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EXPLORERS

AUG / SEP 2017



## **DANCING WITH WINGS**

By Jari Rajanen

## **The Mara-Meru Cheetah Project**

By Dr. Elena Chelysheva & Salim Mandela

## **Zealandia**

By Imogen Warren

# 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 EV<sup>1</sup>, and boasts the widest ISO sensitivity in the history of Nikon cameras with the range of 100 to 102400<sup>2</sup>. 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 second<sup>3</sup> with AE/AF tracking, capturing up to 200 frames<sup>4</sup> (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

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

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# 080

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Hank Tyler  
Editor

Top carnivores around the world are struggling for survival in their native territories because of significant habitat loss and poaching pressures.. Cat species are now particularly endangered by the destruction of their native lands. Global populations of Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Jaguars and Mountain Lions are all in serious decline.

Restoration of native habitat is a vital conservation tool for building back native populations. New Zealand suffered devastating losses of native bird species after the introduction of mammals. Imogen Warren's story on Zealandia, chronicles the efforts to create a mammal free sanctuary to restore native fauna and flora. We applaud New Zealand's innovative conservation project.

PT Explorers strives to offer a variety of articles from authors around the world. Interviews with top-notch photographers and in-depth analysis of gear are found in each volume. We introduce to you the intriguing life of different species, some exotic some familiar. The spectacular wildlife photos in PT Explorers demonstrates what one can achieve with a camera in nature. Holidays, visiting new locations increases the opportunity for discovering special views to capture. Or with your macro lens discover fine details of flowers and insects. Carina Jorgensen's winter holiday to the Canary Islands led to her article. The Gallery section is earmarked for your photographic contributions.

EDITOR'S DEN



PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Vinu Mathew  
Cicada  
Agumbe, Karnataka  
India

# FOUNDERS' NOTE

What is happening to the world? The leader of the free world pulls out of the one agreement which held some hope for the earth. It remains to be seen if the Paris climate pact will survive or have relevance without the participation of the strongest super power. Can the collective will of the rest of the world save the earth? Let us restate the obvious - however powerful or rich you are, the earth is still the only place we know that can sustain human life. We just cannot afford to close our eyes against this reality in the interest of petty differences.

But there are pockets of hope - In Thailand one of the world's largest seafood conglomerates have taken a resolution to end unsustainable fishing. Let this be the start of a mass movement which saves the world's oceans and its many mesmerizing creatures.

We at PT Explorers have also been busy doing our bit. We launched our school outreach programs to reach out and spread awareness among the citizens of tomorrow. Theirs is the voice that must be heard most as they are the inheritors of the earth. Their voice must be strong, for that the first step is awareness - awareness of the earth's many life support systems, our many co-inhabitants on this earth, the many issues caused by our mindless plunder of natural resources. The primary responsibility of schools is to create responsible citizens. Schools promoting ours or similar programs undoubtedly are the ones who impart complete education!

**Encourage** Photographers

**Inspire** Viewers

**Create** Crusaders

**Protect** Nature

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

**Hermis Haridas  
& Nisha Purushothaman**

Founders - PT Explorers



COVER STORY  
**DANCING WITH  
WINGS**

By Jari Rajanen





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**Jari Rajanen is a Finnish nature photographer who specializes in northern nature photography. He was drawn into photography by another dear hobby, ornithology. The wild northern nature and northern lights of Finland has had a profound impact on his work.**

The most interesting photo topics for him are birds but he does mammal and landscape photography too. His company Northphoto, specializes in photography tours, education in nature photography, and hires hides.

[facebook.com/jari.rajanen.3](https://facebook.com/jari.rajanen.3)

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**A hearty welcome to PT Explorers, Jari. We are extremely happy that you accepted our request. Please tell us about yourself.**

Thank you to the entire PT Explorers team for this opportunity to share experiences on nature photography.

I was born and bred in a small municipality in Northern Finland. My earliest nature experiences relate to my

childhood when I lived in close touch with nature. Our family spent a lot of time outdoors, mainly picking berries and hiking. These trips were true nature adventures for a growing and curious schoolboy. I learned to move in the wild nature, both during freezing temperatures of winter and during the hot weather of summer.

I became interested in nature photography, particularly bird photography, during my school years





with the inspiration brought on by my birdwatching hobby. I joined a local bird club with a few school friends. We learned to identify the birds nesting in our home region, we assisted experienced bird hobbyists in bird ringing and made man-made nests for birds of prey.

My first SLR camera, a fully manual Canon Ftb, soon accompanied me on my nature trips. We also developed monochrome films and produced photographs at a school photography club.

Later, I studied to become a teacher and specialised in teaching environmental protection biology. These studies broadened my understanding of biodiversity and matters related to its protection. Therefore, I want to convey these important natural values in my photographs, and raise people's willingness to respect and protect nature.

### **Can you describe that “moment” when you knew that photography was something you just had to do?**

It is very difficult to determine a certain moment, because I have been able to experience several unforgettable moments while capturing photographs in nature, which I will remember for the rest of my life.

There have been several memorable moments; my first successful photograph of a great grey owl aggressively protecting its owlets, my summer night photographs of a bear family exploring my hide, my

first photograph of a golden eagle in the arctic winter frost after several days of waiting, as well as my exciting photography safaris in Southern and Eastern Africa, and my jungle tours in Madagascar with a local guide.

It may well have been these unforgettable experiences that have played a part in nature photography becoming part of my life.

### **How does your style stay unique when compared to other bird photographers out there?**

It is of paramount importance that each photographer finds his/her own photography style, but it is also challenging. Your photography style develops with time, and above all, with experience, when you remember to give space to your own creativity and curiosity. In this way, you can find your own way of operating. Nowadays, there are a great deal of excellent nature photographs available and it is very difficult to stand out. Therefore, it is worth specialising.

I also read, familiarise and analyse other photographers' photos, and try and use them to learn and adopt new skills. It is also easy to get an understanding of the kind of photographs that are available for a certain subject by familiarising in the nature photography selections of international photo agencies. This is rather easy nowadays as the internet is packed with more and more interesting photographs. This is why, it is essential to stand out of the crowd.





## Your inspiration and driving force behind your success?

My best nature photograph is yet to be taken and there are always new perspectives for old themes - different seasons, lighting, movement, etc. Time and space for creativity must be ensured in photography. However, spending time outdoors, experiencing nature and photography are still the most important aspects for me. They provide a huge amount of energy. Succeeding in themes that are important to myself also produce satisfaction.

An essential part of nature photographing is light. There is plenty of northern light here in Finland. Finland and especially North-Finland is full of opportunities for a nature photographer. The pure and rich untouched nature with many National Parks (all of which are free of charge) offers good elements for photographing. Northern light, changing seasons, nightless night (summer time, June-July sun does not go down at all), aurora borealis, snow and ice, a rich fauna and flora makes Finland a unique destination for nature photographers.

**You have awesome photographs of birds in action. Some are truly exceptional. How do you anticipate the action? Do you study their behavior in the field or on the internet? Any tips would be helpful.**

In my opinion, shooting an excellent bird photograph is usually down to

several factors. In bird photography, the actual moment of shooting cannot be planned very far ahead. Even in a hide, the shooting situations mainly occur by surprise. For this reason, situational awareness and familiarity in the subject, conditions and light behaviour play a decisive role alongside the photography technique and equipment. You have to be in the right place at the right time. Luck is also needed, but in terms of success, the most important aspect is to be familiar with bird behaviour in various situations, in which case it is possible to anticipate, for example, the direction a bird will fly in. This in turn allows the photographer to position him-/herself in an optimal manner in relation to the light and subject. As a bird photographer, my extensive birdwatching background has been an enormous benefit to me. I have also been lucky in that I have had the opportunity to work with photographers who are more experienced than me and I have been able to learn new things from their work.

**One of the major issues in bird photography is to get sharp focus. Your photographs have tack-sharp focus. Would you please tell us the secret? How do you quite often capture the decisive moment with birds?**

The photography of birds' activities is one of the most demanding forms of bird photography. The smaller and faster the bird is, the more challenging it is to take sharp photographs of them. The automatic focus systems and continuous burst shooting options of modern





cameras have, of course, facilitated the shooting of moving subjects, but the camera's focusing system still set very tough requirements. The truth is that even the most experienced photographer will have to delete numerous unsuccessful, blurry and incorrectly cropped photographs when hunting for that really good photograph. It is this surprise of situations that makes the challenge spine-tingling and success even greater, when you finally capture a perfect shot.

For moving objects, I always use the continuous focusing mode and the fastest burst mode, for stationary objects I use the single focus and shutter mode with one point to the eye of the subject. I mainly use long-focus lenses, and particularly when shooting handheld photographs, you must remember to use image stabilisation. Depending on the situation, I utilise the camera's focal points as much as possible and for the most challenging subjects, adjustments must be made to the camera's focus modes according to the situation, which are mainly based on experience - information gained through trial and error. A stable tripod and a good ball-and-socket head or pan-and-tilt head are usually essential.

The focus speed of the lens in use also affects the success of the focusing, where the lens speed is often helpful. In most long-focus lenses it is possible to shorten the focusing distance. This feature is worth using because it prevents situations where the automatic focusing hunts back and forth looking for the correct point. Focusing then becomes a lot quicker and more certain.

**The flights of Snowy owl images are simply stunning. Can you talk about the image making process of these photographs a bit? How do you get the right exposure on tough subjects like Snowy owls?**

Owls are possibly my most preferred subjects. Apart from a few exceptions, owls are rather slow and stable when they fly, and the main challenges, in terms of photography, are related to finding suitable individuals. This is facilitated by a wide cooperation network and good familiarisation in the behaviour of birds. I aim to almost always position myself at the level of the subjects, as can be seen in the photograph of a Snowy owl flying across the surface of the snow.

A white subject on a white background is challenging for both the photographer and the camera's focus. The camera exposure always aims for middle grey. For this reason, photographs are either underexposed or overexposed. For example, the Snowy owl in a snowy landscape is, on average, too bright for the camera, so it makes the shutter speed faster which results in an underexposed photograph, i.e. a dark photograph. For this reason, exposure must be compensated by overexposing the photograph by 2/3-1.5 f-stops depending on the conditions, and respectively the exposure must be underexposed in case of a dark background.

I mainly shoot my photographs with manual settings according to the situation. In this case, I measured the exposure

from the snow. I always aim to have the correct exposure already in the shooting situation, but I complete the final exposure compensation with image processing software. In the work of a bird photographer, as in other photography, image processing is important. In my opinion, a good bird photograph should be natural and reflect the genuine atmosphere of the shooting situation. Modern image processing software makes it possible to restore and edit photographs so that they best convey the shooting situation.

After shooting, most of the photographs I have captured are deleted. However, I only carry out basic image processing on my photographs; I crop the photograph, adjust the white balance, lighting and contrast, and finally remove image noise and sharpen the photograph. I do not remove or artificially add anything to my photographs.

**I always say background makes the picture. Is it possible to tell us the importance of the background? Can you also give us some tips on birds in flight?**

The importance of the background is significant. I shoot both landscape photographs of birds, and photographs where the main subject clearly stands out of the background and there are no additional interfering picture elements. In landscape photographs of birds, I draw particular attention to the photograph's composition, lighting, angle of view and, of course, the features of the background. In situations where



©Jari Rajanen

birds can be imaged at a close distance, the use of a wide angle is possible. In this case, it is possible to emphasise both the main subject of the photograph and the landscape in the background.

**What do you find to be the most challenging part of bird photography?**

I find the most challenging thing, particularly in bird photography, is the

surprising-ness of these situations and the varying circumstances. I enjoy both. Winter photography is particularly intriguing. This makes photography interesting and it makes success even greater when the perfect shot is finally captured.

**What photographic gear do you use?**

Throughout my career as a photographer, I have used Canon's SLR cameras and



lenses. As a nature photographer, we work in varying weather conditions, which is why it is important to be able to trust that the camera equipment is durable. I shoot photographs in varying conditions; in winter conditions, in the wind, in the rain, in warm and humid conditions - the weather protection of the equipment and the photographer must be correct. At the moment, I have two Canon DX camera bodies in use. As a bird photographer, I prefer Canon's high-quality EF 400/2.8 IS USM II and EF 600/4 IS USM II fixed focal length lenses. Particularly when shooting from a hide, the second camera body is most often equipped with an EF 200- 400/4 IS USM

lens with an internal teleconverter. For landscape bird photographs, I also use EF 70- 200/2.8 USM and EF 24-70/ 2.8 IS USM lenses. Canon's 1.4 EXT III and 2.0 EXT III teleconverters are also in use. My photography equipment also consists of various ball-and-socket heads and tilt-and-pan heads, as well as other useful accessories.

### **What is the one lasting impression you want to leave in your photos?**

With my pictures my aim is to visualize the beauty of nature, its uniqueness and diversity, and make people interested in

nature and its preserving. Altogether we can save our environment for the coming generations.

### **What is your best advice for bird photographers?**

In this work, success mainly depends on yourself. A bird photographer's most important feature is an interest towards birds and natural phenomena. Photography is a skill, which can be practiced, but a bird photographer must certainly enjoy spending time in nature.

Learn to know your subject and the operations of your device. A lot of effort

has usually been put in to state-of-the-art photographs, so don't expect a miracle the first time.

Choose a composition that pleases you. Consider what you want to bring out about the subject. Let your imagination fly. Make the photograph convey the atmosphere of the situation. In bird photography, situations usually occur by surprise - be ready.

Remember to enjoy the excitement of photography - you cannot forcefully produce photographs!





SPECIES

*Common*  
*Kingfisher*  
(*Alcedo atthis*)

By Alan McFadyen





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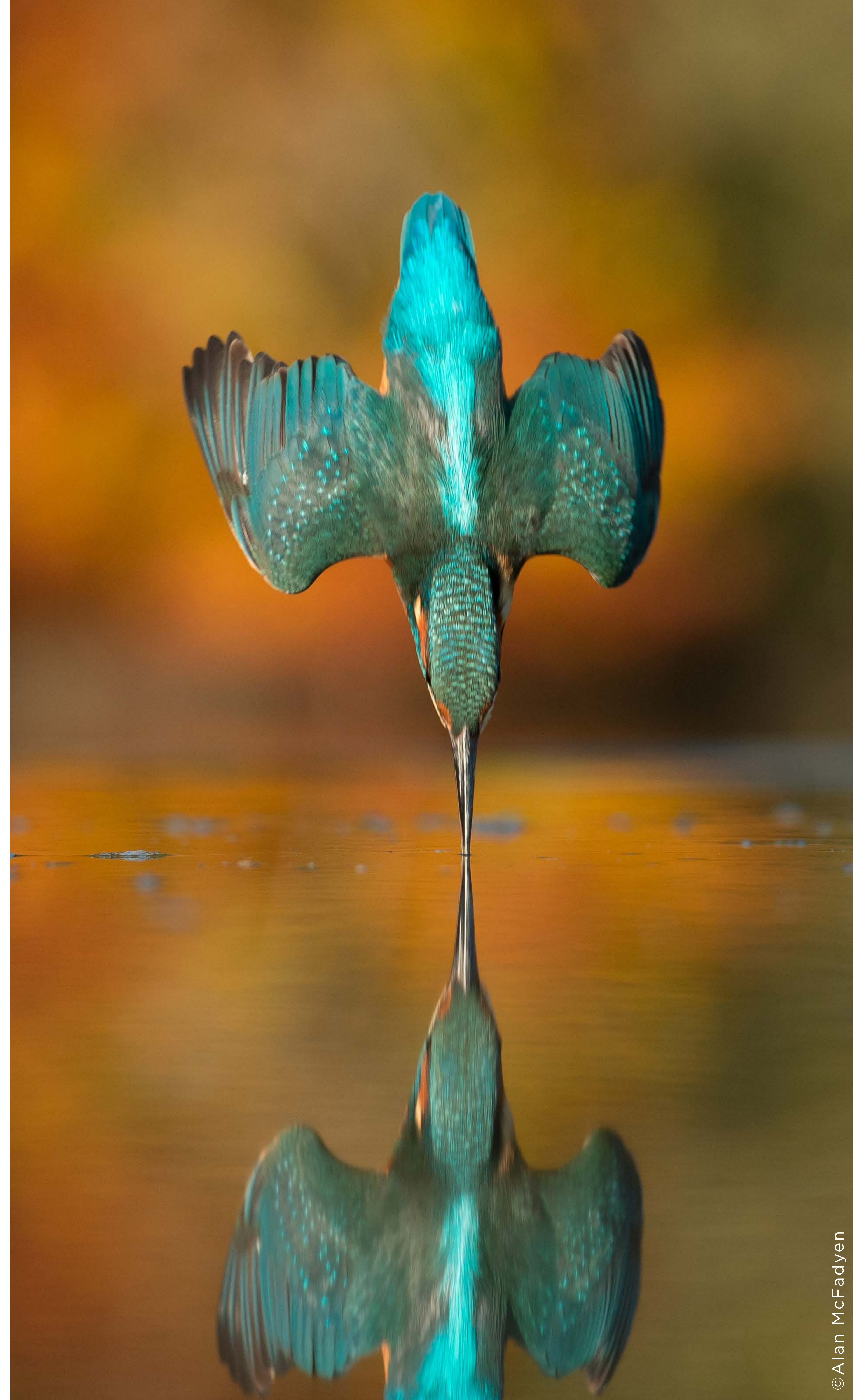
# A

**Alan McFadyen is 47 years old and has been an avid wildlife watcher for over 40 years now. He lives in southern Scotland close to the English border.**

**He single handedly runs Scottish Photography Hides, a business that specialises in wildlife hide rental aimed at photographers. This is his story about his love affair with the kingfisher.**

**[www.photographyhides.co.uk](http://www.photographyhides.co.uk)**

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©Alan McFadyen

As a six-year-old fatherless boy my late grandfather took over this role and took me under his wing and began teaching me all about the wildlife and fauna that thrived in my area. We would go on our bicycles and explore the local forests, moors, estuaries and many other habitats I am fortunate to have so close to my home. I instantly took to the natural world and I was hooked immediately. After several months, I witnessed something that will stay with me forever. One Sunday morning we cycled to a small bridge just outside town. I vividly remember leaning over and suddenly seeing an electric blue flash shooting up river like a bullet. It was of course a Kingfisher and I simply could not believe what I had just seen with my eyes. Was this really a bird that lived in the United Kingdom - I thought to myself? I had seen so many different species of birds in the previous months, but this was different, it just captured me in a way I cannot describe even to this day.

As I grew older I continued bird watching more seriously. Slowly but surely I explored my local patch and built up a great knowledge base of the many birds and animals that lived here which is what I feel is the best way to learn about nature. Reading books and the like helps, but nothing beats being out in the field experiencing nature with the eye.

At 26 years old fishing took over my life. Despite my love of nature taking a back seat during this period it never disappeared as I could marry both these hobbies together. During my years of fishing I was well in tune with the Kingfishers lifestyle and noticed the

negative effects the Scottish weather was having on my local birds. The life of a Kingfisher is a constant struggle and they are very fragile birds indeed.

Scotland is the northernmost of this species range and cold spells and prolonged flooding usually caused the death of many birds through starvation and sometimes it even wiped out the entire population in huge areas.

Flooding makes it extremely difficult for the Kingfishers to catch enough food as they need around 60% of their bodyweight daily. Apart from the swollen waterways which can put the prey

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**Slowly but surely I explored my local patch and built up a great knowledge base of the many birds and animals that lived here which is what I feel is the best way to learn about nature.**

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down deeper in the water making them impossible to catch it also usually colours up the water into a chocolate brown colour making it extremely difficult to see the fish even if they are in shallow water.

Flooding is also devastating when it occurs at breeding time which can easily destroy nests which are tunneled into the banking. At my site alone I recorded 76 nest fails out of 80 attempts over a 38-year period. Around 90% of fails were through flooding and the remainder through predation, mostly by mink





©Alan McFadyen

getting into the nest killing the young and sometimes adults.

Being at the Northern end of their range meant that it took months sometimes years for new birds from the south to take up these vacant territories.

After years of witnessing the hardships Kingfishers faced I decided I had to start helping them as best I could. The first job was to catch small fish and simply place in a basin full of water with a perch over the top. This supplemented food was instantly taken advantage of and the birds visited the feeding station almost every hour every day. The second job was not as simple and that was to try improve breeding success. Things were never going to change if they continued to nest in the low banking where they always nested previously. I decided to make artificial holes high up on a neighboring bank well above water level. I had watched the Kingfishers in the past trying to dig out a tunnel in this spot, but as there was lots of stones peppered through the soil they had no option to give up and relocate as they always hit stone which made it impossible for them to dig deeper.

I took it upon myself to manually dig out several tunnels in this high banking and brought buckets of clay and sculptured artificial nests. If I am honest I never thought that they would be used and questioned to myself why I was putting so much time and effort into something that would probably be a waste of time. However, I was soon proved wrong and in the last three years the Kingfishers have raised nine broods successfully which is more than double the amount fledged in the previous 38 years!

Fast forwarding, 14 years on, a serious back injury ended my fishing when I was 40 years old and it was then that I bought my first DSLR. There was only ever going to be one bird that was going to be my first target, the beautiful Kingfisher. An inexpensive bag hide and the Nikon D80 with a 300mm lens a friend gave to me free was all I had. To begin with I took only shots of them on the perch and because I had already been feeding the birds it was really easy as they were accustomed to coming to where I wanted them. However, this site wasn't chosen for a photographers' eye and I had to develop things to make better backgrounds and also take account of my position according to the light. By moving the feeding station a few yards each day, I soon set up in my desired spot.

Nothing stands still in photography and after several months of taking thousands of pictures of them on various perches it was time to advance. A proper hide was built from timber which was spacious and far more comfortable and it was at that time I set a goal of getting some action shots. To begin with it was simply trying to get them landing on the perch or diving of it. Obviously this was to prove a lot more difficult, but after time such images were achieved and again it was time to move forward. It was time to go for an image of the bird emerging out the water from eye level. I had seen such images in the past and wondered how on earth are these possible? It was time to research and try finding out how this was done. After some time and tip offs an artificial river bed was built at my hide where I could position my camera





at water level and hopefully get the shot I was after. It was as expected, not easy and after countless hours of near misses and frustration I finally managed some photographs I was happy with and thought to myself I have reached the top of the mountain as far as Kingfishers were involved.

However, I know now there is always another level to step up and then an even more difficult image to achieve came to my mind as the next target. This was a Kingfisher diving into the water with its back to me at point of entry with its wings out. I often thought "why am I doing this to myself" Countless near misses, failures and disappointments should have been enough to make me give up, but instead it only made me more determined.

Six years on after taking my 1st ever Kingfisher photograph the day I dreamt of finally came. On this particular day the river was in flood and my hide was 3ft deep in water when I arrived. I had to drive back home and get my old fishing waders so I could get to the hide. Apart from the flooding I had perfect conditions. The light was glorious, no wind which would mean a perfect reflection and the backdrop was the Golden leaves of a distant Beech tree. All I needed now was the bird to come and a lot of luck firing the trigger at the exact time. This is not tenths of a second it is thousandths of a second so this is where the luck came in as it is impossible to time such an event. Thankfully the bird came in many times that day and I managed the image I was after. When I got home and processed

it I was extremely happy and as usual I posted it on my business facebook page expecting to get over 100 likes. Never did I imagine the exposure it ended up getting. It went viral across the globe and blew my mind with the media coverage it received. I feel that this is my reward for the conservation efforts I have put in and the time and effort I have invested on this species. I would of course have done it for nothing, but I am very grateful for the attention this one image has brought me. My motto in life is effort equals reward and I think this is a prime example. Do I feel I have finally reached the top of the mountain? Well no, I now have set a challenge to get photos of the Kingfishers feeding their young deep underground. Perhaps another article will be with you about this in six years' time.







CONSERVATION

# The Mara-Meru Cheetah Project (MMCP)

By Dr. Elena Chelysheva & Salim Mandela





The Mara-Meru Cheetah Project (MMCP) is a long-term initiative with an aim of promoting the Conservation of Cheetahs through a scientific approach, involvement of the local community and empowerment by education. It is led by Dr. Elena Chelysheva - a biologist and conservationist with over thirty years of experience in studying wildlife and in particular, Cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) in captivity and in the wild. This project is affiliated with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and a follow up initiative to the first ever Cheetah Project in the Maasai Mara which was conducted in the period of 2001 and 2002 by the KWS, where Dr. Elena was working as an Assistant Researcher. Salim Mandela is a 28 year-old Kenyan who graduated from the University of Nairobi with a Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Management and Conservation.

**The Mara-Meru Cheetah Project (MMCP) is a long-term initiative with an aim of promoting the Conservation of Cheetahs through a scientific approach, involvement of the local community and empowerment by education.**

[marameru.org](http://marameru.org)

[facebook.com/MaraMeruCheetahProject/](https://facebook.com/MaraMeruCheetahProject/)



MMCP became operational in 2011 at a time when little was known about Cheetahs of the Mara. Because of this, we decided to integrate participation of local stakeholders in MMCP activities. Here, the Narok County Government (by then Narok County Council) rangers, Kenya Wildlife Service Veterinary team and local tour guides are focal to our work. Therefore, to enhance efficiency in their participation, we would conduct workshops for them, during which they would learn about Cheetah ecology, threats and behavioral adaptations. Each workshop would end with an exciting training exercise on Cheetah identification based on unique spot patterns on front (from toes to shoulder) and back limbs (from toes to hip) and rings and spots on the tail following methodology developed and published by Dr. Chelysheva (2004) and used worldwide since. This is usually the epitome of the day with each team receiving a catalogue of Mara Cheetahs. This initiative really played a significant role of promoting efficiency in monitoring of individuals, enhancing efficacy of reports on Cheetahs from rangers and significantly, tightening relationships among rangers, guides and the MMCP team. We are working closely with over 35 Mara tourist facilities and rangers teams of the reserve and surrounding conservancies. After reporting new Cheetahs to us, rangers and guides are encouraged to name a new individual using the word with positive meaning in *Maa* or *Kiswahili*, which describes the animal best. As a demonstration of this cohesiveness, in 2013 we received a call from a local tour guide informing of a terribly looking Cheetah. Immediately we rushed to the spot and to our dismay we

saw this emaciated, limping and from a distance a Cheetah that appeared to be in a life threatening stage of mange. Immediately we informed the rangers, who liaised with the Kenya Wildlife Service Veterinary team and both teams came to the spot promptly. Here, the Cheetah was immobilized by the Veterinary unit while rangers ensured tourists were out of the scene. This Cheetah was found harboring wounds on both front and back legs which we suspected was sustained from an intra-species conflict. The skin was soaked in mud thus from a distance would appear to be suffering from mange. After treatment, the veterinary team translocated the Cheetah to a secure area and advised us to closely monitor the recuperating Cheetah until full recovery. Also, they advised the County





Government rangers to provide a meal since the individual was too weak to hunt and that day, we watched the Cheetah gorge itself attaining a belly the size of a basketball. As it approached dusk, the male moved a few meters from the kill. All of a sudden, we heard hyena calls three kilometres away. Immediately, we realized that danger was looming so we asked rangers to come to the scene and assist in moving the remaining kill from the area. As they moved it, we immediately cleared the ground of any blood which we achieved by applying fresh buffalo dung on the area where the kill was initially lying. We did this to ensure that hyenas would not come to the spot and disturb the sick Cheetah and at 8 pm we left for camp and by dawn next day, we were at the spot with the Cheetah. Alas, our male was intact. We monitored him at the same spot for three consecutive days, where he was fed again and in peace consumed more than ten kg of meet from a kill. On the fourth day, he disappeared without a trace. We searched every bush and ravine but in vain. Although we were worried about his wellbeing, absence of fur nor blood at the spot, kept us optimistic that he was not killed. Three months later, as we were on our daily drive looking for Cheetahs, we came across a male who walked in front of our research car, climbed a balanitis tree, marked it with fecal matter, jumped off and then stood by our car looking at us as if trying to find out if we recognize him, then dashed off into the bush. Immediately we looked through a male Cheetahs catalog and identified him as the same individual we were monitoring three months ago. Later that day, we called the Kenya Wildlife Service

Veterinary team and the Narok County Council rangers informing them of the good news. Together with the teams, we named the male 'IMARA' which means 'HARDY or TOUGH' in *Kiswahili*. Since then, we have been spotting him in good condition and sometimes in courtship passing on his genes of toughness to ensure the survival of its species that is at the verge of extinction!

To improve efficiency and efficacy in their work, we provided rangers with cameras that are shock proof, water resistant and have in built GPS, donated by the Cat Heaven Foundation (USA) in 2014 and by the Nikon Corporation (USA and Middle East) in 2015 and 2016. This has been useful in providing information on Cheetahs and has facilitated their anti-poaching, anti-harassment and other related reserve management activities. In addition, these cameras were provided to selected guides from different camps and lodges of the Mara to aid in data collection on Cheetahs especially movements which is essential in estimating their respective home ranges, monitoring of disease or injury cases and their state after treatment.

As a motivation and a show of appreciation, we provide Certificates of Participation to rangers and guides who actively provide information regarding Cheetahs to our project. This certificates are of high value since each has a designate serial number and bear signatures of the Director of Kenya Wildlife Service, Chief Park Warden and Project's Founder. This has really encouraged others to participate in our Cheetah work.

Maasai Mara is usually prone to wild fires whose origin is suspected to be out of natural causes and manmade. This fire despite the cause is uncontrolled thus ends up consuming a greater part of the ecosystem. Unfortunately, even manmade fires whose aim is to promote ecological rejuvenation and succession, as well as aid in the formation of rainfall, is done in a haphazard and unplanned manner thus ends up being a threat to wildlife especially small mammals that rely on the tall grass as a hideout from predators. Being induced ovulators, Cheetahs are not tied to breeding seasons but rather give birth throughout the year.

Additionally, Cheetahs of the Mara prefer having dens in small bushes and patches of grass. Therefore, in this regard, Cheetahs become victims of such fires requiring a quick response in thwarting fires in the event of presence of small cubs. For instance, last year there was a case that illustrates the above. A female, Miale gave birth in an area close to the Mara-Serengeti boundary. This area is also home to a big pride of lions thus the female chose a secure place in a ravine which is far from roads and predators. It was on 23 August 2016, when we noticed a fierce fire originating from Serengeti, approaching the area of a den with 1.5 months old Cheetah cubs. Immediately we notified rangers from nearby posts and a manager of the nearby Enkewa camp. They responded promptly and together using twigs and branches from shrubs, within two hours we put out the fire in a stretch covering 1.5 km preventing it from coming to the den. It was clear that Miale was not around and we were carefully moving across the





ravine not to disturb the cubs wherever they were hiding. After the “First Aid” team had left, we stayed to wait for the female. From a distance of 200 metres, we could see how Miale appeared from the field and started carefully approaching the ravine. It was heartwarming to watch her calling and looking uncertainly and anxiously into the bushes, and little hungry cubs climbing from the ravine, hurrying to meet their mother. We were happy to share this great news with the rangers and Enkewa’s staff who had played a crucial role in saving these little creatures. Later, when Miale started moving with cubs across the Mara, visitors could enjoy watching the family.

Being a premium reserve, home to diverse wildlife and offering a unique game viewing experience, Maasai Mara National Reserve attracts huge numbers of tourists throughout the year. Attributed to this high numbers, is uncoordinated game viewing habits which amounts to harassment of wildlife, interference with natural behavior such as hunting in Cheetahs, that is critical to the survival of wildlife. After three years of

extensive research, we were able to clearly distinguish tourist behavior that has an immense negative impact to the survival of Cheetahs. Therefore, based on our annual reports to the park authorities, together we formulated seven new park rules that would aid in promoting anti-harassment behavior of tourists while at the same time enabling optimal game viewing experience without interfering with natural behavior of wildlife. Also, arising from our extensive research and experience, we found out that the best way to promote cub survival in Cheetahs is to ensure that areas with dens must be free from intensive human activity, in this regard tourism. This is because frequent visitation by tour vehicles to a Cheetah den translates to disturbance prompting females to translocate cubs in search of secure areas from disturbance. In the process of doing so, cubs are exposed thus increasing the chances of being detected by other predators such as lions, hyenas, jackals and leopards. This is believed to contribute to the high cub mortality in Maasai Mara - 74-76% cubs die within the first three months of age. To combat such threats and promote cub survival, our project has continuously provided park authorities with road posts that are used to close areas with females having small cubs from visitation by tourists. As researchers, we observe Cheetah families and record their behavior distantly and only on certain occasions minimizing Cheetah disturbance.

Additionally, these road posts are used by the park authorities to close areas that have been badly affected by intensive driving which creates numerous and

unnecessary tracks. This aids in rejuvenation of the environment. By giving talks to the safari-guides from different tour companies, who bring guests to the Mara, we indirectly encourage them to follow park rules and especially avoid off-road driving explaining how easy it is to drive over the hidden cubs in the spots, which Cheetahs used for their dens. Disturbance by making noise and keeping engines and radios on, surrounding the Cheetah and following it while hunting or moving with cubs, limits its ability to hunt, detect danger and act accordingly. In 1980, maximum number of cars at a Cheetah site recorded by D.Burney was six. In 2002, we recorded 23 cars, and in 2012 - 63 vehicles around one Cheetah family! Because of our collaborative work with the park authorities and cooperation with the guides, we have recorded a sharp decline in the number of tour vehicles to 16, Cheetah sightings have improved to the level of being a common sighting. We have recorded an increase in the number of females, who have successfully raised cubs to independence for the first time in their life.

Our collaborative work with rangers, tour guides and encouraging the participation of tourists in research, has enabled us to develop an extensive database of Cheetahs of the Mara. Out of 170 adult individuals observed from 1998 to date, we know kinship and year of birth for 70% of the Mara Cheetahs! This database is essential in determining the lifespan of Cheetahs, reproductive success of females and survival rate of cubs. It assists in determining the relationships that exists among Cheetahs thereby

providing an insight to certain behaviors of interaction, and in developing a story line of individuals and families. On this aspect, our project is closely working with rangers not only in the Maasai Mara National Reserve but also from six neighboring Conservancies and rangers and guides from more than 35 different camps and lodges widely spread in the ecosystem.

Our project being a long-term conservation initiative, we recognize the significance of indigenous knowledge, attitude and perception of local people who primarily depend on pastoralism as a livelihood system and are in constant interaction with wildlife. Therefore, we conducted a comprehensive interview targeting pastoralists living around the Maasai Mara National Reserve. Here, 100 bomas and villages were reached and vast data testing individual knowledge of the existing common wildlife, attitudes and perception towards these animals especially the perceived problematic ones, was collected.

Additionally, we visited various schools where we interacted with pupils of different ages and levels of education. Here, having the idea that children of ages between eight years and 14 years do herd shoats and the mere fact that, at this age children primarily rely on information passed onto them by their elders (parents) we considered them as a mirror of a household's attitude and perception towards wildlife. Therefore, whenever we visited a school, we would engage these pupils in a focused discussion about wildlife, especially carnivores with Cheetahs being the focal animal. During

such discussions, questions about respective carnivores' would be asked and pupils provided varying answers most of which inclining on predators having livestock as their primary source of nutrition. Information from community interviews and visits to primary schools formed a critical foundation for the establishment of our community outreach and education programs. Out of this, we developed a kids coloring book 'LET'S GO WILD' together with our partners The Laikipians. In this book, information about ecology, feeding habits and behavior of the animals that were perceived to be problematic was provided with interesting sections containing poems about each animal. We then fundraised with the assistance of Margot Raggett and Entim Camp and were able to print 2,000 copies of the Let's go wild kids coloring book, which we distributed for free to schools surrounding the Maasai Mara National Reserve. Each time we visited a school for the purposes of donating the kids coloring book, we would conduct a conservation lesson. The purpose of this kids coloring book is to enlighten the children of the local community about their wildlife, enhance positive attitudes among them and change the monstrous perceptions to tolerance. As an enhancer to the program, we take pupils to conservation on safari lesson in the Maasai Mara National Reserve, where they learn about animal's ecology and behavior by observing them and learning from the guides and researchers. Also, pupils have a closer view of these wildlife as an eye opener to the value of wild animals just by seeing the massive numbers of tourists in the park and, enabling them to embrace

wildlife's intrinsic value.

**“The children of today is the so called next generation and importantly, the leaders and law makers of tomorrow whose level of education and attitudes will determine the fate of natural ecosystems in the coming days”**

Salim Mandela.

Lastly, due to the high level of transparency and integrity of our project, as well as the integration of locals in the Mara-Meru Cheetah Project conservation activities, we have greatly transformed attitudes of locals from negative to positive towards researchers and research initiatives. This has led to increased levels of acceptance towards incumbent researchers and their respective research, which is manifested by minimal resistance. We are proud of this and encourage any researcher enjoying this positive environment to ensure they DO NOT break the trust we have endeavored to build and continue with fostering good relations with members of the local community from all ages and levels. On the long-term basis, our project is in the process of assessing other aspects of Cheetah health issues, furthering the study of Cheetah-livestock conflict and possible practical solutions.









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CONSERVATION

# Zealandia, Wellington New Zealand

By Imogen Warren



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**Imogen was born and raised in the countryside of England. In 2006 she travelled in the USA, Europe, New Zealand and South America, and became interested in birds.**

**In 2007 she moved to New Zealand and trained as a teacher in Wellington, near to the wonderful native bird sanctuary Zealandia. Imogen spends her free time travelling and photographing birds .She maintains a website and blog to share her photography.**

**[imogenwarrenphotography.net](http://imogenwarrenphotography.net)  
[foxttonbeachbirds.blogspot.ae](http://foxttonbeachbirds.blogspot.ae)**

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I became interested in birds after moving to New Zealand and living in Wellington means you will inevitably visit the Zealandia sanctuary. Set in native bush on the edge of the city, it is more than a haven for the fast disappearing endemic species. It is a life saver.

I visited the sanctuary regularly in my first years in Wellington, as I was studying at a nearby college. I learned about the decimation of habitat and bird species after the arrival of the European settlers in the 1800s and I was enchanted by the ancient call of these birds, heard nowhere else in the area. However, after moving further north, it was a few years before I began spending more time in the park. By that time, I was a bird fanatic, travelling widely to photograph birds. To my surprise, on returning to the sanctuary after several years of absence, the bird life seemed to have exploded. Previously difficult to see birds seemed to be calling at every turn. It was with absolute joy that I began to visit, volunteer and take lots of photographs over the next few years.

Zealandia was one of New Zealand's first restoration projects to re-establish native fauna and flora. In 1999 the construction of an 8.6 km fine mesh fence enclosing 225 hectares was completed on watershed protected land. All mammals within the new enclosure were exterminated. After careful checking to make sure all predators had been killed, the reintroduction of plants, trees, reptiles, amphibians and birds began

Zealandia is one of the most special places I have ever visited, a real triumph for the conservation of not only birds, but also native skinks, frogs and the

prehistoric looking tuatara. However, it is for the birds that I visit and the most notable when you arrive is the Kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*). The screeching noise they make as they fly over the valley is worthy of a 1960s dinosaur movie. I am sure the pterodactyl would have sounded similar to the Kaka.

Gregarious, curious and sociable, the sanctuary foliage cannot support the numbers that now live there. Some have spread out of the sanctuary into neighbouring suburbs and some get extra feed from the stations in the park. I spent some time volunteering to change and clean these feeders and was always delighted to hear the Kākā come wheeling in, squabble with each other and use amazing dexterity to get to the food. These photographs are from around the feeders, where after my duties I would often spend time with my camera trying to capture the impish, mischievous nature of these wonderful parrots.

There is another endemic parrot that, at times, you may be lucky enough to see. It is the Kākāpō (*Strigops habroptila*), a green chicken-like bird. Not very flattering I know, but it is so comical with its odd appearance and even odder movements. This bird is one of the rarest in the world and you cannot see them in the wild. They are protected on predator free islands and there is a dedicated recovery programme trying to build the population. This bird is Sirocco, a Kākāpō ambassador. He is famed throughout New Zealand and even is allowed to fly in the cabin of the national air carrier! Sirocco is the face of the recovery programme and travels around the country like a rock star, promoting the Save the Kākāpō



campaign. I was honoured to spend a couple of hours in his presence, although it was a little surreal.

As you walk through the valley you pass a long, thin lake which supports several species of our native cormorant, the Shag. Luckily, last year several pairs of Pied Shag (*Phalacrocorax varius*), the largest New Zealand shag species and listed as nationally vulnerable, nested close to the walkway. When breeding, they develop these startling blue and yellow facial markings that from the right angle look like spectacles! Here are a courting couple and then a youngster, beginning to explore the world outside its nest.

Once past the lake you can enter the bush proper on one of several walking tracks and then the magic just explodes as you begin to hear the distinctive calls of the bush natives. Heard throughout New Zealand is the Grey Warbler (*Gerygone igata*), a delightful small grey bird that one might think rather dull on first encounter. However, its bright red eye and vibrant call gives it away as a very special bird, and my favourite.

The Grey Warbler flits around the trees and hovers when catching insects. When it settles and sings, the song it produces belies its small size and its whole body vibrates as it produces its wonderful melody. If you can catch the light shining on it and watch it sing, you know you have seen something special.

Not commonly seen outside of thick native bush or sanctuaries like Zealandia is the New Zealand Robin (*Petroica longipes*). Another small grey bird with a big song,

this bird too is full of surprises if you stop to find out. When you hear one in the sanctuary and you scrape the leaf litter on the track, they will often come down to search it for food. They are usually unconcerned with your presence and hop around your feet, often too close for a big lens to catch! Now that is a problem I could live with more often. When two robins are in a territorial dispute, they both puffed up their hair, presumably to make themselves look bigger and then paced around each other calling and displaying.

My arch nemesis in the sanctuary is the North Island Saddleback (*Philesturnus rufusater*). I see them, I hear them and I can even watch them as they flick over bark looking for grubs, but somehow I never quite get that standout shot. These remarkable birds live low in the canopy, are not very good flyers and are quite confiding. All disastrous qualities in a country that had just introduced predators like stoats and weasels. This is another species lucky to have survived the arrival of the Europeans and I like to think that my pursuit of them keeps me returning to the sanctuary.

Seen elsewhere in native forests of New Zealand, the sanctuary is still the best place to see the Whitehead (*mohoua albicilla*). They live in social groups and are initially heard above you, chattering to each other as they move around looking for food. Their colouring ranges from grey when they are young to this gorgeous white/pale grey. They are another favourite of mine as they always seem so cheerful. Honeyeaters are stunning birds that feed on the nectar of flowers and flaxes. The Tui (*Prothemadera novaeseelandiae*) and Bellbird (*Anthornis melanura*) are often

present in native forest with the tui being locally very common. They are unique in bird species as they not only sing but also cough, wheeze and click - the Tui particularly so.

There is no other bird in the world that makes noises like the tui. It is aggressive and active and you don't need a bird book to identify it with that bright collar and ruff (it was called the parson's bird by early settlers). The bellbird, in contrast, is more reserved and melodious. It can be difficult to spot but rewarding when you do. This bird is covered in pollen.

A relatively new addition to the sanctuary are the Kākāriki feeders. Kākāriki translates from the indigenous language, te reo Māori, to small parrot. The sanctuary now supports a small but raucous population of brightly coloured Red-crowned kākāriki (*Cyanoramphus novaeseelandiae*). They are another vulnerable species even though they are able to adapt to different environments. The success of building numbers at Zealandia is both a reflection of the ability to protect vulnerable species when the will is there and also a damning indictment of the damage humans are capable of. The loss of such wonderful birds forever would be a huge disaster.

Another incredibly vulnerable species is the Takahē (*Porphyrio hochstetteri*) with nationally critical status. Indeed, they were thought to be extinct for around 50 years until they were discovered in remote mountains of the South Island in the 1940s. It is incredible to me that there are only around 300 of these birds alive and that anyone can walk into this sanctuary and see them wandering free. They are a member of the rail family, the largest

species in fact and are sometimes mistaken for their rather more common relative, the swamphen. However, they are much larger and stockier as well as being more sedate and reserved.

Zealandia remains a very special place to me and encapsulates the horror of human migration and the very best of environmentalism. It also brings home the now lack of birdlife in New Zealand quantity wise, but the utterly unique variety of species that are accessible to all. Native tree and plant species are being reintroduced that include a number of popocarp tree species: Rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), Matai (*Prumnopitys taxifolia*), Miro (*Prumnopitys ferruginea*), Kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*) and Totara (*Podocarpus totara*). Twenty years into a 500 year project, Zealandia is certainly ambitious. Restoring ancient, native flora and fauna within a predator proof reserve has already influenced the capital city of New Zealand. The sanctuary challenges us all to harness knowledge, energy and connections, working with others to transform how we live with nature in our towns and cities - to reshape the places in which we live. The resurgence of endemic birds like the Kākā, Tīeke, Tūī and Kererū has changed not only the sanctuary but also the city, touching those who live, work, visit and learn in Wellington, New Zealand and the wider world.

"ZEALANDIA has grown from a small community project to a hub for Wellington's conservation efforts" said, Dr Danielle Shanahan, Zealandia's Manager of Conservation, Research, Learning and Experience.

For more info: [visitzealandia.com](http://visitzealandia.com)



Kerala, the southern state of India has an ancient culture of domesticating elephants and using them as adornments for festivals and events, as well as using them as beasts of labour.

In the past year (2016-2017) alone 35 captive elephants have died in Kerala. 33 out of these deaths were untimely. With the arrival of the festive season the demand for elephants shoot up. There are many elephants in the state who are willing their time through cruel suffering. It is mass deaths that beckons the pachyderms of Kerala and if today's situation continues unchecked the death knell for the last one is not far away.

Here is an account of the startling facts this author saw and experienced first-hand while visiting the majority of the captive elephants in Kerala (at Guruvayoor, Travancore, Malabar temple boards and other private owners). The findings here are based on facts which is presented for the purview of animal lovers. The elephant lobby comprising of owners from all religious faiths have been netting out cruel and exploitive practices to the poor animals in the name of believes and customs. The time to raise voice and put an end to this cruelty is overdue.



# The unseen terror & agony of captive elephants

By Rajeev N

Translated by Raghul Patteri



Maximum number of captive elephants in India, 567(558 + 9\*) (the number of unlicensed ones introduced in the last one and half years \*) are in the state of Kerala. (Based on new data available with activists\*).

The state with maximum mortality rate for captive elephants.

The highest number of ailing captive elephants are in Kerala.

The highest incidence of tuberculosis

(T.B) among captive elephants is also in Kerala (38%).

Amongst the entire population 25 elephants are completely blind.

Around 200 elephants are partially blind to varying degree (38%).

More than 400 elephants have serious and incurable wounds (70%).

10 elephants are paralyzed.



Above 75 of the elephants are completely deaf. (In the past mahouts mainly used vocal commands to control elephants, with the increase in the numbers of deaf elephants the usage of tools to control the animals have seen an upswing).

Most widespread use of banned tools and instruments to control elephants is in Kerala.

Maximum cases of elephant dissents and going berserk are reported from Kerala.

Every year majority of the elephants that get darted and sedated are from Kerala.

Maximum number of human deaths caused by elephants are also reported from Kerala.

Maximum number of elephant deaths due to impaction of the colon disease are also in Kerala.

Maximum number of elephants with infected and puss filled trunks.

Alcoholism is rampant among elephant mahouts of Kerala.

Maximum number of young and 1st generation mahouts are in Kerala, most of whom are unaware of the nuances of elephant care.

Highest number of elephant doctors with fake degrees are in Kerala.

Heaviest loads are carried on the backs of Kerala elephants (Approx 700Kg)



Administration of illegal drugs and forced starvation of elephants to suppress 'musth' so that elephants are ready to be used for festivals is common in Kerala.

apparent after years of observation - There is not even a single captive elephant which is not ill-treated, which is well cared for and free in the entire state of Kerala!

The single biggest truth that became

# Coffee Ground Recycling in Melbourne, Australia

By Ninna Larsen



Today, the scent of espresso wafts through the laneways of Melbourne, lingering in tucked away streets full of people seeking out their early morning salvation- whether it be a latte, macchiato or the iconic flat white, coffee is often the beverage of choice for Melbournians. From its humble arrival in the 1930s, espresso has become a center piece of Melbourne culture. But while so many of us are drawn to the magic beans, there are less of us that consider the environmental impact of our morning cup of “joe.”

In the City of Melbourne alone, the coffee industry is responsible for 5,500 tonnes of methane gas entering the atmosphere each year. That’s bad, but what’s worse is that methane gas is 20-40 times more

potent than carbon pollution from cars. It’s evident that the time and care we put into brewing the perfect cup of coffee doesn’t continue through to the disposal of the grounds, and that’s why it’s so important to talk about the alternatives

**Reground** is a company dedicated to diverting ground coffee waste away from landfills, to end users such as home and community gardens. When ground coffee waste is repurposed, it makes an amazing compost material. Coffee bean seeds are full of micronutrients, which greatly enhance the quality of produce within vegetable or fruit gardens. Ground coffee is slightly acidic, and full of nitrogen, which promotes vegetable and plant growth. From lemons to blueberries, research done by Dr Stephen Livesley and Sarah Hardgrove of the University of

Melbourne has proven that ground coffee adds so much value to compost.

Making use of ground coffee as an urban soil amendment creates a sustainable way to address the issue of waste removal that is both extremely beneficial for plants and the planet, and is accessible to the everyday gardener. It’s as simple as throwing the coffee waste into the compost pile before it begins to work its magic. It’s a resource that is so often discarded completely, but why? Ground coffee waste- or ‘black gold’- still has so much to give. As organic matter, it can also be used in other ways in the garden. Composting is an incredible first step, but from there, ground coffee can be used as a fertilizer to improve drainage, water retention and aeration in the soil. There are so many uses for black gold; it can

be used as a way to keep slugs and snails away from plants, or as a cat repellent to prevent cats from making use of plant beds as a litter box. Worms are also very fond of ground coffee in the garden.

Melbourne is a creative, dynamic Australian city, and making the move towards sustainability is absolutely key for the lively espresso hub. In order to ensure Melbourne continues to be one of the world’s most livable cities well into the future, it’s important that we take steps to help our planet heal from the damage caused by climate change today. A better end use for organic waste creates a better future for all of us. Ninna Larsen operates Reground.

See: [www.reground.com.au](http://www.reground.com.au)  
Facebook: Regroundcompany

# Lesser Florican

(*Sypheotides indicus*)

By Surendra Chouhan



Every year, Florican birds reach the north-western regions of India taking advantage of the advancing monsoon to breed and raise their young in the grasslands. After chicks are reared by end of September, they return to some 'unknown areas' in central-southern India. Lesser Florican, the smallest of Bustard family (Otididae), is well known for its spectacular aerial display in the arid and semi-arid grasslands of Western India especially during rainy season which is its breeding period too. Sonkhaliya, Ajmer is a typical habitat for Floricans and can be seen displaying to impress females and they jump/display every 3-15 minutes. They can jump 5-8 feet high and females

choose the partner who jump the highest. If a male finds another male jumping nearby, they fight to chase away the competition. I am a regular follower of these Florican displays since last 5 years and reach Sonkhaliya to capture these beautiful birds. Lesser Florican is one of the rarely sighted birds. During the rainy season the mating display of the males is a treat to watch.

The Lesser Florican mating display is very rare to watch and can only be seen at a village called Sonkhaliya at Ajmer in Rajasthan and at few places in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.





NIKON D500

**'A BOON TO WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS'**

By Gopala Krishnan





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# G

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

**He sighted his first tiger in the December of 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/](http://www.instagram.com/gkpixels/)

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Hi Friends, I am an ardent Nikon fan and have been using Nikon equipment for the past 7 years. My love for Nikon started with the D90, which I used to learn the ropes, I was shooting anything and everything then. I moved then to the D700 and in the year 2012 I started shooting Wildlife, which I found was to my liking more than the other genres. From then I have purchased and used all their professional bodies and lenses.

When it comes to Wildlife it pays to stay far from the animal, for yours and your subject's safety. Plus, when you shoot from far you give the animal its space and therefore you get images in which the subject is shown at its natural best. Most of the time wildlife photography is done from vehicles or structures which are taller than the subject and hence if you shoot from close you are shooting from a higher angle with your subject below you and believe me no animal looks good from this angle. Hence shooting from far using a long lens is the best way and when you shoot from far even if you are shooting from a higher plane the animal appears to be at the camera level due to the distance between you and the subject. That is the reason why people see wildlife photographers carrying long lenses around. Believe me, it's not for bragging.

Crop frame cameras are advantageous in the sense that they multiply the focal length of the lens which is attached. Nikon's crop frame cameras come with a 1.5 factor which means if you attach a 100mm lens then it miraculously becomes 150mm. Now my kit for African safaris has come down to just three Cameras and

four lenses. D5 with a 600mm mounted, D500 with 200-400mm, D4 with 70-200 mm, and the 16-35 mm which jumps in to any of these cameras when I want to do wide angle shooting.

I had tried a few of these crop frame cameras earlier, the D90, D300 and later the D7000. I was not very happy with them shooting wildlife since they all shoot fewer frames per second in continuous shooting mode, buffer memory was not adequate, they have fewer focus points etc. which was not right for the kind of photography I do, which is mainly 'Wildlife in action'.

Then came the Nikon D500 which addressed all these woes and now it does not leave my side when I am in the wilds. This amazing creation by Nikon engineers can shoot 10 frames a second with enough buffer to hold 200 images when shooting at 14 bit RAW Lossless compressed mode. The count may go lower when shooting at 14 bit RAW uncompressed format or RAW+JPEG combination. This is more than enough to shoot the full throttle chase of a Cheetah behind its hapless pray, to get the kill and even shoot till the prey is floored. There is nothing more I can ask for.

Apart from this the Camera boasts of a 21 MP sensor, Matrix, Spot, Centre weighted, High light Weighted metering systems, a top shutter speed of 1/8000 sec etc., all these features make this Camera a pro-level equipment.

D500 is almost as good as its Big brothers D5 and the D4 during day light, I don't miss my D5 from 8 AM in the

morning to 4 PM in the afternoon when light is plenty and the low light / high ISO capabilities of the big brothers D5 and the D4 are not needed.

This camera is loaded with many features and options but I will discuss here the options I found most useful in the wilds when this camera accompanied me for over 6 weeks. one great thing - this camera is entirely customizable. All its buttons excepting the shutter trigger can be programmed to do some other function as needed by the photographer.

### 153 FOCUS POINTS

The focus points cover end to end of the focusing screen which enables this camera to obtain focus in some very trying circumstances. Photographers tend to be a very superstitious lot. When they get a good image it is always due to the lucky dress they wore that day, the breakfast they ate, their presence of mind to take the blessing of their mothers before starting the trip, the fight they had with their girlfriend, their back pain, etc and this list is alarmingly long. But most of them have not realized that it all boils to how quick their camera responded in the given situation and acquired and kept the focus locked while they broke their index finger, punching away on the shutter release. I also have one kink too, I never use my left index finger to click. (hehe)

I have found the speed of acquiring focus and locking on the D500 to be as good as the D5.

Further, the focus points stretching end to





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end on your viewfinder gives you amazing compositional opportunities. You can place your favorite subject at the extreme corners or the frame. You can show the subject as well as its grand habitat, you can capture a chase where the predator and the prey occupy different corners of the frame.

Again it is extremely good in obtaining swift focus in even low contrast, misty and dusty scenes.

### **BLAZING QUICK AUTO FOCUS:**

This little beast borrows the same focusing mechanism as its peer the D5 and it is trustworthy. I can trust a life time chance of shooting a Cow jumping over the Moon and this camera will grab all the action without me filling up the trash folder of my Mac.

At Masai Mara during last year's migration I had the opportunity to shoot with a South African filming crew. In the company of armed rangers, I went to the Mara River shore to shoot the Wildebeests jumping into water. Unfortunately, they were hidden from view by a steep bank and I could see them just before they leaped in to water. Lying on the river bank on my stomach with a ranger behind me to look out for crocodiles who might consider me for breakfast, it was a bit difficult to view the grand event and take some shots. My camera had to obtain focus on the Wildebeests in a fraction of a second after they appeared from behind the steep bank and just before they jumped in to the water. For them we were an additional threat apart from the swift river





water with its Crocodile inhabitants and they were in no mood to pause and wait for me to get my focus point locked on to their low contrast bodies as they jumped. D500 did that for me. It actually focused on them midair just before they vanished in to a huge splash of water.

Another situation when this camera saved me from biting the dust was when I was following a Serval Cat which decided to duck in to tall grass just before it pounced on a mouse which we both could not see but the cat could hear. For a moment, I lost sight of the cat and as I was searching for it through my viewfinder she leaped high in to the air. It was sheer luck, my index finger was still on the trigger and I managed to get the shot. The auto focus capability of this Camera is amazing even in low contrast scenes.

Some examples below. Now combine this with a 10 frames per second advance and you have a series of images which land in to the hard drive of your PC instead of visiting the Trash folder.

In addition to various auto focus modes in it's arsenal, this camera offers a mode called Group Auto Focus. In this mode a group of 13 focus points form a group and act like a single large focus point. In a situation where you have a fast-moving subject with some trees or shrubs as background it is easier for your focus to lock on to a background object as you pan the camera along with your subject. The more number of focus points you use, the easier it is for the camera to forget your subject and lock focus on a background object. If you use a single focus point you may again lose the subject since its moving much faster. But

your subject has no escape when you use Group Auto Focus. You just need to get any point of your subject inside the group focus points and unless you drop the camera from the top of your vehicle to the hard ground below, the D500 will not let your subject leave your frame. However, you must be careful about two issues. The camera will focus and hold on the nearest point on your subject to the focusing plane. If there is a cluster of shrubs between you and your subject, then the focus might jump to the cluster of shrubs. Or, when a bird comes flying towards you, and you try to focus on its eyes, instead the group auto focus will tend to focus on the tip of the bird's beak since this is the point which is closest to the camera. For action scenes this is 'THE MODE' to use and the results are amazing.

#### **DYNAMIC RANGE:**

In many scenes where the brightest part of the image is many stops different from the darkest part of the image, (Example subject against a bright sky) normal cameras tend to put up their hands in despair and activate light monsters called 'Blinkies' which decorate your image review LCD screen, which means the highlights have been sacrificed and rendered pure white without any details. When this happens unlucky folk, who do not have a D500 tend to adjust the exposure to reduce the light coming in to their camera sensors, but alas they have a beautiful sky now, but their subject and the foreground have been reduced to shades of grey and black. The D500 has an amazing dynamic range where in it can record the bright sky as well as your



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subject in all its natural glory without you having to accept a silhouette or go back home to process the image in Photoshop or any other software to bring a balance to the overall image. If you are shooting in RAW then the image information is recorded in the sensor as it is. Hence you will be able to recover a lot of highlight information in your RAW conversion software. I have some lovely images saved from great disaster due to the high dynamic range.

### HIGHLIGHT WIEGHTED METERING

Imagine a lovely scene where your favorite subject walks across a dense back ground of trees and shrubs and you are following its every move and shooting several keepers which you plan to print and decorate your living room wall with. Then the subject moves in to an area which is not so dense and you anticipate an amazing shot where you will show

your audience a grand play of light and shadow as the overhead shaft of light nicely illuminates the face of your subject. Well your dreams may hit the floor of harsh reality when you see the review of the image taken on your LCD. Omg, the face of your favorite subject has been over exposed to the extent that you just cannot see its furry head with yellow eyes and white whiskers. The whole area looks like it has been lit by a hundred flashlights while the rest of the image looks cool. You can't hang an image on the wall where your subject's head has no details. Your dreams are floored and you may have to buy a painting or some other art work for your wall.

What really happened? Since the camera saw all the surrounding area dark it tried to help you get a winner by over exposing the whole scene. It did not realise your favorite subject's head was lit by a stray shaft of light. Since the image

was given additional exposure globally it resulted on your subject's head to over expose while the rest of the image was recorded perfectly. Nikon D500 handled this issue by providing a very useful metering system which actually preserves the highlights when such incidences happen by globally under exposing the whole scene. You must be aware that recovering shadow details using your favorite processing software is easier than recovering the highlights. The under exposed shadow areas can be brought by using any software so that your wall can still have your favorite wildlife image to decorate it.

### FLIP UP LCD

I love shooting wide angle images of Wildlife. This kind of imaging brings a closeness to the subject from the audience point of view and most of the images I shoot are from the eye level of the subject. I usually mount the camera on the foot step of the vehicle and trip

the trigger by using a remote. But I must position my vehicle in such a way that I get the subject in the frame as well as to obtain focus. The flip up type LCD feels robust with millions of pixels packed close to give me a good rendition of the actual scene in front of the camera even when viewed from a meter or more above the camera. Previous cameras I used did not have such a sturdy flip up mechanism and I was not very confident of using them outside the vehicle, where it may be subject to occasional brushing on the bushes or small branches and twigs.

If I must write about all the features available in the D500, I would probably need a whole month's space of this magazine and hence will stick with these most vital features which I found extremely useful. I hope that you will try out these features and enjoy the full benefits this Camera has to offer.

Good Luck and Happy clicking.



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# Canary Islands A Subtropical Paradise

By Carina Jorgensen



TRAVEL & PHOTOGRAPHY

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# C

**By Carina Jorgensen,**  
Copenhagen, Denmark

**Carina just graduated from the University of  
Copenhagen with an M.A. in English and Danish.**



The second week of February 2017, I visited Gran Canaria Island in celebration of my thirtieth birthday. Warm ocean waters that wash on black beaches made from volcanic sand are one of the Canary Islands major attractions. However, there are many other things to explore: Sand dunes and desert conditions, volcanic cones and mountains, coloured mineral rock formations, and in places tropical, lush vegetation that adds to the island's charm. A wonderful botanical garden is located in Las Palmas. Some of the more interesting plants are Dragon Tree (*Dracana draco*), Teide Wallflower (*Erysimum scoparium*) and Teide Viper's Bugloss (*Echium wildpretii*).

In terms of location the Canary Islands can be found from 100 km to 250 km west of Morocco (North Africa), between 27 and 28 North latitude along an east-west line. The islands are in two Spanish provinces. They consist of seven major islands; from east to west Lanzarote (846 square km) Fuerteventura (1,660 square km), Gran Canaria (1,560 square km), Tenerife (2,034 square km), La Gomera, La Palma (706 square km), and El Hierro.

In Denmark from November to February the sun rises at 8:00 AM and sets at 16:00 PM. Moist air and horizontal rain showers with a cold that cuts into your bones makes the idea of travelling south very attractive. Especially with what may be climate changes that prevent the snow from freezing on the ground and lighting up the landscape, the Danish winter months become very dark and depressing. Even during the Danish summer months us Vikings long for the warm sun and the dry air of subtropical





©Carina Jorgensen

climates, because summer rain and unstable weather is standard.

As it happens the Canary Islands are considered among the best places in the world in terms of a pleasant climate. Gran Canaria has four different climate zones: The south of the island has the dry and warm climate with desert landscapes. In the north of the island is a subtropical zone where the rains come frequently. The higher up the mountains you get, towards Roque Nublo, the more pine trees you get as the climate zone changes to what is known as 'taiga'. The last climate zone is somewhere between the subtropical and taiga zone. An array of fascinating plants grow the islands. Different ecological habitats from the warm and humid subtropics at sea level to the cold climates at mountain peaks create the wide diversity. Many species are endemic to the islands, and other species of Mediterranean plant species have been introduced to the islands.

The Canary Islands are tops of oceanic volcanic rocks projecting above the ocean. Geologists estimate the underwater volcanic eruptions occurred many millions of years ago. Volcanic peaks, bizarre rock formations, seaside cliffs and hundreds of beaches create the island's very attractive scenery. The most recent volcanic eruption was in 1971 on La Palma, and Lanzarote's Mountain of Fires continues to flare steam and fire.

Apart from swimming and sun there is a lot of beautiful nature to see on Gran Canaria. Driving around Gran Canaria is exciting. Rent a car for a day or two at prices ranging from approx. 30-50 euros

per day. You can drive to the mountains and enjoy the volcanic rocks with green patterns, formed by layers of minerals of National Park.

Clouds bringing mist and rain develop on the mountain peaks drifting in from the sea. A highlight my February visit was my pilgrimage to the center of the island. There are beautiful hiking routes and wonderful views. Here you find the island's iconic natural monument named the 'Clouded Rock' or as Roque Nublo. Roque Nublo is 67 metres tall and made of volcanic rock created during the second great volcanic cycle of Gran Canaria. This was the Roque Nublo Cycle, that took place from 5.3 to 3.4 million years ago to today. The whole site is protected as a UNESCO Heritage site.

My visit to Roque Nublo was magical in part because of the fog, which kept the view under wraps and scared off other tourists for a long time. Sitting in the car eating a comfort apple I never would have expected the view I eventually found at the top of the mountain. The fog was everywhere, adding to the frustration of navigating all the narrow mountain roads only to end at a deserted parking lot, that would normally be bustling with tourists. Visibility was reduced to about ten metres, shutting out the sunshine. I eventually overcame my despair and left the car, plodding ahead on the trail, up the mountain.

As I walked, the sun started to break through the heavy clouds here and there. It got a brighter and I was able to take a few photos at the edge of the trail with the horizon in the background, seeing

glimpses of woodland and mountains far away. This was fun and encouraging and my mood got better as I proceeded ahead.

As I reached the mountain summit and walked across the broad plateau, the looming shape of Roque Nublo appeared. A tall rock towering high above me gradually came out of the fog. It was impressive, but out of focus because of the mist. Nevertheless I snapped pictures in front of the monument, wondering what it looked like in clear weather. And now for the surprise - the fog dissipated rapidly as I took pictures! It took just five minutes for miles of fog to be swept away by the wind and the warm rays of the sun. Like the unwrapping of a Christmas present, the landscape was revealed: Kilometres of pine woods with amber earth beneath, pine needle floors that reflected a golden hue in the sunlight. Great mountains rising high above green valleys, and white puffy clouds sailing smooth through the air, decorating the landscape more than obscuring it.

Best of all, there were no other tourists! I can only imagine the noise of a crowd of 50 tourists, all clamoring for pictures, because my voice echoed off the rocky walls. It was truly something special to explore the stones in solitude and roam to the foot of Roque Nublo to discover a sublime view across all of Gran Canaria.

The Canary Islands are one of the world's special islands for climate, national parks, and of course delightful beaches and warm ocean waters for swimming. I look forward to returning and recommend that the reader goes exploring in the mist - it may dissipate in a minute.





# Learning The Ropes

By Rahul Chandran

CUB'S CORNER

## CUB'S CORNER



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**Rahul Chandran is a 15 years old from Palakkad in Kerala, India studying in grade 10. He is a passionate photographer. He is open to exploring the various dimensions of photography.**

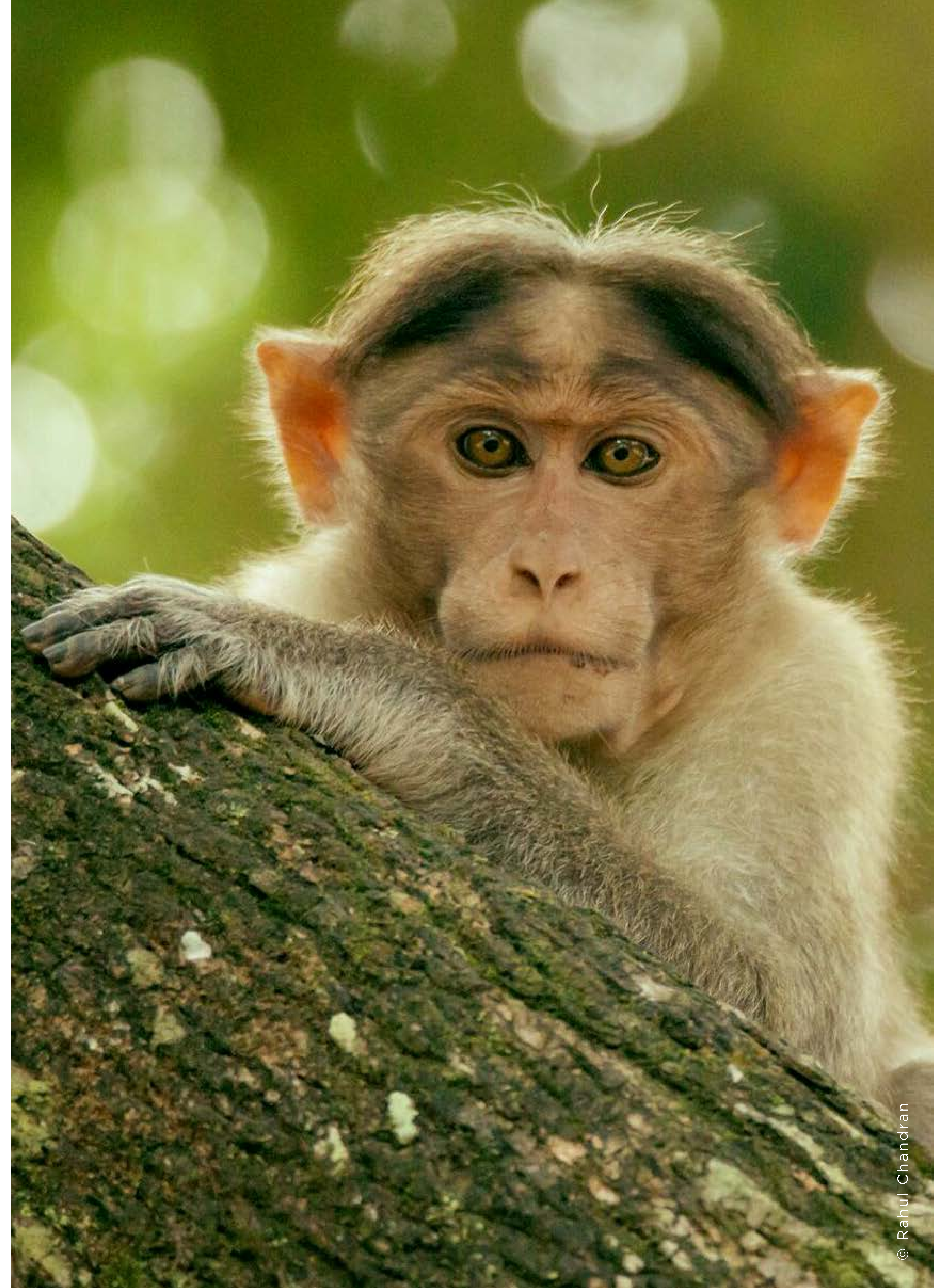
**He believes in presenting Photography in its true colour. He started taking photos from the age of 11.**

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rahulchandranphotography

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I started my photography with a normal camera and today I own a Canon EOS 7D mark II. I have been versatile with my photographic experiments and always liked to present it in its true form. Even though, I would like to experiment with different types of photography my love towards animals and birds from the childhood makes wildlife photography my favourite. I think it was my father who performed a major role in implanting the love for animals and birds in my life.

I have visited many wildlife sanctuaries, reserves, and national parks like Kumarakom, Parambikkulam, Silent valley (all in Kerala), Dubai desert etc. Silent valley is my favourite national park among those I have visited, even though it's hard to spot birds and animals there. It's a very thick rain forest and provides best scope for macro photography. I had another wonderful experience while visiting Parambikkulam tiger reserve. We reached there by morning and were welcomed by grey langurs on the trees. We were taken





into the forest by the forest department vehicle and we were fortunate enough to spot many bonnet macaques, spotted deer, wild boars, crocodiles, a large flock of peacocks and many other birds. That was indeed a treat for our eyes and souls.

I had the privilege to meet and attend classes by great macro photographer M. Jayaram and wildlife photographer Mr Sreenivasan Durairaj. Apart from visiting the wild life sanctuaries I try to take pictures from my surroundings. I am thankful to be surrounded by encouraging friends and family in my journey of photography.

I was lucky to get the opportunity to exhibit two of my photographs, one a rare tossing moment of Eurasian Hoopoe and another one of Houbara Bastard at the "UAE Frames" by Lulu in 2016. The photograph of Hoopoe was taken from Dubai creek park after a wait of almost

5 hours. I use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram to share my photos. One of my recent photo "A Brahminy Kite drinking water" which was taken from Kollam in Kerala brought me lots of appreciation. These platforms allow me to get guidance from famous photographers like Mr. Sajan Raju.

From childhood, my love for animals and birds made me think about protecting them and I feel photography is a very good tool in providing awareness to the people about the importance of wildlife and nature. This will in turn help in their protection. Keeping this in mind I conducted a small rally with the slogan "SAVE ANIMALS" in my hometown. I intend to pursue my further studies in wildlife photography and look forward in exploring new opportunities in the field through which I could contribute in the protection of wildlife.









# Beauty of the Himalayan Avifauna!

By Dhairya Jhaveri

THROUGH THE LENS



**Dhairya Jhaveri is a family business owner, an avid bird watcher and wildlife photographer from a birding paradise, Jamnagar, Gujarat in India.**

[facebook.com/matrishva/](https://www.facebook.com/matrishva/)

When it comes to the Himalayas, I always get goose bumps - feeling the unspoiled, untouched, sublime, whole new world with rich flora and fauna. Surrounded by those mighty snow-capped mountains, my expedition plan took me to the place which is avi-fauna rich, Chopta, a small region of meadows and evergreen forest area which is a part of Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary, area 975 km<sup>2</sup>, elevation 1,160 metres, located in Uttarakhand, India.

### **Photographer in making...**

When I was a kid in school, my dad took me for birdwatching. Since then I have observed and used binoculars to see the details and distinctive pointers for every

bird species I came across. In 2008, I visited this place named Kakragadh, Uttarakhand and got details from a local about an expert bird watcher. He was none other than Mr. Yashpal Negiji. I remember watching a Crested kingfisher with him!

Everybody knows while making a career, you need to sacrifice something you love the most. Knowing that I still had some affair left with birds, my dad gifted me a Sony HX-9V digital camera on my 18th birthday, with which I inclined myself with photographing birds and their behaviour.

Upgrading to a DSLR camera is every amateur photographer's wish. I became a Canon user by then and got a EOS 70D.





Tamron 150-600mm was the budget lens with a good focal length for bird photography. Mounting it on my crop sensor body gave me a good reach to photograph bird portraits and @150mm for habitat shots.

In 2015, I visited Chopta again with so many lifers. The 3rd time was in February of 2016 however, this time with the gear in any amateur bird photographer's wishlist.

I used Canon 7D Mark II with Canon EF 500mm f/4 USM IS II with a 1.4X tele-converter

### The Journey...

We started our journey from Jolly Grant

Airport, Dehradun, Uttarakhand enroute to Makkumath, a small village which is the base camp for Chopta and Tungnath. It is an 8-hour drive via Rishikesh, Rudraprayag and Srinagar. Devprayag is one of the Panch Prayag of Alaknanda River where Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers meet and take the name Ganga or Ganges. We continue our journey towards Agastmuni, where the road to Makkumath merges.

### The Experience...

Getting acquainted to the weather takes some time as I was going from semi-arid Jamnagar, my hometown to shivery, spine-chilling temperatures of the Himalayan foothills. Rhododendron flowers forming a huge carpet of pink

and red colours were an amazing visual to experience. Birds here depend upon these flowers in many ways. Some for the nectar, some petals or for pollen grains.

This is how nature works in a symbiotic relationship.

All those beautiful, brisk, hyperactive species are a challenge to photograph. Being persistent is the key to get a good photograph with good light and perch. Getting some good images was like a dream coming true.

So many endemic birds reside around the area where we were staying. Himalayan Bulbuls, Grey treepies, Black Francolins, Russet Sparrows were in large numbers. Rusty-cheeked Scimiter Babblers passing by, searching food. In mornings and evenings, Great Barbet calls were so soothing giving the valley its own music. Midnights were filled by the calls of Mountain Scoop owl, an elusive species which resides along the Himalayan foothills. Chopta has Himalayan Monals in good numbers. Whole valley is flourishing with flowers of rhododendrons. Rufous Sibias, Oriental White-eyes cherishing pollens from Rhododendron flowers are a treat to watch.

Birding around Makku is also fruitful. One morning we were on a stroll and observed a flock of 10-12 individuals having seeds on a flourishing tree. When identified, Bravo! Brown Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula nipalensis*), another least photographed, elusive species of bullfinch. Getting portraits and witnessing their feeding behaviour is among the best experiences of my life. They were

almost oblivious to our presence, giving an amazing opportunity to photograph, thanks to Nature! It's all about energy you set which resonates with any living being on earth. That day we caught the Himalayan Buzzard (*Buteo refectus*) looking for prey, perched on a dry tree trunk in the morning light, which is any photographers dream! It dived and the camera shutters went crazy!

Snow pigeons (*Columba leuconota*) also were high on our birding list of elusive species. A flock of 8-10 individuals stopped by to eat some grains from the harvested wheat farms. We got great eye-level images. We also got Chestnut-headed Tesia (*Cettia castaneocoronata*) which is also difficult to photograph as it is brisk, rarely shows up on perch, and always sighted in low-light conditions. It is all about gear, technique, skill and ultimately getting it bang-on.

Next day we trekked to Chandrashila, a peak of the Tungnath meaning "Moon Rock", located at a height of about 4,000 metres (13,000 ft.) above sea level. Trek starts from Chopta. Species we were expecting was the Snow Partridge (*Lerva lerva*). One of the most difficult species I've ever photographed...

3.5 km Trek. Altitude 11,994 feet. Temperature was 1-degree C. It dropped to -2 within couple of minutes. Heavy snowfall on the peak. No luck to see this beauty. Fingers were frozen. It was a challenge to hold my gear. Then the miracle happened. A group of Snow Partridges heading towards us! The best feeling when you get your perceived bird from the books! I then relaxed on the

freezing moss of Tungnath peak, cherishing the efforts and images I made.

We then visited Baniyakund, a small place enroute Chopta where we got to see Lammergeier a.k.a. Bearded Vultures, Himalayan Griffon, Eurasian Griffon, Cinereous Vulture, King Vulture soaring high, looking for carcasses of decaying animals. Getting some images of a Juvenile Bearded Vulture was also a life-event for me. I might not get it again on my viewfinder. Griffons eat up flesh from carcasses, while bearded vulture feast on bone marrow.

They take a bone, throw it from a height to break it and marrow becomes accessible. This shows the intelligence of birds. Amazing behaviour to witness.

We observed 120 species of birds and some mammals including Himalayan Pika, Himalayan Tahr, Himalayan langurs, Jackal and Barking Deer.

It was an adventure of a lifetime. To witness nature and its creations so closely and capturing it for eternity with both my lenses visibility eyes and primes!





# Unrequited LOVE

By Mandara BM



**Mandara has a Master's in International Studies. Having had exposure to the grassroots of wildlife since childhood, understanding the functioning of wildlife and related activities. Occasionally resorts to wildlife photography to document the moments spent in the wild.**

Ever wondered what it feels like to be in love? Yes, love, not with fellow beings. But, with another part of the environment we live in – animals. I'm sure most of us who own pets do know the kind of love that exists. In this context the only famous quote that I can think of is that by Anatole France: "Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened."

I, possibly cannot relate to a better quote than this. On a personal note, I didn't really know what it meant to have someone I could share my love with. Then, on this one fine day, he happened. A Tiger. Weird? Might as well be. So, on this fine visit to a Tiger reserve in the woods of South India (because the Tiger Conservation Authority has put a ban on mentioning location of the specific

animal), I happened to come across a tiger, who, not only killed all my anxiety, but pierced through my heart. That was an end to my six months of wait, to have just one glance of him.

I've been a tiger lover since I was probably a four year old kid. Having visited innumerable tiger reserves, and seen many of these endangered species, I was never content. May be my heart was waiting for "The One". The entire first half of 2016 was when I went crazy to see this li'l boy. He was already a 10 year old grown up by then. And, not to forget, he was a darling and the most handsome one. Due to his bold and charismatic nature, he had already, by then, earned several crores of revenue to the Forest Department. Know what it means to be the apple of everyone's eye? He was that

for all wildlife lovers out here.

April 16, 2016. The due date. It was a chilly but the "perfect weather" type morning. Not in my slightest imagination had I thought about this being my luckiest day. The sort of sunlight mixed with mist all over at 7.45AM, and this boy emerges head-on! I was never a person who believed in love at first sight, but he proved me wrong. That calm and innocent face of his, the royal look and walk, without even a slightest tinge of air. He was there, right there in front of me, staring into my eyes. I was head over heels on him and this has happened every single time that I have been able to sight him in the wild, over the next year. Emotions are no less than a blessing from God because no one has got enough of them. But at times, this blessing becomes more of a pain for you when they are one sided. Not everyone is lucky enough to be loved back by people whom they fall for. I have, nevertheless, been happy with this state. Ever since the summer of April

2016, I had the opportunity to photograph him and keeps his memories intact. And there had never been a single instance of him disappointing his loved ones.

Like they say, all good things come to an end. He met his death in the month of April 2017. That one year of happiness that he filled in, may never repeat in the same capacity. It's so hard to forget someone who gave you so much to remember. His eyes had a different story to tell every time, but he left a deep place in everyone who loved him so dearly. Off late when I visit the place, there's a void in the heart, very well knowing the fact that he's no more there.

Some love lasts a lifetime. And I am happy to have had this phase in my life. A life changing one indeed. Do have a look into the soul of the animal, and you'll know what I mean.

Rest In Peace, my boy. I shall miss you the most.





© Malcolm Arnold

© Chris Bacon

*‘True Nature’*

By Chris Bacon

WILD ARTS SHOWCASE





**“To keep seeing, keep feeling, staying focused on my vision... and knowing that how I respond to things and how I convey them through my art is a reflection of myself, my true nature.”**

<http://chrisbacon.com/>

From as far back as I can remember; I've been acutely aware and fascinated by wildlife. As a child, I was always drawing and would usually include it in my renderings. Now, it occupies my work, no longer as simply a celebration of the things I love, but as vehicles that help me explore and hopefully convey the ever so subtle, sometimes sublime and always felt things.

It wasn't until I reached the age of thirty and only after some serious introspection, that I discovered the true meaning and reason for being within these works. I reached a point in my evolution as an artist, when I

realized that my very life was starting to reflect in my art. There appeared to be a correlation between the things I responded to in nature, which was somehow connected to what was going on within me. It was a milestone in more ways than one.

Learning to 'see' what resonates around and within me, searching for truths and how to convey them through imagery has been an ongoing journey of discovery. As well, from a visual perspective, I am drawn to those gaps in between sound and movement; those timeless, moments of stillness seem more believable to me as a 'picture

maker'. Within that framework, so much can be said, for those moments can speak volumes ... for all time.

When I go out in the field, I have no expectations and rarely go looking for anything in particular. Instead, I slow down and get absorbed in a place. I become awakened to life as it unfolds around me. If an idea comes, I make visual 'notes' in the form of field sketches and gather reference and a few photos that seem relevant at the time. The chances of being in the same place again both in mind and location, with exactly the same set of circumstances that triggered the 'idea' are minimal to non-existent.

What is the evolution of an idea? What is the very essence of the final piece that must be kept alive throughout its development at all cost? It begins with

a conceptual 'thumbnail' drawing, born from thoughts and supported with a sundry of gathered reference. Then I produce colour and compositional studies to help me establish a foundation upon which I can build a solid painting. In some cases, these final 'studies' develop their own legs and can stand well enough on their own. They manage to convey the very thing I mean to instill in the viewer. When this happens, I sometimes get it out of my system and rarely feel the urge to tackle the final painting. At other times, a fully resolved work is what it takes to convey the idea completely.

My practice is slow and methodical. Whether it is a watercolour or an acrylic, when all the drawing is there, I secure it by building up very thin transparent layers from light to dark. Every subtle nuance of the work is carefully

### Liquidity 2010



considered as it starts to evolve. Then I listen for when it starts to 'speak,' as it tells me exactly what it needs to make it all it can be.

My favorite part of this process is the beginning. The rest is just plain hard work, frustration and torment. Bringing a piece from conception to fruition can be both mentally and physically exhausting and in the end, they rarely look the way I imagined they would.

I work on my painting every day and focus on one piece at a time. They take on average about three months to complete, but have also been known to evolve over a number of years. When I'm not actually painting, I'm thinking about them, either problems inherent in the existing piece or working through ideas for future paintings.

Always with me are the thoughts that I

must continually strive to push my own boundaries. That there is so much more to learn and apply and that deep down inside, I know I can get even closer. Therein lies the challenge and reason enough for me to stay on course. To keep exploring and hopefully one day arrive at that place, where I can make paintings that reflect the way I see them ... in my mind's eye.

*"There are a few artists who stand out, and they stand out because they are artists. They do not just make pictures of animals. Chris has a unique style. His paintings are immaculate. They are conservative in their handling, perfectly rendered, well designed, and conceptually original."*

George McLean, Artist

Excerpt from: Leigh Yawkey Woodson

### Study for Western Bluebird 2013



©Chris Bacon

'SARUS CRANE' 2003 • alkyd on rag panel • 11.50 x 11 inches



©Chris Bacon

Art Museum. 'Birds in Art' 2004 Catalog. 'The Moment between Movement' by Rebecca Rowland. Page 8.

Chris Bacon was born in England in 1960 and raised on Ascension Island, Fiji, Bermuda and England before moving to Burlington, Ontario, Canada. He is self-taught and made his artistic debut in 1980, exhibiting twenty-two watercolours at the Alice Peck Gallery in Burlington. This first solo exhibition sold out in three minutes on the preview night and marked an auspicious beginning. He has worked at his painting on a full-time basis ever since. Chris is a 'Master Signature Member' of

the Society of Animal Artists and has received seven 'Awards of Excellence' from that organization, in addition to the 'Elliot Liskin Memorial Award' for painting. He was honoured to receive the prestigious 'Master Wildlife Artist Award' from the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum (U.S.A.) in 2004 and in 2008 received the 'Trustees Purchase Award' from the National Museum of Wildlife Art (U.S.A.). In 2012 Chris was presented with the 'Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal' in recognition of his achievement in the arts. His work is included in private, corporate and museum collections around the world.

*“Bacon’s remarkable watercolor paintings bring to mind adjectives that range from ethereal to meticulous and vivid to subtle. He simultaneously creates environments that are recognizable yet not of this world. Are they places we know or ones we’d like to know? His birds display an elegance that is rarely equaled and the overall effect of his paintings can seem magical. Chris’s gentle manner and powerful personal style translate into artworks truly worthy of the ‘Master Wildlife Artist’ honor.”*

Kathy Kelsey Foley  
Director of the Leigh  
Yawkey Woodson  
Art Museum.

Excerpt from:  
L.Y.W.A.M. Press  
Release Date: May 1,  
2003

**Warm Front 2005**





YOUR GALLERY



Dr. Shashank B  
Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)  
Location: Kabini, Karnataka, India



YOUR GALLERY

**Ajith Nair**  
Malabar Pit Viper (*Trimeresurus malabaricus*)  
Location: Agumbe, Karnataka, India.



YOUR GALLERY

**Prasad Natarajan**  
Green Vine Snake (*Ahaetulla nasuta*)  
Location: Agumbe, Karnataka, India.



YOUR GALLERY

Vipin Sharma

Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone viridis*)

Location: Ranthambore Tiger Reserve , Rajasthan, India



YOUR GALLERY

Somil Makadia

Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)

Location: Porbandar, Gujarat, India.





©SABRI

**YOUR GALLERY**

Sabr Dri  
Arabian Gazelle (*Gazella arabica*)  
Location: Dubai, UAE



**YOUR GALLERY**

Sajeesh Aluparambil  
Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)  
Location: Kabini, Karnataka, India



YOUR GALLERY

Keyur Nandaniya

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)

Location: Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, India.



YOUR GALLERY

Praveen G Nair

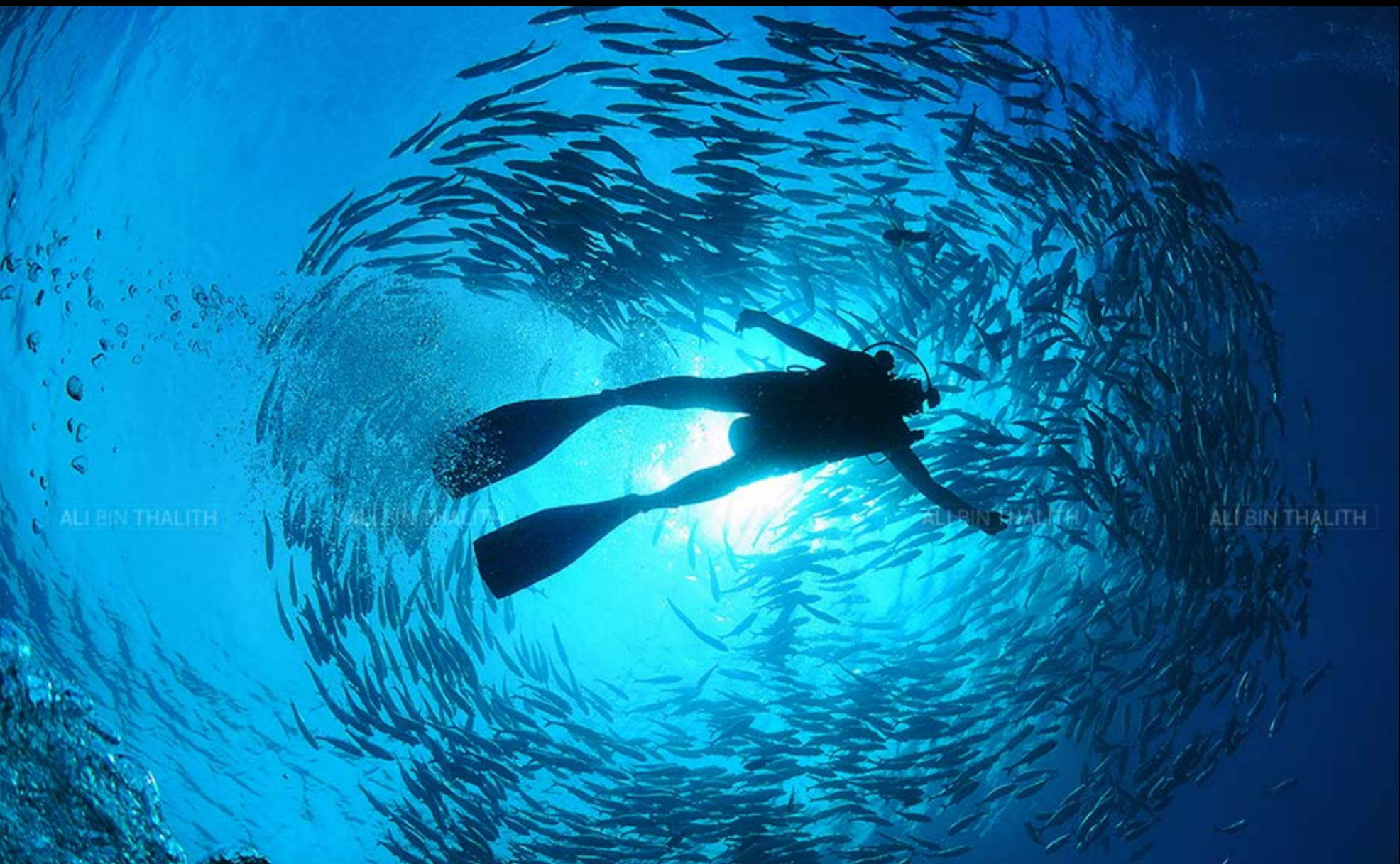
Common Cerulean (*Jamides celeno*)

Location: Chirakkadavu, Kottayam, Kerala, India.





## UPCOMING FEATURES



# THE MAGICAL MARINE WORLD

By Ali Bin Thalit



# GREAT HORNBILL

By Hermis Haridas



# Cubs Corner

By PT Explorers