about 500 km east of Mozambique off the south east coast of Africa is the fourth largest islands in the world and home to unique wildlife and plant life still abundant in habitat protected areas. Most species of flora and fauna are endemic to Madagascar. While Madagascar is close to Africa, its wildlife is almost totally unique. Conservationists consider protecting the island's unique species and habitats one of the most important areas in the world. About 2,000,000 hectares of land is protected in forty-three protected areas across seven different categories of conservation lands. There are seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites, three Biosphere Reserves, and two RAMSAR wetland sites. Conservation organizations are struggling to protect as much land as possible in the face of rapid deforestation.

C

Clyde Odonnell is a nature guide and wildlife photographer from Porepunkah, Victoria, Australia with 25 years of experience in Borneo, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Madagascar.

Clyde loves photographing insects.



© Clyde Odonnell

Madagascar is world renowned for its diversity of nature with most species found nowhere else on earth, its reptiles including some 75 species of Chameleons. Amphibians, insects and mammals come in a staggering range of colour and size.

Paul Bannick

Madagascar's amazing unique fauna and flora is due to its geographical isolation. As the super continent "Gondwanaland" broke up about 88 million years ago, land split off from India forming a separate island. Over millions of years, the island developed its unique animals and plants. Madagascar is about 1,580 km long and 570 km wide, orientated on a north-south axis, and located south of the equator between 12 degrees and 26 degrees. Madagascar is similar in size to France, about 58,000,000 hectares. The climate ranges from mild temperate in the south to sub-tropical in the north. Forests range from wet tropical along the east coast to very dry along the west coastal "rain shadow" region.

Madagascar is considered a biological hot-spot because of its size, high number of unique species, large potential for identifying new species, and rapid destruction of forests and natural habitats. Compared with much of the world, more biological surveys and inventories are needed in Madagascar. New species are being discovered all the time. Therefore, a range of species is often given for most species of plants and animal groups.

Lemurs are the unique primates that have evolved to live in all the island's ecosystems and habitats. Scientists consider there are about 100 taxa of lemurs in Madagascar with more still to be discovered. This island contains five families of lemurs in fourteen genera - the highest diversity of primates in the world. Lemurs are primitive primates that are diurnal as well as many that are nocturnal. The National Parks with the



highest species diversity of lemurs are Andringitra (31,160 hectares, eastern mountain rainforest from 700 meters to 2,658 meters), Zahamena (43,200 hectares, eastern mountain, 254 to 1,560 meters), Marojejy (55,550 hectares on the northeastern slope is wet rainforest in rugged mountain terrain to a height of 2,132 meters), Ranomafara (41,400 hectares, wet tropical rainforest, south eastern), and Andasibe Mantadia (15,500 hectares, middle of eastern slope mountains 800 meters to 1,260 meters, easy to visit from capital city of Antananarivo, home of largest lemur, the Indri).

Chameleons, a reptile, are another group of special animals. About 75 of the 150 species of chameleons are found only on Madagascar. Chameleons are noted for their bulging eyes that move independently from one another, and for their ability to change the colour of their skin rapidly to frighten predators, or to blend into their habitat while hunting. Chameleons have a special layer of cells under their skin that are able to change colour rapidly and frequently. Many species are nocturnal. They have evolved into a variety of shapes and sizes. The smallest is *Brookesia*, about 30 mm long. Several species of arboreal chameleons have prehensile tails.

The combination of lemurs and chameleons make Madagascar an amazing island for nature lovers and photographers to visit. Nature photographers are always pleased with the surprising number of new species of mammals, birds, reptiles, butterflies and insects spotted while waiting, watching or

walking in the national parks. Naturalists are always delighted with spotting new species.

Insects are one of my favourite animal groups to photograph. Madagascar has an amazing diversity of insects. Many insect species remain to be identified.

Sadly more than 90 % of Madagascar has been cleared of natural forest. Invasive plants are found in all areas and destroying many habitats. Surprisingly wildlife is abundant in most reserves and national parks although all species are under constant threat from poaching, habitat burning and hunting by local people who will even eat the spiders off their webs.

As a tour guide and wildlife photographer I was drawn to Madagascar in the late 1990s and have since returned nine times to photograph wildlife in many of the national parks including Mantadia, Mitsinjo, Masoala, Ranomafana, in the east De Isalo and D'Analamazoatra in the south west, D'Ankarafantsika in central Madagascar and Montange D' Ambre (Amber Mountain) in the far north west. All have unique wildlife in very diverse habitats from dense rainforest to dry spiny forests. Exploring these parks is exciting and rewarding.

With constant economic and political instability tourism is slow throughout most of the year and many of the parks are poorly managed and sadly have deteriorated significantly in recent years. Fortunately local guides are employed in each park and possess excellent knowledge to offer the visitor. However



the cost to visit these parks have increased three fold in recent years, yet the infrastructure is largely in ruins which suggests that the tourist income is not going back into the parks as much as it should, especially in D' Ankarafantsika and Montange D' Ambre. Unless this situation changes soon I fear much of Madagascar's incredibly special wildlife will soon be lost forever.

Madagascar is world renowned for its diversity of nature with most species

found nowhere else on earth. Mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects come in a staggering range of colour and size. For a nature photographer, this amazing island is a must visit to photograph.

See: *Conservation and Environmental Management in Madagascar*. 2014. Ivan R. Scales, Editor

[www: parcs-madagascar.com](http://www.parcs-madagascar.com)

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





ODE TO NATURE

AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY...

By Aishwarya Sridhar



AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY...

By- Aishwarya Sridhar

A handsome male tiger was in the forest one night,
In search of a prey that he could kill at sight.
The moon shone bright as the tiger stalked the woods,
Not knowing that a poacher wanted to kill him if he could.

Stealthily into the forest the poacher had entered
And this male was the one on whom his focus was centred.
When at last the tiger came in sight
He picked up his gun and fired with all his might.

The sound of the bullet pierced the silence of the night
But the world slept through the tiger's plight.
The evil mind had done his deed
In return for money that would satiate his greed.

As the tiger lay dead on the forest floor
The poacher's greed grew even more..
Apart from the skin, he took his claws
Followed by his bones and his paws...

Money was to him, such a temptation
That he butchered the tiger without any hesitation.
Punishment for this crime he did not heed
As there was no proof of him committing the evil deed.

And money could always buy him bail
And save him spending his term in jail
Wonder why he left the tiger's soul behind
Guess it's not valued anymore by mankind.

With poor enforcement of laws safeguarding animal rights
Saving the tigers is proving to be a futile fight...

W **Writer, poet, wildlife photographer & amateur wildlife film-maker and passionate conservationist, Aishwarya is a Mumbai based College student who loves nature and through her poems, articles and images of natural heritage hopes to spread the message of conservation.**

She is currently documenting the bird life of Uran and Panvel and has recorded more than 180 species.

I was driving through New York State's Adirondack Park, a six million acre Park comprising public and private land, created in 1892 by the State Legislature. I was a mile outside Long Lake, one of 102 towns and villages in the Park with just 130,000 permanent human residents, but whose human visitors swell to 10 million in summer. As one of those visitors, I was accelerating when a sow (female) black bear (*Ursus americanus*) galloped across the two lane highway. I swerved left just in time to avoid her. Shaken, I stopped and looked in my rear view: two small cubs ran across the road to be with their mother. Had I killed the sow bear, three black bears would have died. The encounter made me question the sustainability of human life with wild nature even in a Park as large as the Adirondacks.



An estimated 5,000 black bears live in this six million acre Adirondack Park region which occupies 20% of New York State. Black bears are rarely seen. Writing for the Adirondack Explorer magazine (Nov-Dec 2016), Wildlife Conservation Society scientist Michale Glennon notes "they are afraid of humans, and they aren't really a predator. They are an opportunistic omnivore, so if they are attacking

Black Bears in New York's Adirondack State Park

By David Gibson



a human, it's for a cause that I would consider an anomaly; either fear because someone has gotten between them and their cubs or made them feel scared for whatever reason."

Black bears populate this region for three main reasons. Unlike much of the fragmented, developed northeast, the Adirondacks contain large unbroken, protected expanses of eastern temperate deciduous forests. These forests supply nuts for the bears in order to quickly build up the fat reserves needed to overwinter in this harsh environment. These expansive forests also supply a variety of denning sites for overwintering bears, ranging from tree cavities, to dense overhanging branches, to small caves, all allowing deep snow to cover them

and retain body heat. The Park also has relatively low highway density per square mile of terrain, meaning that bear deaths at the hands of drivers like me are comparatively rare.

Bears have a powerful sense of smell and cubs quickly learn from their mother where to find food wherever it may come from. Natural foods include plants and insect grubs in spring, berries in summer, and even deer fawns when they can be caught, and hardwood mast in fall. However, persistent beech bark disease has impacted the old-growth beech forest and its mast crop. A rich source of fat reserves, beech nuts, can no longer be relied upon. Many uninformed human residents offer tempting alternative food sources for bears. What once



was common at town dumps is still too common at homes near Adirondack forests. Unsecured human garbage or even bird feeding in summer will condition individual bears to feed near human residences. A bear fed by careless humans often becomes a dead bear.

Research and education can result in fewer negative hiker-camper-bear encounters in the park's public wilderness areas. Thanks to the educational work of the Wildlife Conservation Society (based in Saranac Lake) and the regulatory efforts of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, beginning in 2006 a majority of backpackers started to use bear-proof food canisters on the foot trails and primitive tent sites in the park's largest wilderness, the 193,000-acre High Peaks Wilderness Area. Just as rapidly, fewer black bears were attracted to these tent sites and negative interactions (loss of human food) markedly decreased.

However, during a very hot, dry spring and summer, berry crops will fail, causing black bears to seek out human food sources resulting in many more human-bear conflicts. That's what happened in 2016. Just to know black bears are present in this magnificent Adirondack forest is enough for most of us. It's humans who must manage their own behaviors and habits to ensure that any bear sightings are positive, inspiring and fleeting.

David Gibson is managing partner of the nonprofit Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, on the web at www.adirondackwild.org
New York State, USA

FIRE MANAGEMENT IN FLORIDA

By Linda Duever

When Ponce de Leon gave the subtropical peninsula at the southeastern corner of the United States the name “La Florida”, he was inspired by the glorious stands of wildflowers carpeting the open landscape. As his soldiers struggled through flooded swamps and burning pinelands, they confronted the fundamentally elemental nature of the place: this is the ultimate land of earth, air, fire, and water. The rushing air of hurricanes regularly rearranges shorelines and forests, piling fallen branches in wrack lines and treefall gaps. Torrential rains deluge the landscape from mid-summer into fall, then, come the spring drought, an extraordinary density of lightning strikes sets the dry brush on fire. And the earth responds with wildflowers. That’s how the system works.

Or at least, that’s how it used to work. As

people have flocked to the state’s warm winter sunshine and crystal turquoise waters, highways and high-rises have cluttered and fragmented the landscape. Expanses of prairie and pine flatwoods savanna have been dissected by proliferating roads, water supply canals, and urban sprawl. High-end homes and trailer parks now butt up against remnants of dense scrub forest evolved to regenerate via catastrophic canopy fire.

The predictable human response has been aggressive fire suppression. That, coupled with the way linear barriers now prevent both floods and fires from ebbing and flowing across the landscape, has allowed open vistas to become choked with flammable brush. Wildflowers and wildlife habitat have been smothered by thickets of invading plants, some

notorious alien weeds and others opportunistic “nativasives” like the laurel oaks and water oaks that move upslope from wetland edges in the absence of fire.

Florida’s land managers have addressed this by developing an exemplary prescribed burning program. They have been aggressively clearing and burning unmanageable brush from sandhills and flatwoods to permit longleaf pine – wiregrass and the myriad species dependent upon that regional matrix ecosystem to thrive. Most conservationists understand the urgency of this, recognizing that doing our best to restore pre-European fire regimes to our remaining natural landscapes is our best strategy for “saving all the pieces” and preserving the web of interconnections that prevents ecosystem collapse.

City dwellers and “snowbirds” seldom understand. They freak out over blazing saw palmetto thickets and complain about any smoke that wafts across their roads and homes despite the burners’ skill at directing it up and away. Too few citizens realize that these “controlled burns” are their best defense against the truly devastating wildfires that otherwise inevitably remove heavy accumulations of brushy fuel.

The rapid expansion of “industrial strength” land management worries knowledgeable people too. Botanists go ballistic over enormous firebreaks bulldozed through sensitive groundcover. Bear advocates rage about how pre-burn roller chopping diminishes critical crops of saw palmetto berries for centuries to come and how winter burning kills cubs

in their dens and destroys the blueberries they eat in the spring. Calmer scientists point out that winter burning is at odds with nature, citing voluminous evidence that our ecosystems evolved in response to spring-summer lightning fire and will disintegrate without it. We have made great progress in managing fire in Florida, but we have a long way to go. Now we need to adjust our strategies to create an intelligent mosaic of biodiverse habitats instead of the vast tracts of battered sameness that tend to result from current policies. We haven’t figured out how to do that yet, but there is one thing we do know: It’s complicated.

Reed Noss, author of *Evolutionary Ecology of Fire in Florida* and the *Southeastern Coastal Plain* (University of Florida Press, in press), explains that we must adhere to the principle of following Mother Nature as we move ahead: “If the conservation of biodiversity is a goal of land management, then fire-prone ecosystems should be managed in a way that maintains or mimics the natural (lightning) fire regime. This is the fire regime that species in a community experienced during their evolutionary histories. Strong departures from this evolutionary environment could lead to extinctions.” Reminding us of the fragile intricacy of our peninsula and the complex interactions species develop in response to elemental ecosystem drivers, he challenges us to take a leadership role and “get fire management right” in this global biodiversity hotspot.

Linda Duever is a conservation biologist working in Florida, USA



Undercover for the wildlife

By Urva Sharma



Wildlife conservation is a massive term and cannot be explained in simple terms. There are more than hundred different activities which can be listed as 'conservation'. One of them that I have involved with the last few years is 'Wildlife crime control and law enforcement'. This is one of the less talked about activities, yet one of the most significant divisions of wildlife conservation.

Saving the flora and fauna is one of the most challenging tasks for any country. There are several aspects that have endangered the forests. Besides contamination and pollution, trafficking also poses a severe threat to the forests and its occupants. Not only has trafficking imperilled the lives of wild animals and medicinal plants, it has also misbalanced the biodiversity of our planet.

Several NGO's along with others have joined hands to save the wildlife and preserve the greenery of planet earth. However, such accomplishments are time-taking and the results can be seen only later on. The extinction list of endangered

species and flora and fauna seems to be getting longer and the pages of the "Red Data Book" seem to be filling up fast. Organisations have been forced to take stern action against trafficking because of the situation.

Trafficking is risky, which is why it is an infrequent undertaking in different countries. However it is at its peak in African and Asian countries.

The organizations I have worked with are active in west and east African countries. These organizations work in collaboration with the governments of the respective countries and along with the local communities who are willing to fight trafficking. The procedure is different for every operation. It begins from locating the lead to arresting the main trafficker. It is a tedious job and takes days to build trust with the dealer. It is only after the undercover agent has the complete confidence of the dealer when the arrest of the main trafficker happens. The complete mission is precarious and kept secretive. When the trafficker or the dealer is arrested, animal parts or even live animals are seized. The animal parts

that are mostly traded are elephant tusks, bones and skull of apes, baby animals, chimps and gorillas, birds, turtles and reptiles.

The best part of such operations is the quick arrest of traffickers and recovery of live animals. Every trafficker or dealer arrested lead to the chain of trafficking and many other traffickers. It also helps in stopping trafficking activities for some time and save wildlife. Sadly, the administrative policies of most countries have trivial punishments which mean the traffickers and dealers are back in the forests trafficking animal parts or animals, in no time. For instance the African judicial system has a three month punishment for those caught trafficking.

These liberal policies has made the traffickers fearless, they hardly end up in jail and even if they do they walk free in no time to execute the same thing. It gets difficult to crack the next operation once you succeed in making an arrest. However, the joy of success is always sweet especially when you save the lives of thousands of innocent

animals. Clandestineness is your weapon because if the traffickers get the faintest hint about your activities the operation becomes a fiasco and your life is in danger. However, the love for wildlife eliminates this fright.

'Let us save innocent lives, Let us fight for those without a voice, Let us prove that we are humans!'

Urva has always been passionate about animals and forests. But it was not her original choice of carrier. She did her master's in Business management (MBA) and worked for couple of months for a multinational company. Soon she realized that this is not her calling and enrolled to do full time Master's in Wildlife Science. She started volunteering for different NGOs and forest department. She then got the opportunity to join Wildlife Institute of India for Tiger Project. It's been more than 5 years now and she got versatile roles in different parts of India for wildlife conservation. Her recent engagements were with Wildlife Crime Control and Law Enforcement firms in African countries.



© Immanuel Abraham Mathew

Glimpses Of Bali

By Immanuel Abraham Mathew

TRAVEL & PHOTOGRAPHY





Immanuel Abraham Mathew is an I.T. Officer at National Bank of Umm Al Quwain. He started photography 4 years ago as a passion in college. Being a Landscape photographer, Immanuel has traveled to different places and was blessed to witness and capture tons of sunrises and sunsets, making him a better person both professionally and personally. Night photography is another favorite genre of his, capturing the Milky-way and being surrounded with tons of stars has always been a favorite experience. He plans to travel more and nurture his photography his whole life.

Social Media Links to Follow Me :

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BIG ZOOM ON A BUDGET

AF-S NIKKOR 200-500mm f/5.6E ED VR



PRODUCT REVIEW



By Hermis Haridas,
United Arab Emirates

A self-confessed nature lover and travel enthusiast, he became deeply involved in nature and bird photography and found himself traveling around, hunting for and trying to capture moments hitherto uncaptured. His trips to Russia, Sri Lanka, India and African continent gave him the opportunity to understand the nuances of wildlife photography. Hermis believes in the adage that “practice makes perfect” and there isn’t a day in his life without peeping at the world through his “third eye”. He holds his passion closest to his heart and dreams of making it big as a nature photographer. Website: www.hermis.me



This is a latest addition to Nikon’s range of constant aperture super telephoto zoom lenses. The lens is an impressive package as it combines excellent image quality and great image stability in a surprisingly affordable price.

Nikon’s Silent Wave Motor (SWM) feature converts “traveling waves” into rotational energy to focus the optics. This enables high-speed autofocus that’s extremely accurate and super quiet. When it comes to wildlife photography autofocus is a most critical element in capturing action. The SWM feature answers this requirement. It might not be as quick as a pro-level (Prime) lenses, but pretty fast enough for action photography mainly when used with the latest Nikon cameras. Tracking is also pretty good while photographing birds in action.

When it comes to low light conditions the Nikon 200-500mm VR focused with more precision, compared to other lenses in the same range.

Another great thing – the lens is comparatively lighter, making it easy to hand-hold and shoot. The ~4.5 stops of vibration reduction feature is very effective and aids to shoot hand-held in any conditions. Shooting with such a lens where we have to deal with relatively slow aperture and long focal length, hand-held requires a quite solid image stabilization. This is great for capturing those magic moments at dawn and dusk.



T **The lens is an impressive package as it combines excellent image quality and great image stability in a surprisingly affordable price.**



The Nikon 200-500mm is sharp with minor pincushion distortion, terrific vibration reduction and dead-on autofocus. This could be the next legend for Nikon and prove the best budget alternative to Prime Super telephotos.

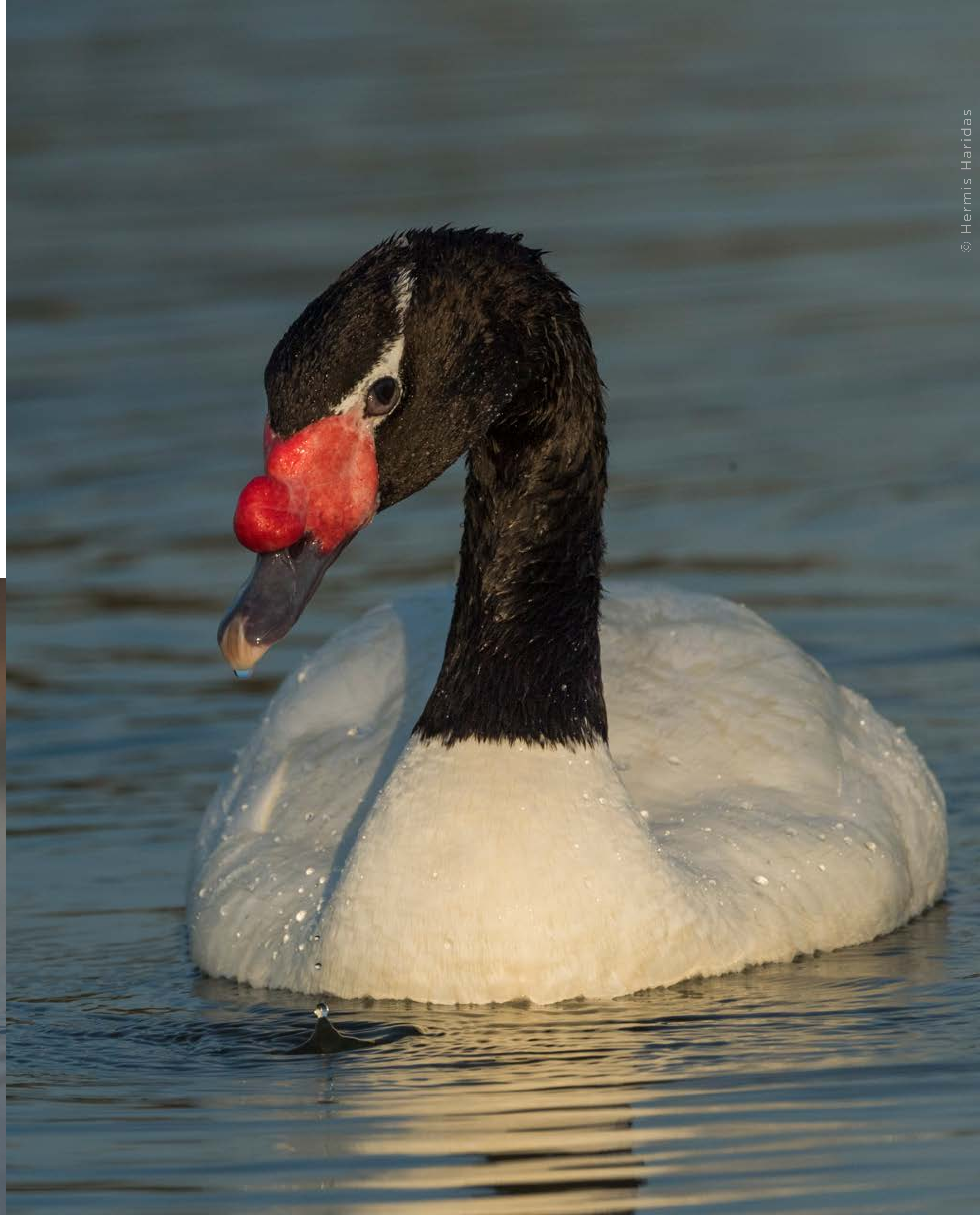
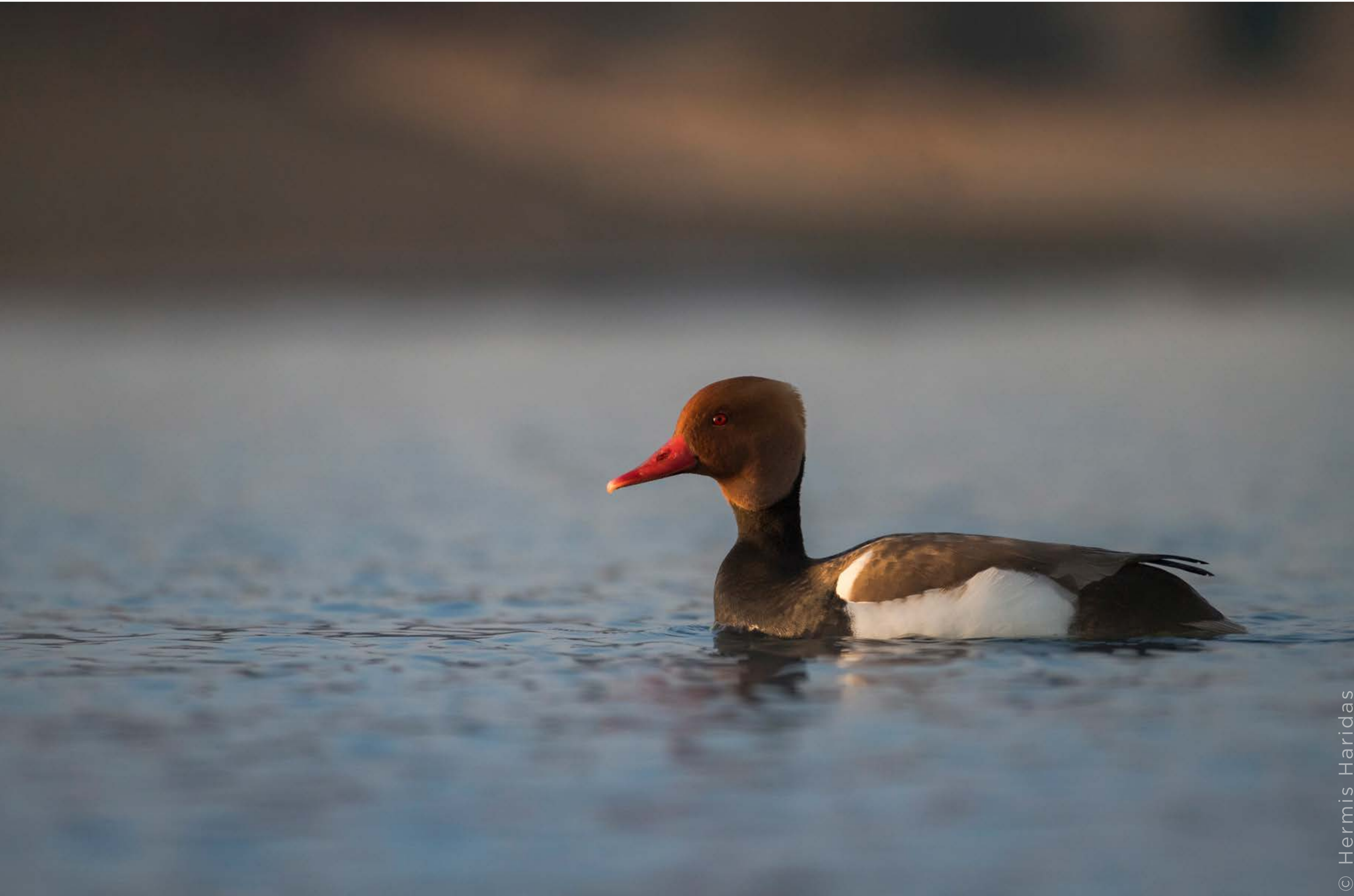
This lens can also play the role of a macro lens to bring small subjects to sharp focus creating distraction free out of focus backgrounds, what is known as the bokeh effect.

Similar to a prime lens the bokeh effect is taken care of by the long focal length which keeps the background nicely out of focus.

When tried with Nikon D5 for low light shooting conditions before the sunlight hours, the images were absolutely impressive. The lens in tandem with the high iso performance of the D5 is exquisite.

In tandem with a DX body the lens is a belter for birding and even safari as you get an effective zoom of 300 - 750 mm. One thing which stands apart from lenses of this range is the sharpness. Nikon has without doubt created a champion in the 200-500mm f/5.6 .

If you are a tele photo shooter, this lens is a compelling choice!





© Dheeraj M. Nanda

Prodigy Underwater

By Dheeraj M. Nanda

CUB'S CORNER

CUB'S CORNER



Dheeraj M. Nanda, from Bangalore, India is 16 years old and a passionate wildlife, underwater photographer since 2013. He is a certified Stress and Rescue level scuba diver and a cyclist. Interested in the outdoors and likes to explore places off the beaten track.

When it comes to expeditions - adventure, risky tasks, and doing things that many people have not done or ever tried doing are on his priority lists. Always keen on presenting nature's beauty in the most interesting and inspiring manner. Nature, passion, and his cameras, he calls them as his best friends!

Dheeraj lives by the quote "My life, my journey, fuelled by my passion."





My father and brother had been into photography few years before I started. When I expressed my interest in photography my parents were very supportive and have never advised me to concentrate only on academia, my dad made my outings very different from that of my friends, he took me out to several national parks and forests across India. Observing animals in their habitat on wildlife safaris was so much fun and learning too. The interest in learning about animals and their behaviour in the natural habitat increased as I started to travel more often, the forests and the oceans have compelled me to be adventurous and I would never like to

limit my boundaries. Scuba Diving back then in 2012 was something very few young people had tried or even thought of in India.

Photography helps me express my vision, as a photographer I always perceive a scene very differently from a normal person next to me. While diving, I was left fascinated by the kind of creatures I saw down there, really unique and completely different from what we see on land, especially while shooting macro, every dive I get to see something new, quite literally. Observing them and photographing them gives me a whole new experience and there







is always something new to learn. One of the best birthday gifts my dad gave me was my recent trip to one of the best reefs in the world - Raja Ampat, it is the most inspiring trip of my life till date. The vast marine life and the richest coral life sighted there was something way more beyond my imagination and expectation. It was the first time that I experienced diving with sharks, finning through the ocean currents and diving in the open blue dive sites. Though Manta Rays, Sea Lions, Whales, Penguins and other big underwater mammals are on my favourites list, the small macroscopic marine organisms such as the shrimps, thousands of species of nudibranch, and several other small fish never fail to impress me.

When I am shooting neither wildlife nor underwater I love to try landscapes. It was a thrilling experience in the winter nights of Ladakh region shooting long exposures, Milky Way, and breath-taking panoramic views of the mountains. Among Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia, mainly has won a spot in my heart for underwater photography. From my recent visit to the Andaman Islands in India I was awestruck by the

rich corals, reefs, crystal clear water with unbelievable visibility, and the inspiring marine life I could see when I plunged to capture them. The vast varieties of soft and hard corals are home to thousands of fishes and other animals.

Few of my images made it to the special mention award at Nature InFocus photography awards, both special mention and first place in India Photography Awards 2016, and honourable mention in the International Photography Awards 2016. These things makes me happy and encourages me to improve my work and produce better images in the coming days.

Today photography has become an easily accessible hobby, but in the process of producing better and challenging images many of our actions tend to cause destruction to the habitat. I strongly feel that we should aim at creating better images only if our actions are not causing any harm and disturbance to the habitat, otherwise it is better to give up the shot. When my images of a particular species speak for their importance and conservation, only then I am happy and self-satisfied.





The 5 'P' s of Wildlife Photography.

By Gopala Krishnan



© Gopala Krishnan

THROUGH THE LENS

G



Gopala Krishnan is an Indian national living in United Arab Emirates.

He sighted his first tiger in the December 2011 and got hooked to wildlife photography since then. Gopal uses Nikon equipment and shoots with a variety of lenses from Wide angles to the Super teles. He strives to showcase wildlife as it is, with minimal Photoshop and other gimmickry.

He does this as a hobby and his purpose of photography is to increase the awareness of Wildlife's existence, the value of their habitat and the dependence on wildlife for mankind's survival. Gopal is actively involved in conservation and wildlife monitoring projects in Kenya.

www.instagram.com/gkpixels/

I have been shooting wildlife for the past five years now. The ride has never been easy or comfortable.

I never go by the reception of my images in social media and I am aware that the current legends of wildlife photography spend the least amount of time on social media. Social media likes are often directly proportional to the number of friends and well-wishers one may have and nothing else.

To be a good chef one must be able to appreciate and recognize good preparations prepared by other chefs. All my free time I seek out and admire the works of the people whom I consider as my idols and try and learn their tricks to present to the world some great creations.

I have realized and understood the meaning and reason of the 5 'P's in





©Gopala Krishnan

The 5 'P' s of wildlife photography.

PASSION
PRESENCE
PATIENCE
PERSISTENCE
PREPAREDNESS

wildlife photography. These 5 'P' s are meaningful in all other life activities too.

PASSION
PRESENCE
PATIENCE
PERSISTENCE
PREPAREDNESS

These are required in equal measures and each one of them are extremely important if one wants to create awe inspiring images.

Last Month I was touring the Mara in Kenya and the first two weeks whizzed

by. I had some great photo opportunities and some great failures too, when one of the 'P's was not active. I have a very long wish list of shots I would like to do and one of them is a full frame image of a lioness carrying her young one in her mouth. I wanted an image where just the lioness and the cub would be in the frame and nothing else.

In the past few years whenever I learned of a lioness with very young cubs I would go there and wait for hours, if not days for this image to come by, but it never happened.



©Gopala Krishnan



This time when my guide mentioned about a lioness with three very young cubs in an area which was about an hour and a half drive away, I could not resist the temptation and we went there the next day early morning.

The past few days it had been raining in the evenings and at nights and the drive was tricky. But to get the best image of my subjects I must be present there early morning or late evening when the light is soft and golden. If I find an irresistible subject then I would wait all the time between the golden hours somewhere nearby and come back to attempt shooting them in the Golden light hours.

Soon we found the lioness behind a bush cluster which was close to a small rock at the base of a much bigger boulder. The location was secluded. These great mammals choose the best of the places where they can bring up their young ones safely.

It was very frustrating to shoot as the bush gave the lioness and her cubs excellent cover and there was no way I could get a clear image without any leaves or twigs coming in the way.

The first whole day went by without any decent images and as we drove back to the camp I decided I will be back the next day to try my luck again.

The second day was equally pathetic. There were no images till evening, except towards midafternoon one of the cubs decided to come out a little and explore. It tried to climb a small rock unsuccessfully and went back to the mother when she called for him. Then the rest of the day was spent waiting with no

images again.

The third day the drive itself was too bad as the roads were water logged. We lost our way a few times in the darkness and finally reached the lioness and her cubs a little after sunrise.

We were surprised to see a huge male Lion about 20 meters away from my subjects sleeping in the early morning sun. My heart sank as I knew this huge male was a threat to her cubs, even though he was from the same pride. The cubs were just too young and even a touch by the giant paws of the lion would surely injure or kill them. At this moment, the sun was getting a bit too warm and the male lion got up to move behind some bushes to rest in the shade. To my alarm, I could see he was limping very badly. His right side front leg was injured and he was walking very slowly on just three legs. I was sure that he would not move from that area for some time. The lioness on her part will not allow her cubs to get in to any danger. I was certain my wish list shot of a full frame with the lioness and a cub in her mouth was doomed. I had just one more day left before heading back home.

It was a helpless situation. We decided to move on. We tried some portraits of the male but the light was already harsh. The next few hours we went driving around the mountains and water bodies in that area and had our lunch under a tree by the banks of Sand River and I was already thinking on my packing and the trip back

It was getting cloudy. We could see the clouds forming very close to the place





©Gopala Krishnan

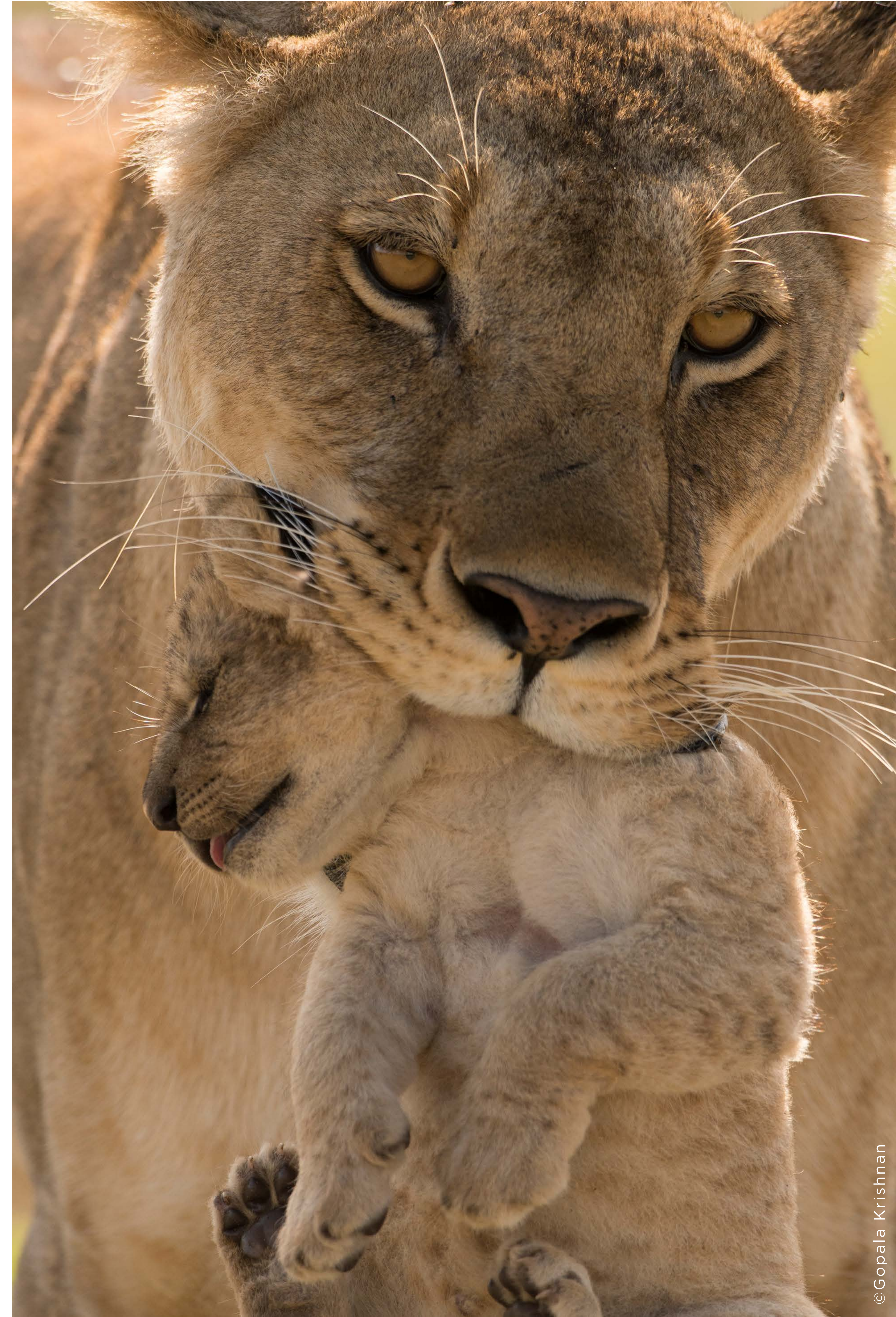
the lioness was. The past few days it had not rained much in her vicinity, but today the clouds were dark and menacing and threatening to drench her and her cubs. The bush she was resting behind was just below a huge boulder. If it rained hard then her bush might get badly water logged. These cats do not love water much. There was a chance she might move the cubs to a safer place.

We rushed back. It was quite a distance and I wanted to get back there before the rains started. My heart was pounding already as we raced against the rain. The male lion was not to be seen. He

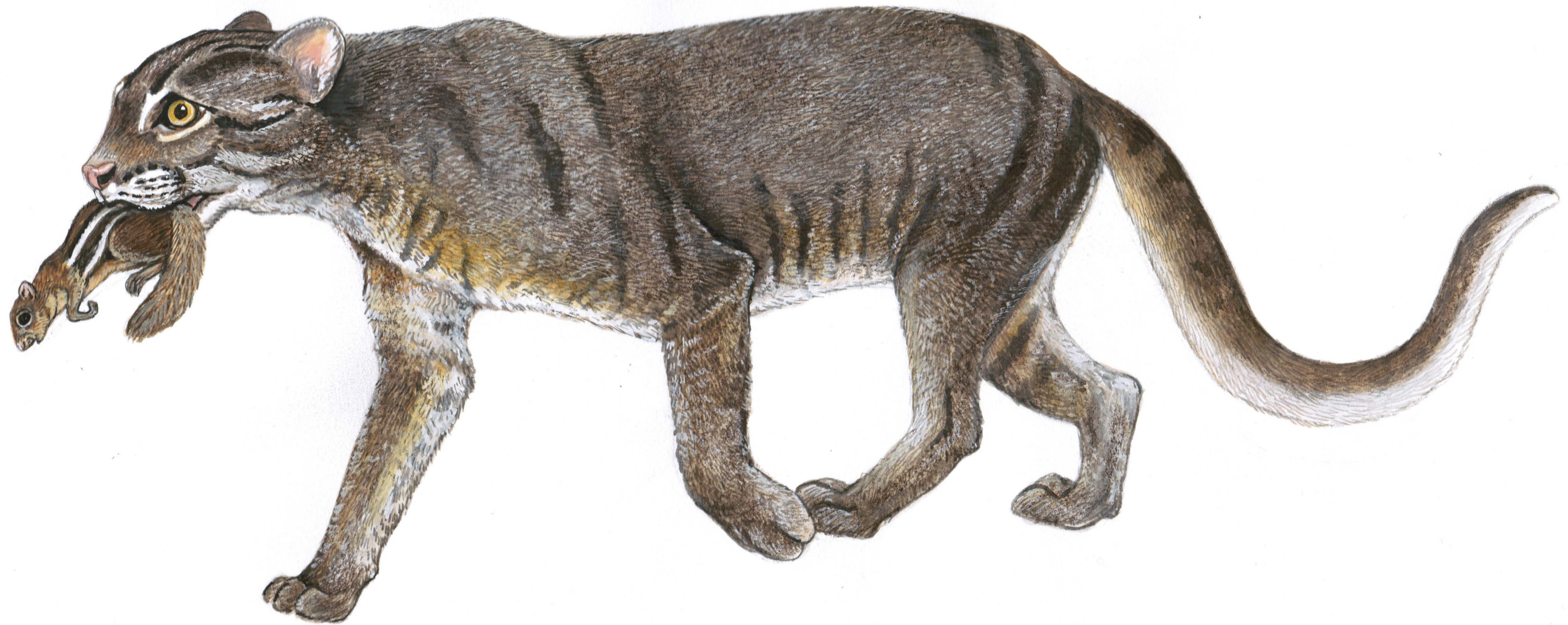
must have sought refuge elsewhere from the rain.

As we reached the bush where the lioness was I could see her bend down to pick up something from the ground. Yes, she was lifting one of the cubs. Yes, she was moving her cubs to a different location. This was the moment I was waiting for. She picked them all up and carried them inside a small cave higher ground. I had my dream shot in my memory card.

That day I realized the value of patience and being prepared more than any other day.



©Gopala Krishnan



INSPIRATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS

By Karen Phillipps

WILD ARTS SHOWCASE



©Honor Phillipps

The island of Borneo is home territory for Karen. She was born in Sandakan, Sabah. One of six children, she and her siblings had free rein to explore, collect and to adventure in the tropical jungles and fields which were their backyard.

Her parents supported their children in this way, and the house was filled with bird and plant books, what was then available, which was not much in those days.

Both her parents painted, her father occasionally for pleasure, but after his death, her mother, Susan Phillipps, started illustrating the various Pitcher plants and Rhododendrons that grew locally. She even wrote her own book, "The Enchanted Gardens of Kinabalu, a Borneo Diary".

Initially home schooled, when the family moved to the west coast she attended the local government schools and later was sent to board at Bedales School in England and from there to Camberwell college of Art and Design where she

specialised in Illustration. Her first illustrating jobs were for African text books - a far cry from the birds and plants she wanted to paint.

From there she moved to Hong Kong, continuing illustration work, and it was there that she answered an advertisement in a newspaper for a bird illustrator... the beginning of a long and productive career. Over the years she has illustrated over two dozen books as well as numerous posters, calendars and stamp designs for the Hong Kong Government and for conservation

non-profit organisations such as WWF and World Conservation International. Those times were wonderfully interesting and busy, there were very few illustrators in Asia specialising in natural history.

Karen combines a keen eye for detail, a flare for colour and strong design in her illustrations, she loves small intricate birds, mammals and plants. Countless hours are devoted to field observations, museum and library research. She has produced numerous sketchbooks full of preliminary drawings and water colours with copious notes. Birds are sketched either when found dead, or whilst being ringed, held live in one hand and sketching the details with the other. For the mammal guides many of the smaller mammals were trapped, painted and then released, including the bats. Museum skins were also a good source of information.

More recently, the advent of the Internet, fantastic photographic equipment and camera traps have made life easier, there is so much new information

©Karen Phillipps





Bay Cat with Four-striped Ground Squirrel ©Karen Phillipps

coming in, and so much still to be discovered.

Karen uses mainly a mix of watercolour and gouache, enhanced at times with water soluble crayons. She likes good acid-free smooth paper and very sharp pencils. For plates, generally the size will be double or larger than the end product. She says she is a 'morning person', working 12 hours a day at times, but concentrates on one piece of work at a time.

Karen's most recent illustrations were for Phillipps' Field Guide to the

Mammals of Borneo, 2016. Princeton Books, a collaborative project with her brother Quentin. This book is more than a field guide because it included a variety of information on ecology, conservation status, sites to visit and numerous sidebars with tidbits of ecological information. This field guide is richly illustrated with bright water colors of birds, mammals, snakes, butterflies, flowers and fruits. In addition to typical field guide species plates there are wonderfully designed illustrations of mammals, the fruits they eat and the seeds they disperse. A wide variety of illustrations include habitat

scenes, ecological descriptive and rat species associated with different species of Neptnthes are scattered throughout the book. Karen has cleverly designed many of her illustrations to dovetail with the text. Karen and Quentin began this book with the idea of updating and expanding Karen's 1985 book. The more they researched and gathered new information the field guide expanded and developed clever designs for presenting nuggets of ecological facts. Karen is now creating new squirrel illustrations based upon information and specimens collected in Kalimantan. Karen and Quentin are the modern day Alfred Russell Wallace, meticulously explaining the ecological facts and wonders of the rich species diversity of Borneo.

Karen on Working with Quentin -

She says, she really enjoys working with her brother, they have the same background and can second-guess each other on content and discuss layout and artwork together which makes the books a lot more fun to produce.

Major illustrated field guides include: A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali (1993), Mammals of Borneo (1985), A Field Guide to the Birds of China (2000), A Color Guide to Hong Kong Animals (1981), The Birds of Hong Kong and South China, The Birds of Sulawesi, A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo (2014), and Mammals of Borneo. A number of Karen's books have been issued in new editions.

Karen does not have a website. However, by searching the internet for the above books one can see many of Karen's outstanding illustrations



Tomistoma schlegelii attacking Proboscis ©Karen Phillipps



Sun Bears & Bornean Ground Cuckoo



KP 2011



YOUR GALLERY



Husain Alfraid

Pharaoh Eagle-owl (*Bubo ascalaphus*)
Location: Jubail city, Saudi Arabia



YOUR GALLERY



M. Gaythri Devi
Zebra (*Equus quagga*)
Location: Samburu, Kenya.



YOUR GALLERY



Amit Rai Chowdhury
Spot-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*)
Location: Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Karnataka, India



YOUR GALLERY



Hira Punjabi

Blackbuck (*Panthera pardus*)

Location: Taal Chappar, Rajasthan, India



YOUR GALLERY



Hussain Nalwala

Leopard with Gazelle kill (*Panthera pardus*)

Location: Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Jeetu Jam

Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*)

Location: Coastal area of Gujarat (Salaya), India



YOUR GALLERY



Pabitra Mahato

Gray Langur (*Semnopithecus entellus*)

Location: Chilkigarh Kanak Durga Temple, West Bengal, India



YOUR GALLERY

Mahesh Reddy

Vernal Hanging Parrot (*Loriculus vernalis*)

Location: Honey Valley Resort, Coorg, Karnataka, India



YOUR GALLERY

Kiran Ranga

Black Leopards (*Panthera pardus*)

Location: Kabini, Karnataka, India





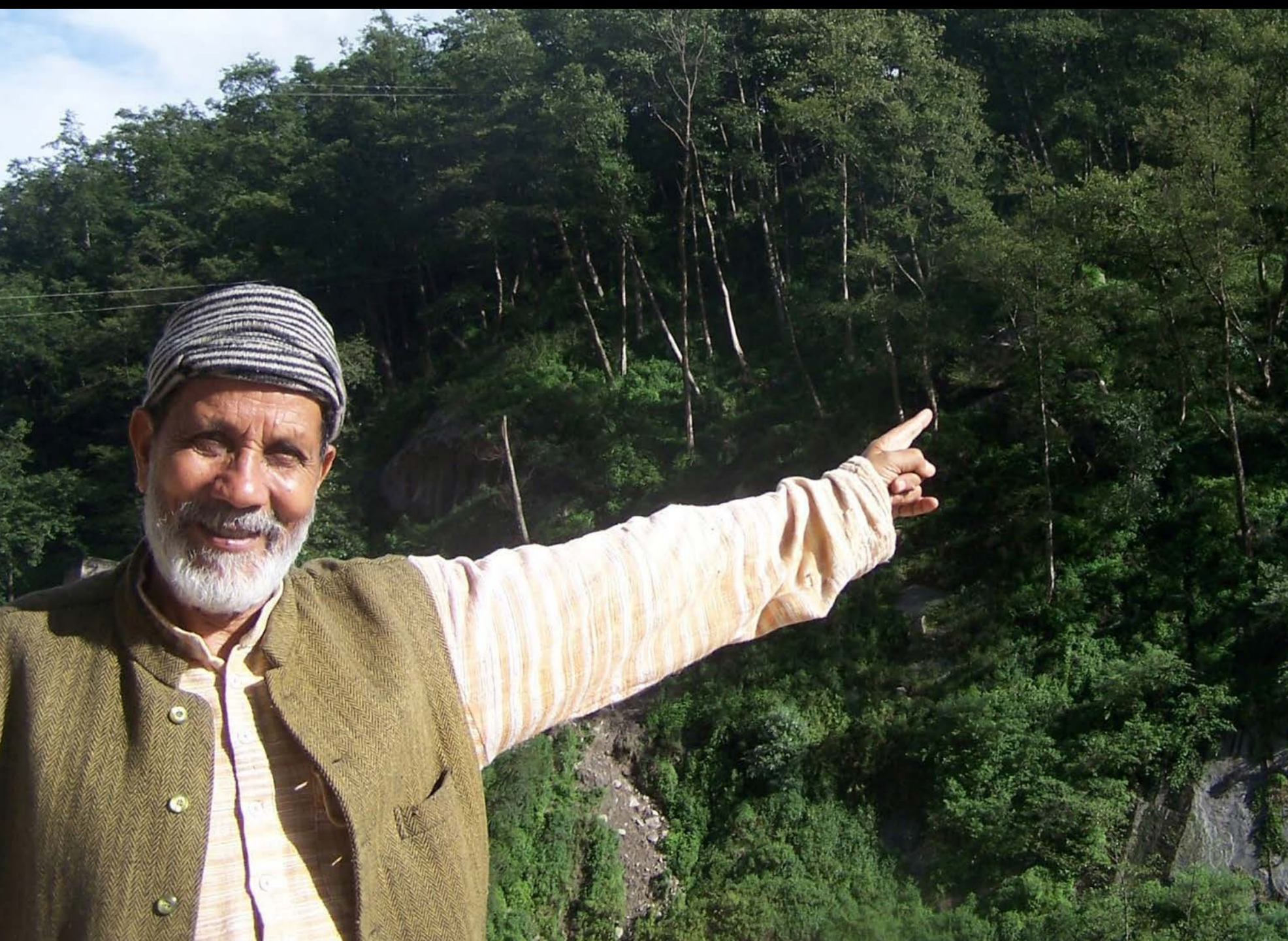
MOJO IN THE WILD

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Mountain Gorillas: Threats, Conservation and Ecotourism

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THE ROOTS OF CHIPKO MOVEMENT

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