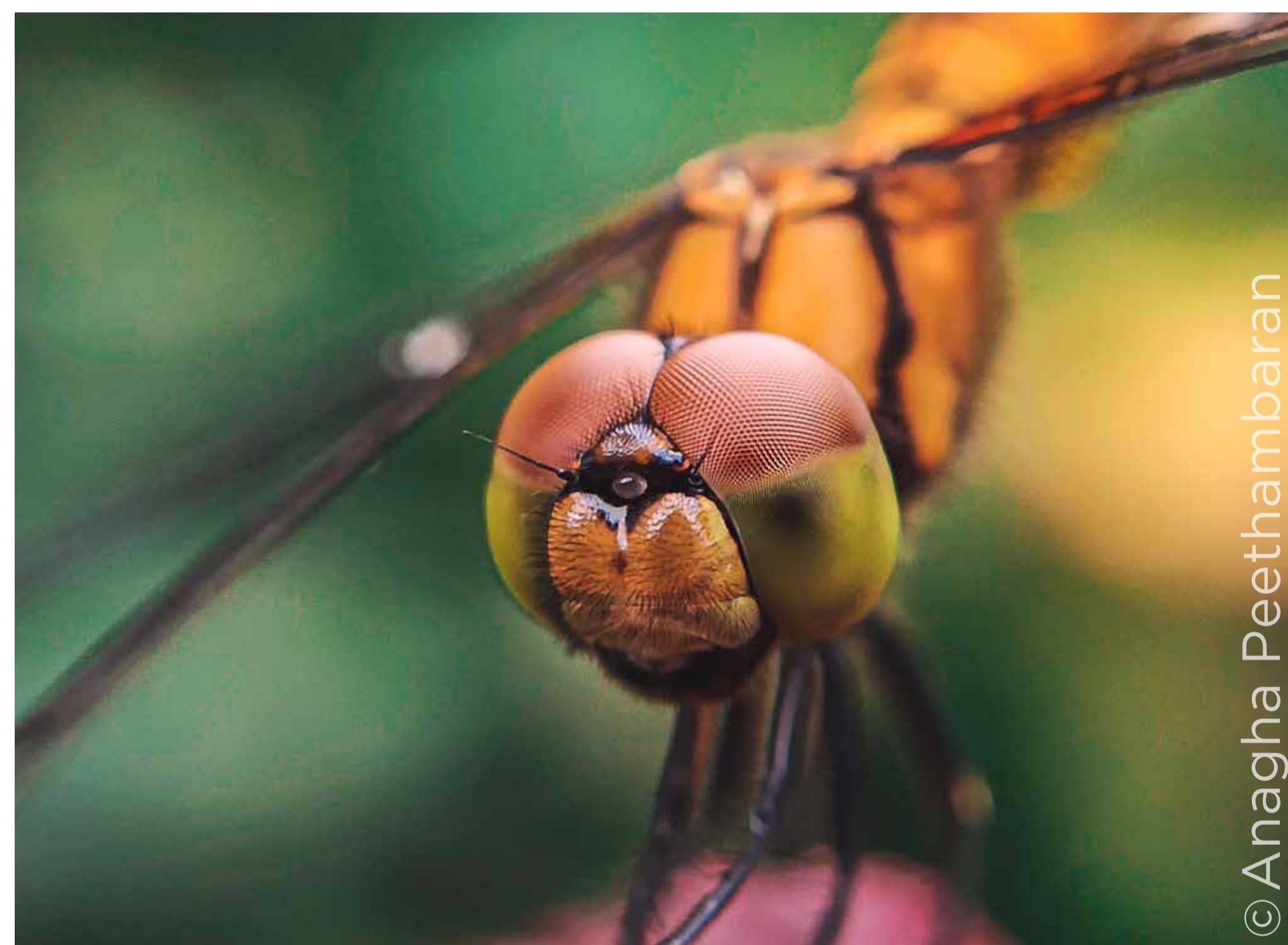




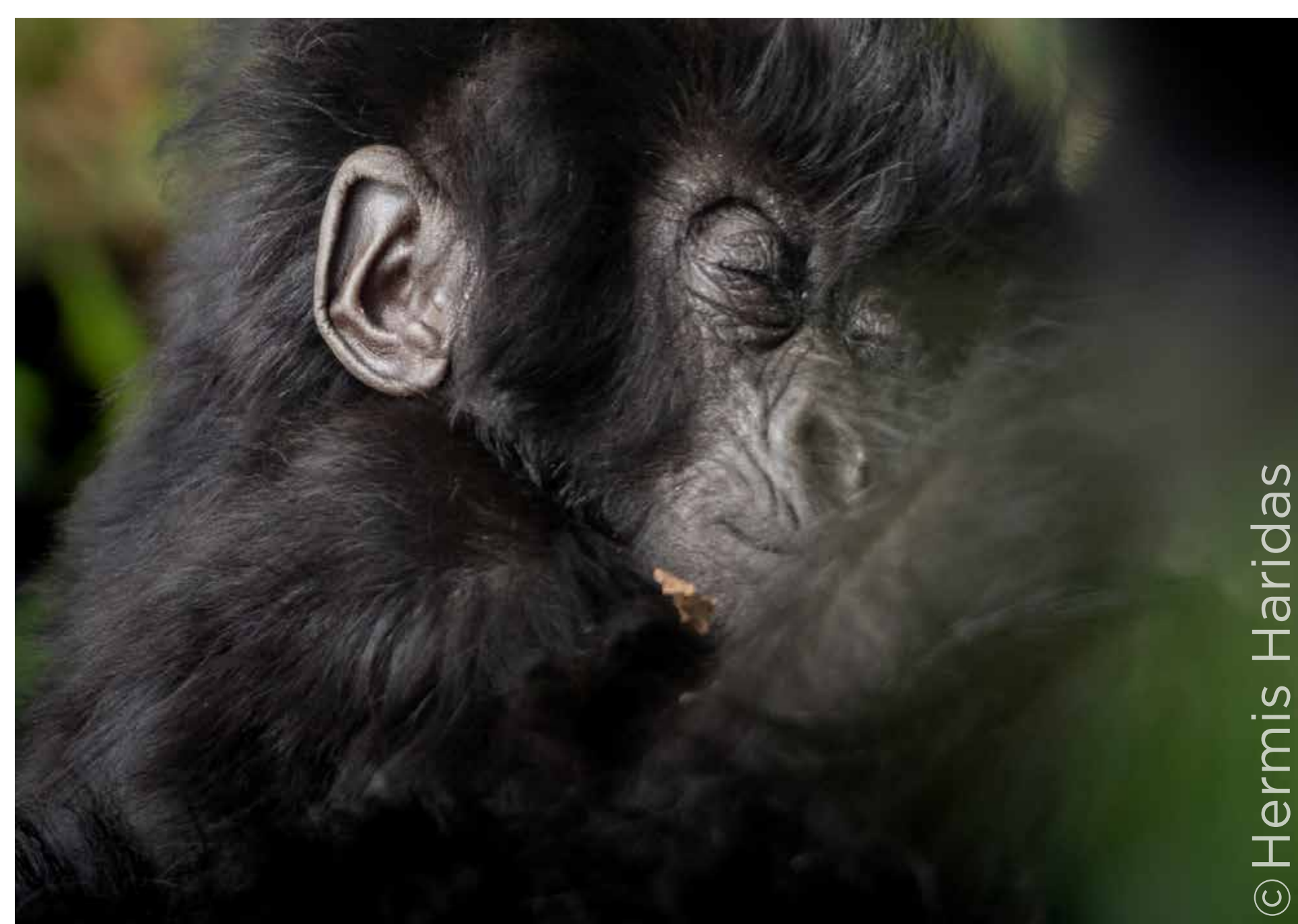
INTO THE WILD
WITH **CYNTHIA
BANDUREK**

BIESZCZADY NATIONAL PARK -
POLAND
BY BY KATARZYNA GUBRYNOWICZ

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©Anagha Peethambaran



©Hermis Haridas

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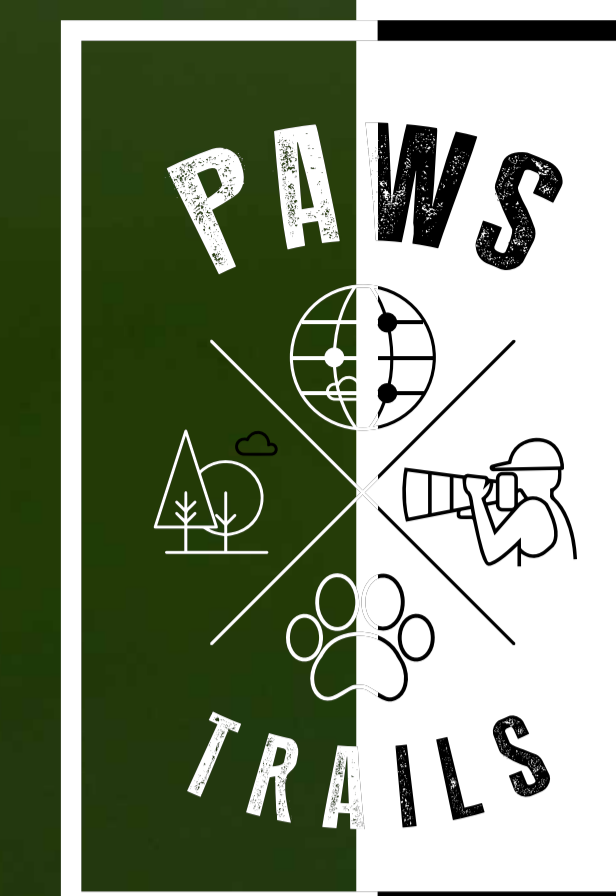
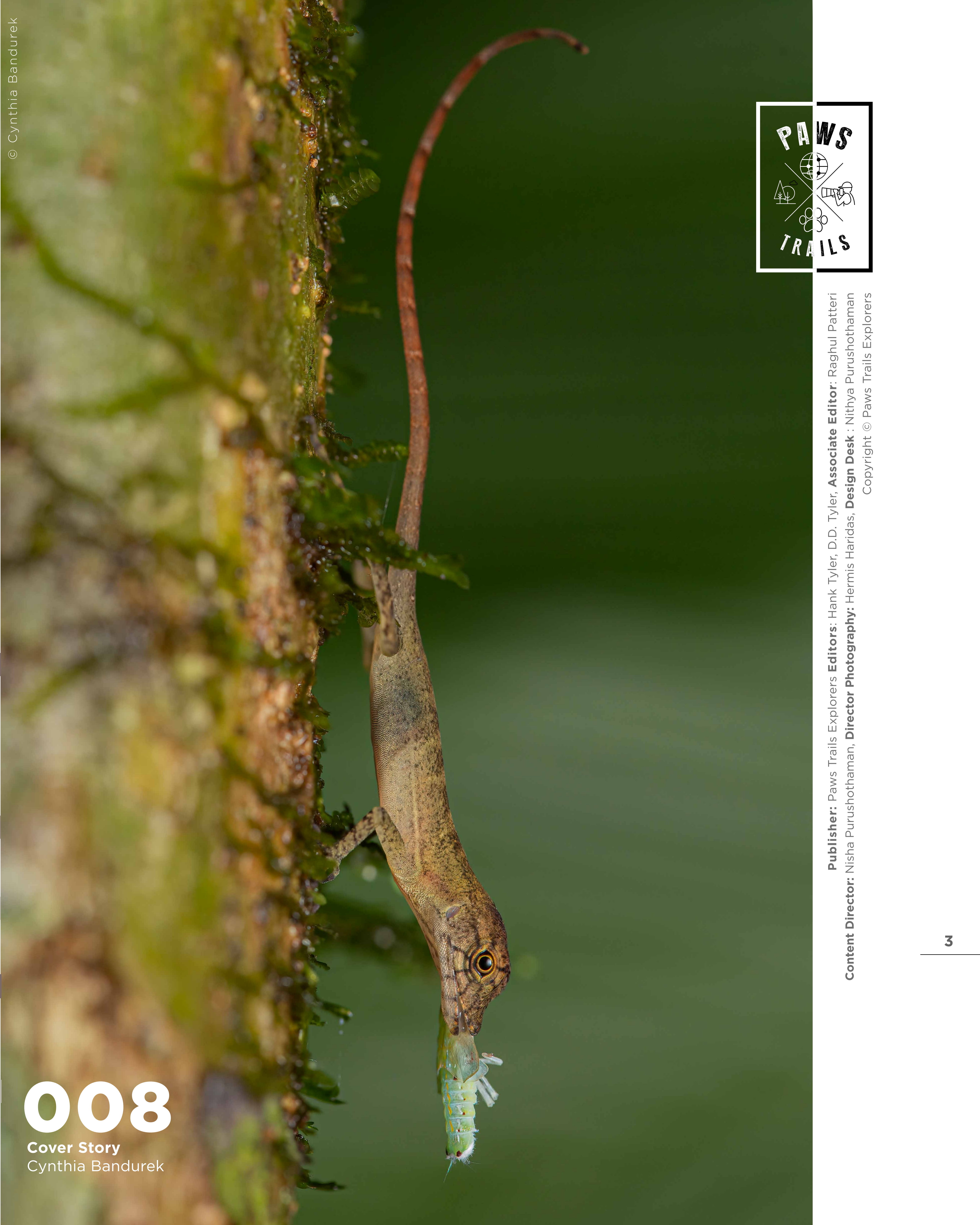
YOUR GALLERY

188

008

Cover Story
Cynthia Bandurek

© Cynthia Bandurek



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Hank Tyler
Editor

Cynthia Bandurek, biologist and macro photographer, is featured in our cover story. She tells her story of how a biologist became interested in nature photography and then specializing in macro photography of insects. Cynthia combines her background as an artist with photography to capture eye-catching images.

Katarzyna Gubrynowicz, a Polish nature photographer takes us to Bieszczady National Park and shows us images of one of the few remaining examples of old-growth Carpathian Forests in eastern Europe. She specializes in landscape photography.

Hermis Haridas tells the story of the critically endangered Mountain Gorilla in Virunga National Park in Rwanda. Hermis recently returned with stunning close-up images of gorillas.

In our Her Views and Visuals section, Anagha Peethambaran, tells us about her experience in macro mobile phone photography.

Heather Thorning from western Australia captured brilliant photos of two species of Fairy Wrens that are endemic to Australia.

Nitin Michael tells us of his travels to the Pantanal of Brazil to photograph jaguars and giant anteaters.

Wild Arts features Rodrigo Verdugo Tartakowsky from Chile who describes his transition from advertising to natural history illustrations using digital technology

Through the Lens features Debarpan Datta's story of the Great Indian Desert and images of desert lizards, birds, and mammals.

Springtime is gradually appearing in the Southern Hemisphere where we are grabbing our cameras and heading into the bush to capture images of emerging leaves and brilliant flowers. If you live in the Northern Hemisphere, grab your camera and head outdoors to capture the amazing array of autumn leaf colors.

PT Explorers invites you to contribute your best images for a short snippet, or a longer article telling our readers of your adventures in a national park or ecological reserve.



PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE



Debarpan Datta
Himalayan Marmot
(*Marmota himalayana*)
Hemis National Park | India

FOUNDERS' NOTE

Welcome to this edition of PawsTrails Explorers.

The world seems to be getting back up on its feet after being bogged down by the covid pandemic. Travel seems to be picking up with more people venturing out. We see eagerness in people to spend time in nature after being cooped up indoors for a long time with restrictions on travel and the new normal of working from home in many countries.

We have always believed that spending time in nature is the best way to fall in love with nature, and what better way to commit to nature's protection. We advocate responsible ecotourism – enjoying nature without interfering with it. In the present situation of a world recovering from the pandemic, it is also important to advocate responsible travel, respecting the rules and restrictions that are there in place.

Reach out to us for the best safari experiences. Our lodge, the MaraTrails in the spectacular Massai mara is awaiting you!

We warmly welcome you to the PawsTrails community of explorers and wildlife photographers. The very idea of PawsTrails was born with a group of people who traveled and photographed together, and we welcome you to our world.

Conservation is a matter of grave concern and there is an urgent need for spreading awareness among the masses. It is our main aim to aid mother earth by aiding conservation through awareness building. We painstakingly gather articles on nature and conservation from around the globe with the aim of spreading awareness to more people. We could use your help with this. If each of our readers can spread the word about us by sharing our posts on Facebook or other media channels, we believe we will reach more people in a meaningful way. We request your co-operation in this endeavor for mother earth.

Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman

Founders - PT Explorers





COVER STORY

Into the Wild

with Cynthia Bandurek

Red eyed tree frog (*Agalychnis callidryas*)

Cynthia Bandurek is an Argentinian Conservationist Ecologist, Field-Naturalist, Nature photographer, and wildlife artist. She has worked for more than eleven years at the Natural Science Museum and two years at the Darwinian Botanical Institute in Buenos Aires. In January 2021, Cynthia moved to Costa Rica to pursue work in conservation biology and photography.

She participated in Conservation Projects in Argentina. She is the author of the Book: “The world of small, An approach to the universe of arthropods from an artistic, visual, and evolutionary perspective.”

Cynthia is PT Explorers’ Contributing Editor for South America. She is a Nature First Photography Ambassador (<https://www.naturefirstphotography.org>)

She leads Macro Photography Workshops in Costa Rica (<https://macrowildphoto.com/>), and offers a complete online course on macrophotography in Spanish in www.tucursodefotografia.com.

**<https://cynthiabandurek.com/>
https://www.instagram.com/cynthiabandurek_artphotography/
<https://macrowildphoto.com/>
<https://www.tucursodefotografia.com>**





How did you get into photography and what made you choose macro photography?

I discovered photography while I was studying for my second career as a field Naturalist in 2007. First it was a tool to record the animals or plants I was studying in the field. But when I started to shoot, I fell in love with photography and started to learn more and more as a self-taught. At that moment I was studying frogs, so that fact led me to start with macro photography at night, and I realized that macro photography allows us to enter a completely new world that our naked eyes don't see. I felt in love with photography even more deeply. My first camera was a Sony Cybershot H2, a bridge camera.

Where do you find inspiration as a photographer?

Nature always inspires me, but not just experiencing it in the field, also learn about natural history, evolution, adaptations, and conservation. All that knowledge makes me want to explore different places to find the examples of every behavior and adaptation and even more exciting for me is to find a new species from among those that are not described by science. Something that in the field of entomology is common because the world of arthropods is amazingly diverse and abundant, and there are millions of new species to discover.

I can also think that I come from a family of artists, and so luckily, I was born with a creative and artistic brain.

I am a painter since I was a little child, and no one taught me how to paint. I was born with an artistic ability. That background came with my genes.

Do you think being a woman is challenging in this field? And if so, what are the challenges you face and how do you overcome them?

Sadly, being a woman is challenging in every field and nature or wildlife photography is not an exception. We face several kinds of challenges, from the risk to be alone in wild places to the differences in possibilities to get a job or assignment in the field of conservation visual storytelling.

But luckily women are slowly gaining terrain in this field, as in others.

I had to face some incidents in the field, and the way I overcome it was just pushing ahead, I didn't give up. I always put my best efforts in to my work.

How do you approach a subject in macro photography?

I approach this aspect of photography from two perspectives. One of them is with respect. The second one, is in an artistic way.

My way to approach photography is always putting nature first before a picture. All my photographic work is made in natural conditions without manipulation of the animals. I try to show in an artistic way the natural life and behavior of the animals I shoot. It happens that in macrophotography it is common that photographers manipulate the subjects to get outstanding shots. But I believe that if the subjects are easy

to manipulate it doesn't mean we have to do it. I think we need to be respectful of nature in every shape, we must respect an insect or frog the same way we do with for example jaguars or birds. Insects are small, but equally important are their lives.

Can you please mention any special moment in your journey?

A couple of years ago I started traveling alone to different places. Just me, my camera, and wild places. It was special, first because I could overcome the fear to travel alone to other countries and cultures. Then in the path I discovered that traveling alone is a really good way to know every culture, to connect with people deeply, and dedicate yourself 100% to make these wild places part of your art.

I traveled first to Costa Rica in 2018, a month learning about different places and registering the biodiversity with my camera. In 2019, I decided to go to Ecuador, to the Chocó Forest and the Amazon jungle. Both were unforgettable experiences. Not just because of the pictures I could take, also because the personal growth this kind of experience gives you. You always return home being a different person. Knowing different cultures, ways to live and other life stories make you change the perspectives you see and how to approach life.

These two travel experiences made me realize that I needed a change in my life. I was aware how happy being in nature makes me, and how deep was my desire to experience new places. I decided to live in a new location in a new country, so I moved to Costa Rica. A 100% switch

in my lifestyle. Not an easy decision, and not easy to start a new life in a different country, but I'm sure that I am in the path I chose.

How do you think your style has evolved over the years?

I started my journey using photography as a tool for documenting species I had to study and learn about. But then I discovered the power of composition and aesthetic, so basically, I discovered that photography can be art, and that art has the power to produce emotions. So, with that in mind, I switched my work into conservation and visual storytelling. In the beginning it all was about the subject, and now it is all about finding the way subjects can be shown to make them impactful. Having a background in art and painting helped me deeply to understand photography in an artistic way.

If you could photograph one thing in the world, what would it be?

What a difficult question for a deep lover of life in every shape. But I think if I just could photograph one thing, maybe I would go out of macrophotography to work with wild cats.

What is the scope for a career in macro photography? Can one pursue it beyond a hobby?

As in any branch of art, there is no easy way to make a living off it. I am now in a journey to discover if it is possible. But I believe that being an artist you need to find a way to make a living diversifying your possibilities and not just waiting to earn money with the product you create while being creative, maybe doing photo-



Katydid Nymph (*Orthoptera*)



Weevil (*Curculionidae*)

© Cynthia Bandurek

tours, teaching photography, writing articles for magazines, and selling your pictures. It is a long and slow journey where you have to be patient, constant and determined. Not easy but if you are sure that is your passion, it is really worth trying!

How important is to have profound subject behavior knowledge to become a macro photographer?

Knowing the behavior of animals in any kind of nature photography will help us to get better shots. From knowing the environment where they live, the time of the day they are active, the behavior of each species, the way they act when you approach, all that knowledge will get you more time and possibilities to think more in composition and be able to get outstanding images.

Spending time watching and observing is vital to knowing your subject. Gradually, one gains the skill to know the subject, and to be able to act (shoot) at the right moment to capture the perfect image.

Your opinion on the role of a photographer in conservation, and how do you implement it in your journey?

The core of my photographic work is conservation. I believe that the power of images can be used to change attitudes and behaviors toward the natural world, visuals can bring people closer to nature. I think that the impact can be deeper if we add the scientific knowledge and make people know the importance that every living being has in the intricate network that allows the fragile balance of life and how magnificent their lives can result. My photographic work tries

to bring aspects of nature that are little known but are still amazing – a complete universe of life that remains hidden for most eyes.

What are your future plans and projects related to photography and conservation?

I recently moved to Costa Rica, to pursue work in conservation, and conservation storytelling.

In 2017 I published a book called: “The world of small, an approach to the universe of arthropods from an artistic, visual and evolutionary perspective.” The idea of that project was to connect people with the underestimated world of insects and spiders, in a way people can feel related with them. Connecting the behaviors and adaptations of them with our daily lives.

Now I have the same idea, but with the world of plants and other inhabitants of the forest like fungi. I want to show the forest and every part of them in a way that we as humans can understand the complexity of forests. But again, in an artistic way trying to make an impact, using the emotions to connect people with nature.

Your message for every woman following their dreams.

Follow your instinct and work hard. Focus on what you want to do. Never give up! And never allow anybody to tell you that you are not enough for what you do! Always do your best in what you do, be determined, constant and passionate.

What’s your set of gear for your shoots



and what would be your suggestion on gears for macro enthusiasts?

I use a Canon 6d, with a Canon 100 mm 2.8, a Raynox achromatic close-up lens DCR 250, a flash by Yongnuo and a handmade diffuser for my macro work.

My suggestion for macro enthusiasts is “use what you have.” The good part of macro photography, especially when you start in this technique is that you can do macro, just adding extension tubes to your lens, or a close-up lens, or just inverting the lens you have, these simple accessories will give you the possibility to get outstanding shots. Just you need to train your eyes and learn how to manage your gear. I started this way, with a compact camera, and some of my pictures taken more than 15 years ago with that gear are published in my book: “The World of the small.” So, learn the fundamentals of photography, learn how to manage your equipment, and learn about composition and you will be able to get the shots you dream with the gear you have!

As you are currently based in Costa Rica, what would be your advice for photographers planning to visit Costa Rica for photography?

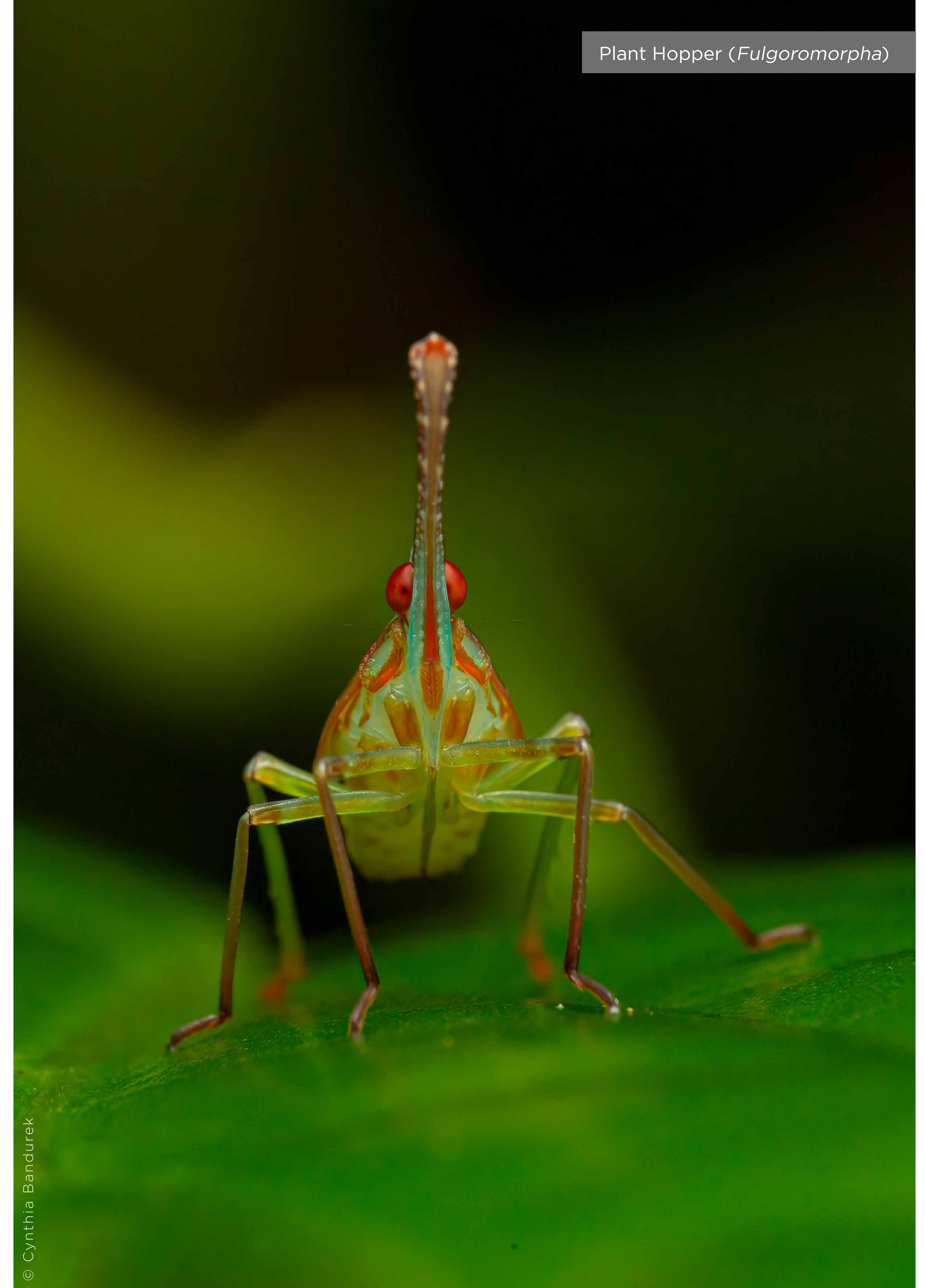
Something I see in the way tourists visit a new place, is in general they prefer to stay short periods of time in every place and visiting a number of places. But from my humble experience, I recommend to visit less places but get to know each one deeply. Nature is unpredictable, and the forest is always different. You can walk on the same trail one time and another time the experience will always be different. Being longer in the same place will allow

you to know the dynamics of nature, the forest and the animals that live in the forests. You will begin to understand it, you will start to feel as a part of it. And at that moment is when the magic starts to happen, when all your senses are in sync with the natural rhythm. When you are connected with nature, you understand its pace and you naturally will start to get amazing frames.

What’s the best advice you’ve ever gotten? And what will be your advice for nature lovers and upcoming photographers?

The best advice I received came from a completely different field - music. I played guitar in a band when I was younger, and one day I met a famous English musician, and he told me: “You don’t have to wait to sound perfect to be on stage, you will become perfect with the experience the stage gives you. The stage will make you sound perfect.” That advice is with me since then, and I think about it in every aspect of my life. You will be better with the experience the path gives you.

So, my advice for nature lovers is basically the same - study the fundamentals, study your gear, study your subject and go out and practice, practice, and practice. Do not wait to show your work, put your work out there in the world, accept the critics and be a self-critic. Watch and analyze the work of others, that will give you a visual culture that will allow you to be more creative. Creativity is just connecting all the information we have in our minds in a different way. So, having more information in your brain will give you more possibilities of combinations. Do not be shy - get out there and get involved.





Small-headed Frog (*Dendropsophus microcephalus*)









Grasshopper (Orthoptera)





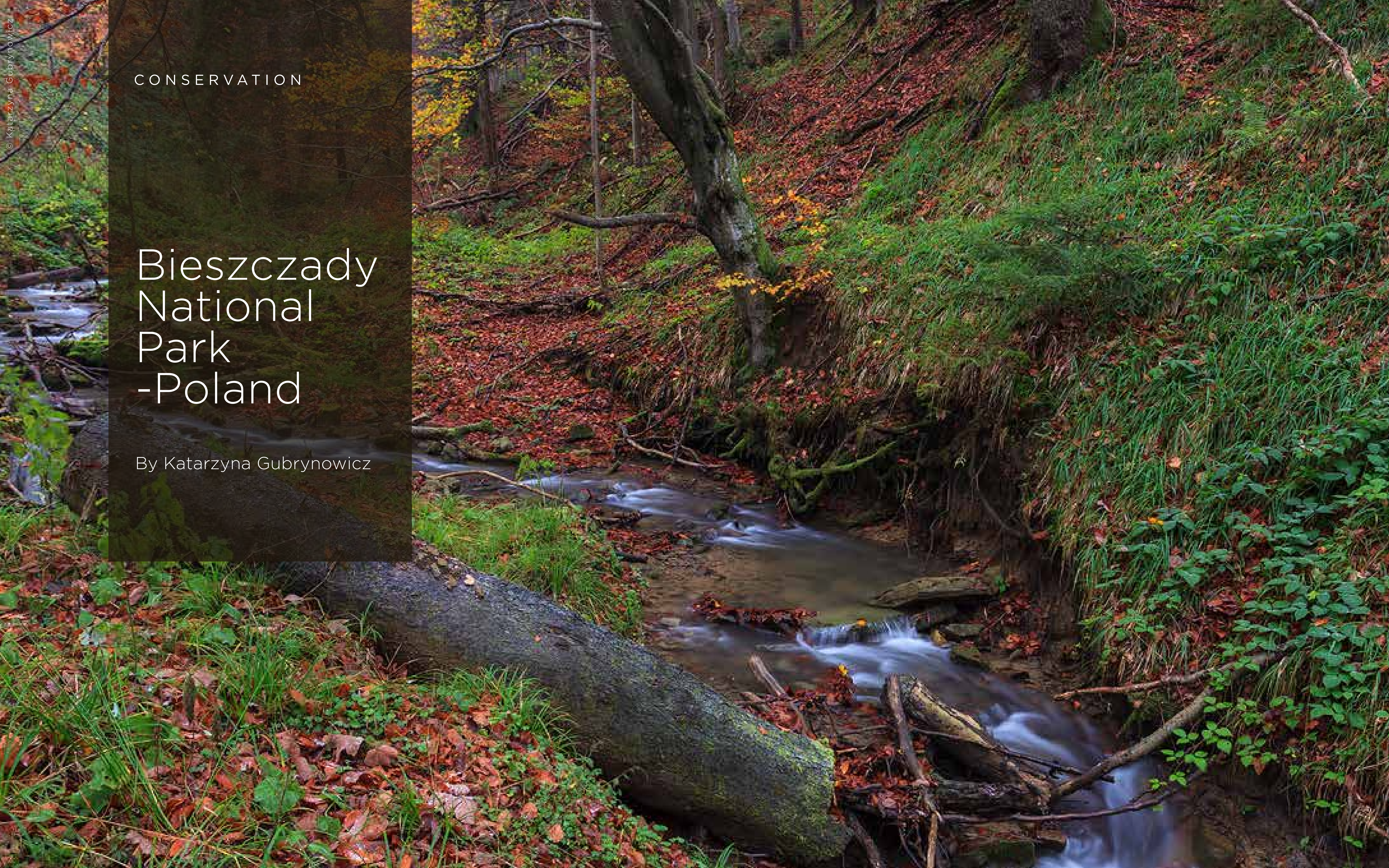
Tree Hopper (*Membracidae*), mom and nymphs



Red Eyed Tree Frog (*Agalychnis callidryas*)



Weevil (*Curculionidae*)



CONSERVATION

Bieszczady National Park -Poland

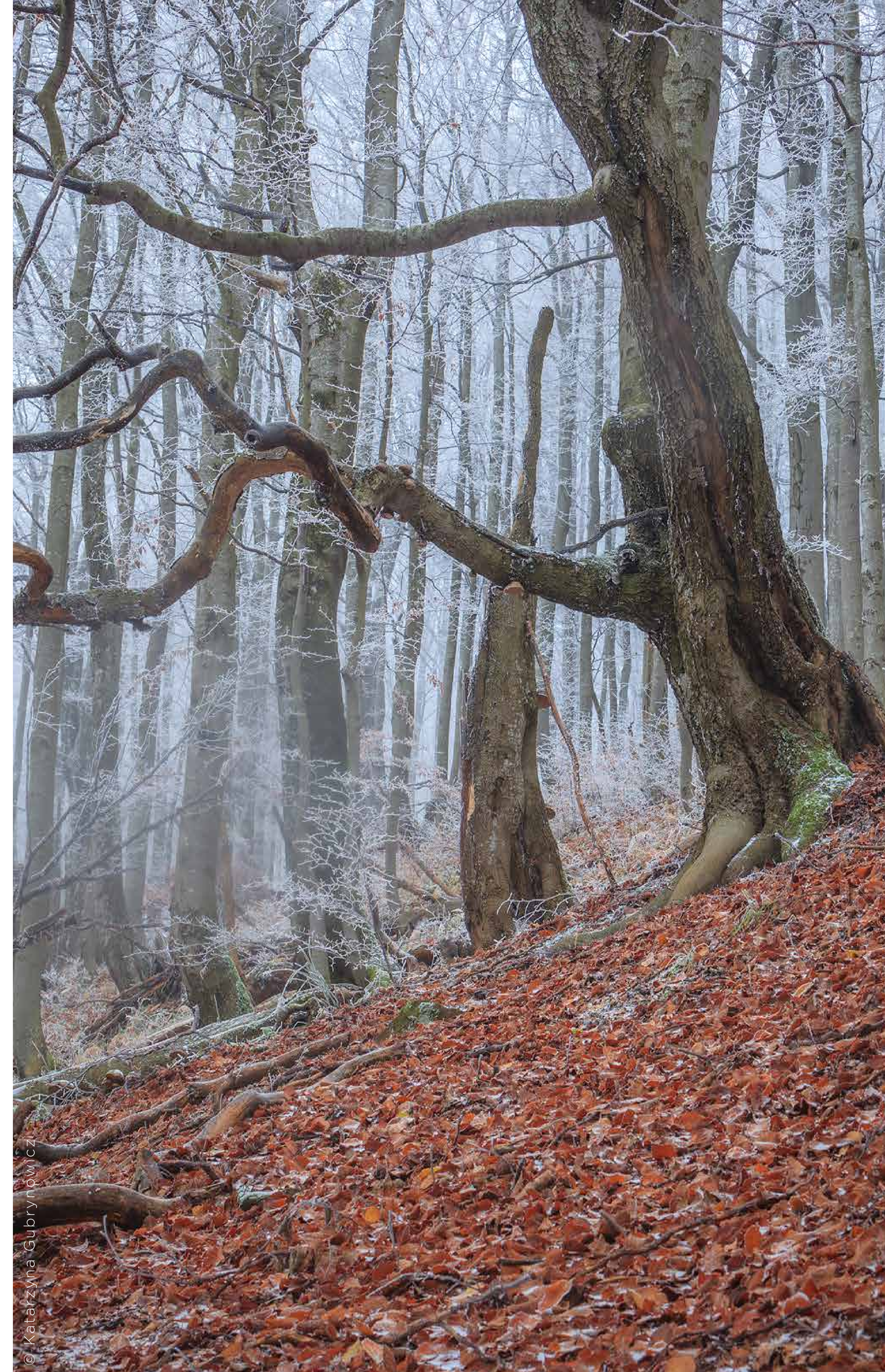
By Katarzyna Gubrynowicz

© Katarzyna Gubrynowicz



Katarzyna Gubrynowicz - Graphic artist, graduated from Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. She lives in Warsaw, Poland. For over a decade, she has been primarily worked as a nature photographer, mainly landscape photographer. She travels around Poland and Europe (mainly northern regions) in search of the beauty of wild nature and light. She is a member of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers and the Association of Polish Nature Photographers, in which she served as president in 2013-2016. Since 2020, she has been an advocate for the international movement for responsible photography - Nature First. She is the recipient of many awards for her nature photography. She conducts workshops and educates in the field of responsible photography.

**www.gubrynowicz.pl
facebook.com/gubrynowicz
instagram.com/katarzyna_gubrynowicz/**



© Katarzyna Gubrynowicz



One of the most interesting and also my favorite national park in Poland is Bieszczady National Park that covers 292 square kilometers of mountains and forest. Squeezed into the south-eastern edge of Poland - between Ukraine and Slovakia, it is a true kingdom of wild nature. Large predators such as the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) and brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) live in this region. When walking along the path, you can sometimes see the big paw prints imprinted in the mud. Occasionally you can also see the herds of wild bison (*Bison bonasus*) that several dozen years ago were brought to this area from Białowieża National Park.

You can also meet many species of owls - such as the Ural owl (*Strix uralensis*), or the smallest European species of owl - the owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*).

The slopes of the mountains are covered with beech trees - light green in spring, fabulously colorful in autumn. The ancient Carpathian Forest covers this region of Poland. In the past, Carpathian Forests covered a much larger area of Poland, but this day only three small enclaves remain. In addition to the Bieszczady Mountains, the areas of the Magura National Park and the Przemyskie Foothills are covered with native beech forests, The priceless old trees are safe only in areas belonging to national parks.

There were plans to create a new national park, Turnicki National Park, in the Przemyskie Foothills, but unfortunately this has not happened. Timber harvesting continues in this region. Every day, trucks transport old beeches, maples,

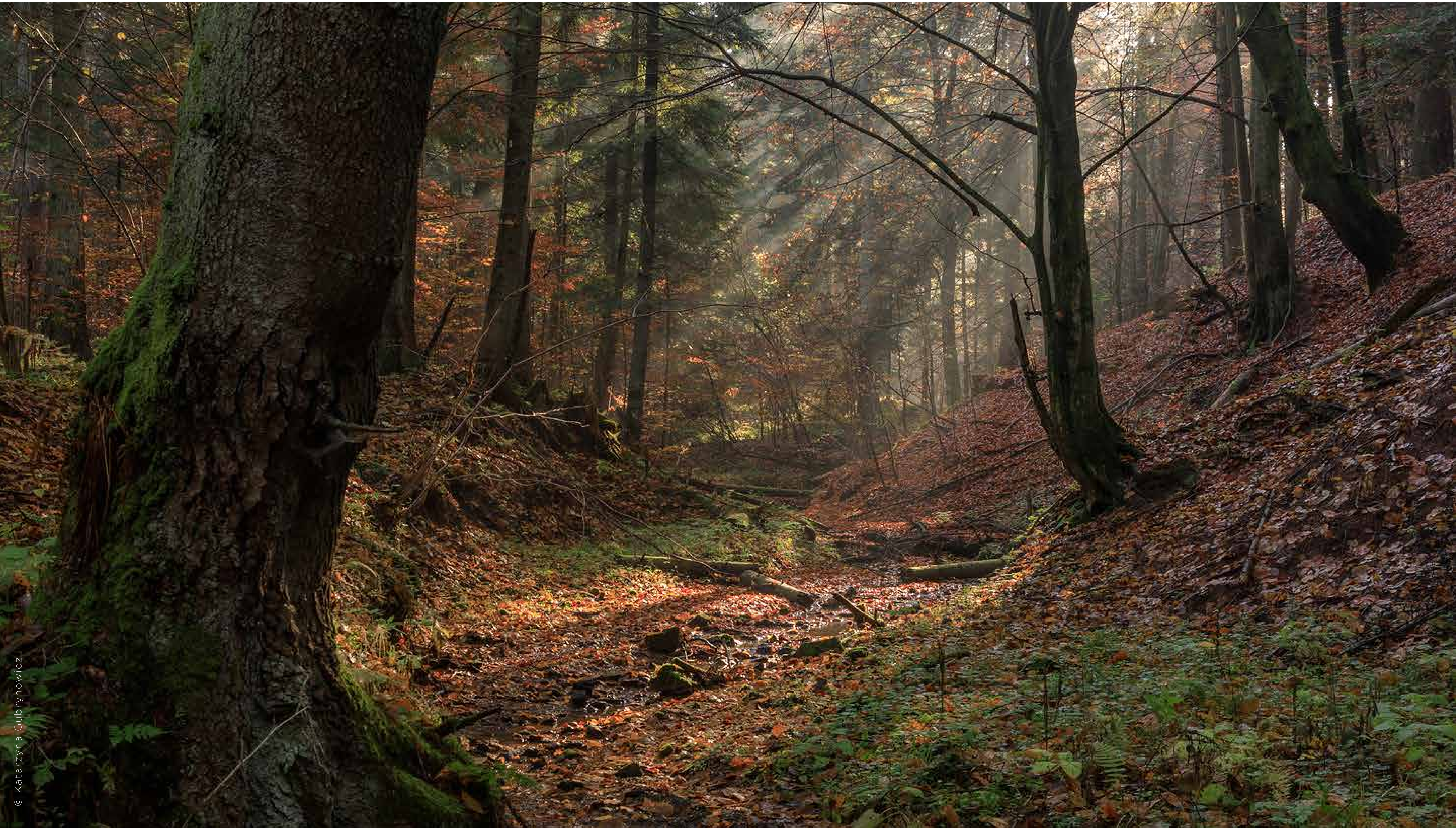
hornbeams and firs from the forest, and the sensitive ecosystem of the forest is destroyed by heavy equipment used for logging. Naturalists from the Natural Heritage Foundation and young activists from the Wild Carpathians Initiative are protesting the cutting of old-growth trees.

Above the forest border there are open spaces covered with grass and blueberries, the so-called "meadows." Today the meadows are great viewpoints - great spots for landscape photographers: Bukowe Berdo, Połonina Wetlińska, Caryńska. In the past, sheep were grazed in these areas. This area - almost uninhabited today - was inhabited quite densely by the Ruthenian population, known as Boyki, until the Second World War. To this day, there are wooden churches, overgrown cemeteries, roadside crosses, and wild orchards - souvenirs of people who lived, who after the war, by the communist regime, were relocated to Russia or to the other side of Poland. The villages were deserted, the places of former homesteads were overgrown and only a legend and songs reminiscing about the old days remained.

The Bieszczady National Park is one of the most popular Polish parks. Poles still have the myth of "wild Bieszczady" - a place where you can hide and take a break from civilization, telephones and the internet. And although the journey from the capital takes about seven hours by car- many people decide to go on this trip to spend at least a few days in the wild - climb the highest peak - Tarnica, and in the evening drink a beer in one of the fashionable pubs in Wetlina or Cisna.







Unfortunately, this popularity has a price - the park is very crowded in the summer season or during longer breaks and holidays. Therefore, if you want to really feel the beauty of this place - it's better to go to Bieszczdy out of season.

The mornings and evenings are definitely better times, closer to the so-called golden hour - when the light is softer, the colors are more saturated, warmer, and distant views more vivid. Unfortunately, it is forbidden to stay in the national park from dusk until dawn without a permit, which makes it impossible to sleep in the wild in beautiful places or photograph the sunrise from the top of the mountain. Unless you can run uphill fast with your photo gear! Fortunately, two mountain pastures - Caryńska and Wetlińska are not so high and can be easily climbed. And the morning in such a mountain pasture can be particularly picturesque, especially when the so-called inversion - and the sea of clouds will be below us, below the tops of the mountains.

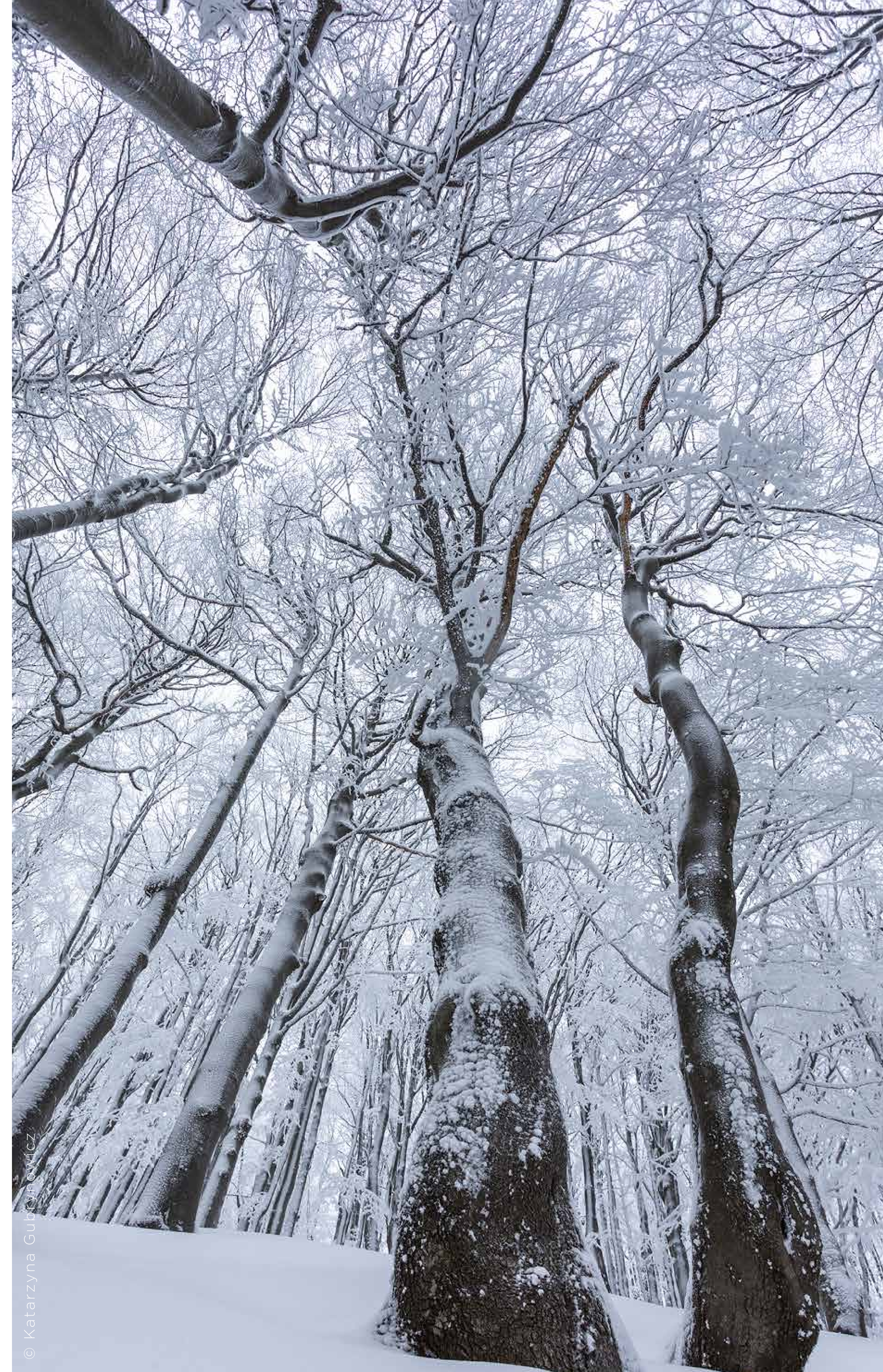
When going to the mountains, it is necessary to remember, of course, about decent hiking boots, a wind and rain jacket, and a warmer sweater or polar fleece as if the weather broke. And you know - in the mountains it is different. It is worth taking something to drink, a sandwich, a bar or chocolate, a flashlight and a cell phone (because even when there is sometimes no coverage in the valleys - you can catch it at the top).

But when we go hunting for beautiful photography opportunities - we have to take much more with us. I usually take a large backpack that holds my camera - Canon EOS 5d mark IV, two lenses -

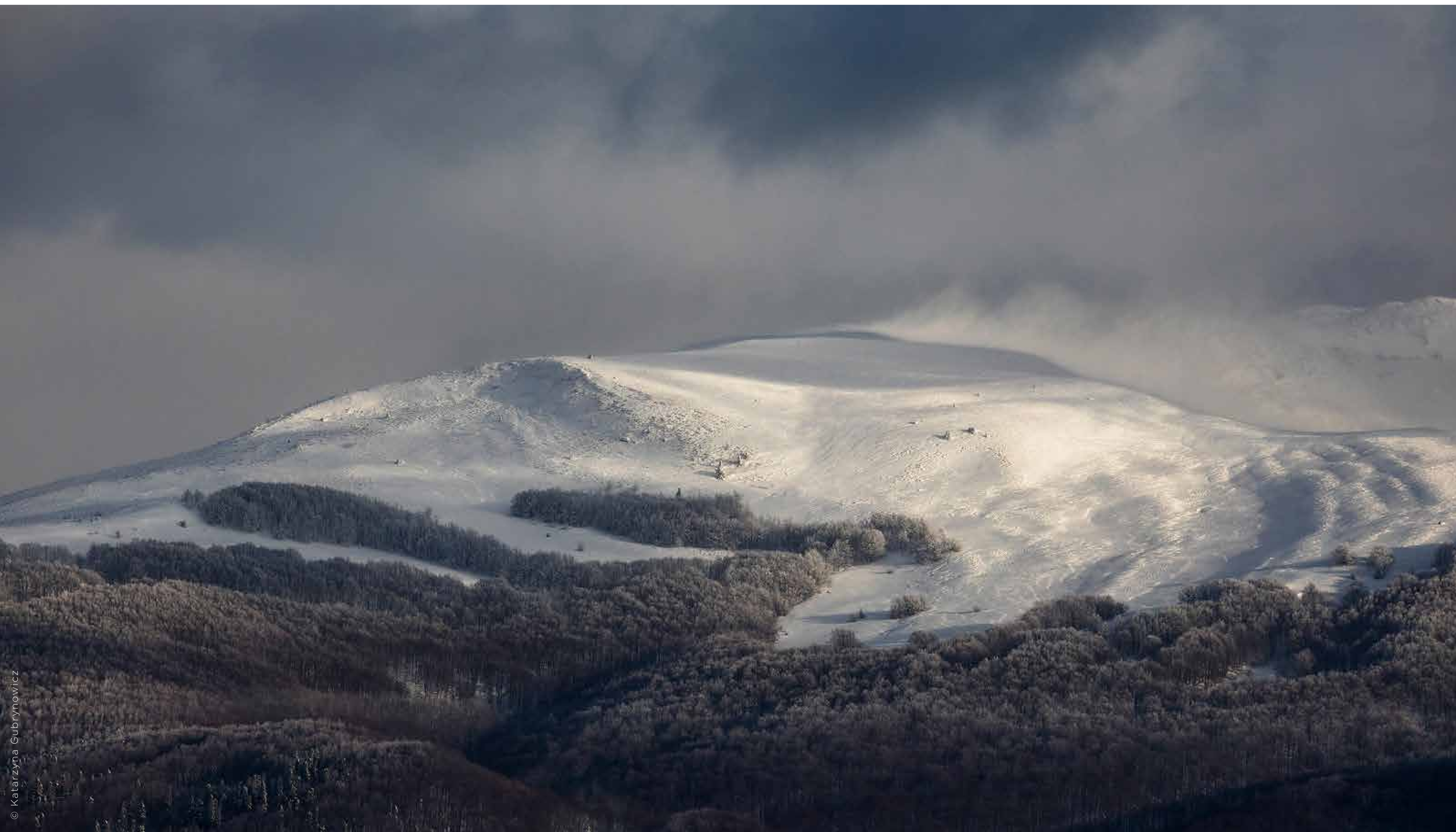
universal Canon 24-105mm f / 4 II and the Canon 100-400 f / 4-5.6 II telephoto lens. Sometimes - if there is a chance for extremely picturesque clouds, beautiful skies - I also put the Canon 16-35 f / 4 wide angle (and in the past 17-40 f / 4) into the backpack.

In addition, there is a mandatory supply of batteries, a polarization filter, thanks to which I can better bring out the beauty of clouds or rainbow in the sky. A good polarizing filter is also useful in the forest, especially wet from fog or rain - it allows you to reduce the reflection of light from wet leaves, making the image more saturated and effective. It is also useful to have a half gray filter with you to reduce too much contrast between the bright sky and the darker landscape below.

Less necessary, but sometimes also useful are the ND 1000 or ND 500 gray filters, which, by extending the exposure time significantly, allow a more artistic presentation of clouds flowing in the sky or water in mountain streams. Currently, mirrorless cameras, which additionally have a built-in stabilization in the body and great opportunities for shooting at higher ISO sensitivities, can sometimes cope with the lack of a tripod, but in the case of an ordinary SLR or in the case when a long time is necessary to achieve the desired effect - you should attach to the backpack also a stable tripod. However, there were also such days, especially in winter, when the wind is so strong that it knocked me over with my backpack, so there was no question of taking a tripod. Back then, the only solution was to set a high ISO and take handheld photos. Winter is generally



© Katarzyna Gubinska





snowy and demanding in the mountains. High snowdrifts can be found here when there is no snow at all in other parts of Poland. Then you may need snowshoes or, if the trail is icy, crampons.

I especially like being high in the meadows during golden hour especially when there is an inversion. In the mountains - when the foreground is attractive (e.g. some rocks) - wide angle shots are very good. But I think I like the telephoto shots the most, especially when they are taken against the sun. Apart from showing the beauty of the place I am in - I look for frames that are not quite obvious. These pictures may not be suitable for guidebooks or calendars, but they are more personal, more artistic.

On the other hand, when I head south, I can go on a long hike in the mountains and admire the breathtaking views. This is the range of the Sudetes and the Carpathians, the highest peak of which is Rysy in the Tatra Mountains (2500 meters above sea level).

But Poland is also a land of numerous lakes (Warmia and Mazury and other lake districts), peat bogs and rivers. Some of them, still wild and unregulated every spring, create picturesque backwaters, such as the Biebrza River - a real paradise for both birds and wildlife photographers.

The forests support many species of mammals - roe deer, deer, foxes, elks, and if you are lucky - also wolves, which are fortunately protected in Poland. In the forests, which make up about 30% of the country's area, you can find mainly pine, as well as oak, birch, and hornbeam. In

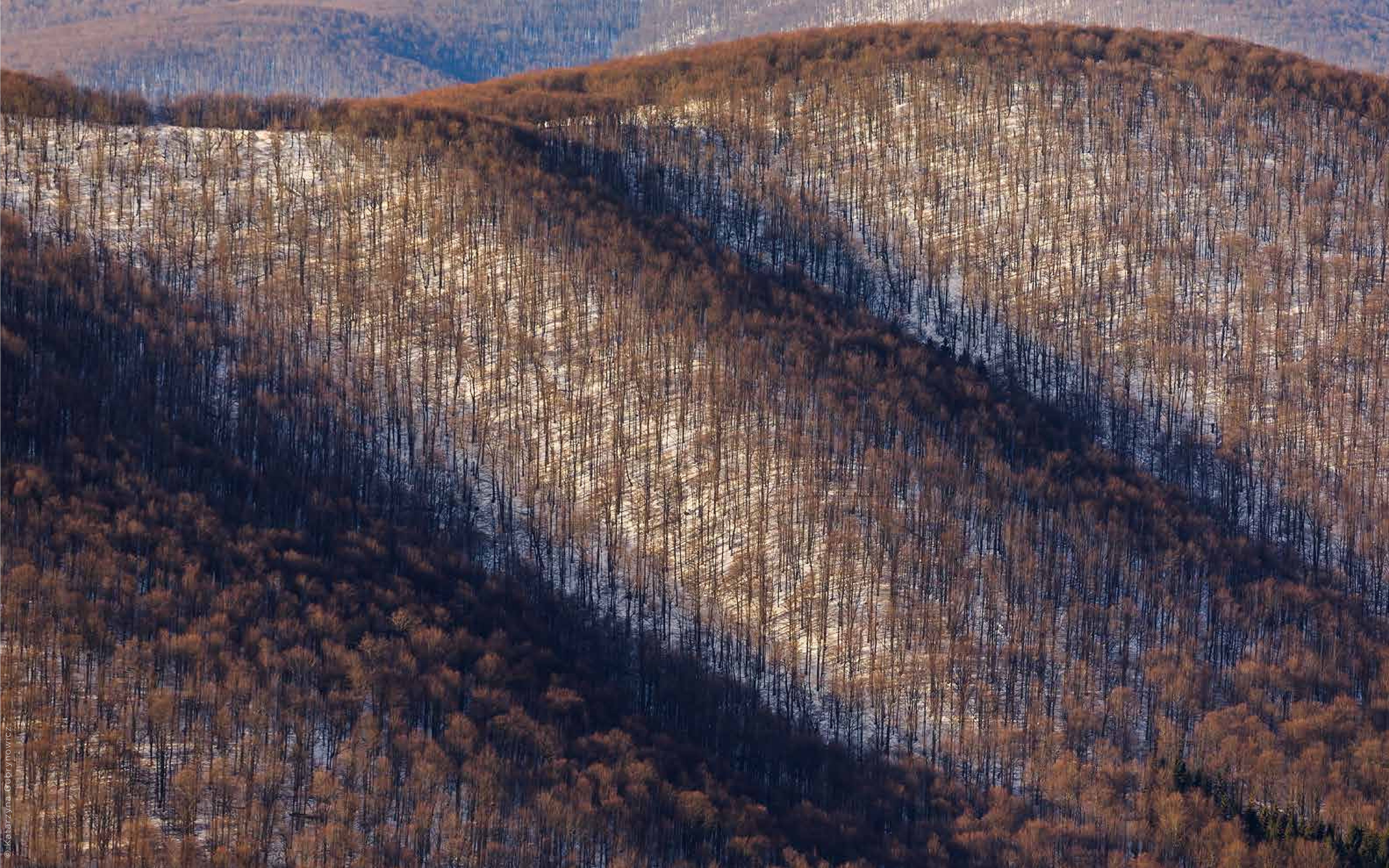
more natural forests you can also find spruce (mainly in northeastern Poland and in the mountains), beech, sycamore, and in the mountains also fir and larch.

Snowy, decent winter, bright green spring and colorful autumn - I recommend all three seasons to go to those, maybe not the highest, but very picturesque mountains. Not only in the Bieszczady Mountains. In my opinion, these are the best seasons (especially October - the time of "golden Polish autumn" when forests become colorful and the turn of April and May, when nature comes to life, young green has an intense color, and there are many flowers in the forests and meadows) to get to know the beauty of wild nature in Poland.

There are only twenty-three national parks in Poland covering about one percent of the landscape. Another outstanding park is Białowieża National Park containing the last lowland forest in Europe with old-growth trees. The Białowieża Forest with wild bison living there - the largest land mammals in Europe, is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Unfortunately, only small parts of them are legally protected. Each year more hectares of these valuable natural areas are lost.

Poland - on the one hand, a thoroughly European country, on the other - thanks to its location on the eastern border of the European Union - Poland is a place where many wild, beautiful and valuable pieces of wild nature have survived. I invite you to visit Poland and our national parks.







SPECIES

Mountain Gorilla

(Gorilla beringei beringei)

By Hermis Haridas



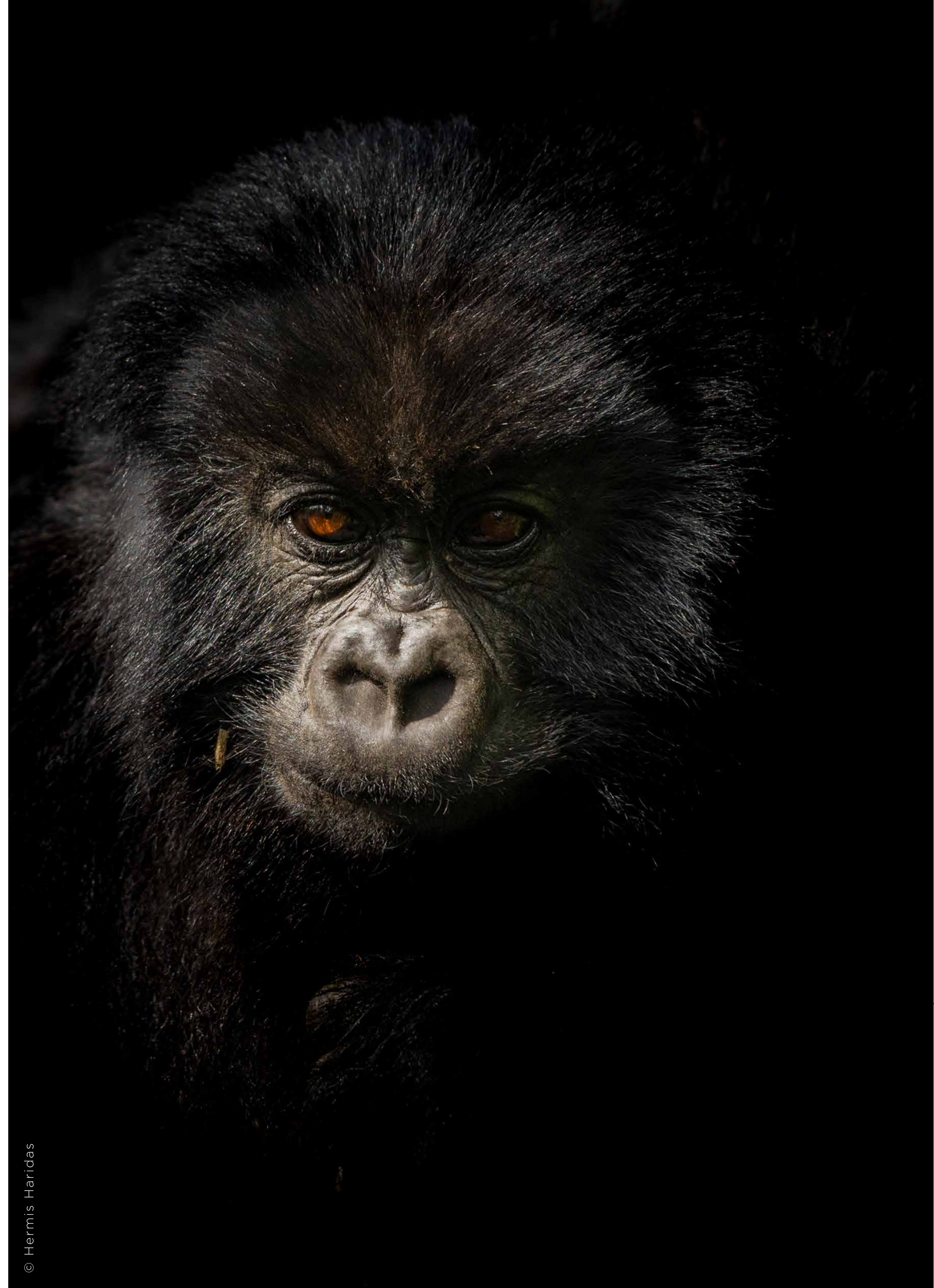


A self-confessed nature lover and travel enthusiast, he got deeply involved in nature and wildlife photography and found himself traveling around, exploring for and trying to capture moments hitherto uncaptured. His trips to the exotic wildlife locations including Russia, Sri Lanka, India and African continents gave him the opportunity to understand the nuances of wildlife photography.

Hermis believes in the adage that “practice makes perfect” and there isn’t a day in his life without peeping at the world through his “third eye”. He holds his passion closest to his heart and dreams of making it big as a nature photographer.

<http://www.hermis.me/>

<https://www.instagram.com/hermis.haridas/>





The Mountain Gorilla is an awe-inspiring creature, a male gorilla can weigh up to 220kg (485lbs) and can be up to six foot tall (2 meters). These apes have muscular arms, a massive chest, and broad hands and feet, and they have longer hair and shorter arms than their lowland cousins. Their thick black hair helps insulate them from cold weather. They are primarily herbivores and can eat as much as 18 kg (40 lb) of vegetation each day. They favor celery, thistles, wood, and roots, and they rarely need to drink because they consume succulent vegetation which is full of water as well as morning dew.

These apes are tremendously social and live in groups of two to 40 led by the silverback, a dominant male that is the chief leader and protector. The majority of males leave their biological groups around 11 years old. Some move alone and others travel with other males for a few years until they attract females to join them. The silverback leads the group to the best spot for feeding and resting throughout the year.

They live in the mountains of Rwanda, Uganda, and Congo. Within a short drive from the capital of Rwanda you can be in the center of the Virunga National Park which is fertile and rich in biodiversity making it one of the most populated regions in Africa. You can spend an hour each day watching these remarkable creatures go about their daily life. Not only is this exceptionally enjoyable but also the revenue from ecotourism help to protect the gorillas, protecting their forest habitat and provide important income to Rwanda. On top of this is the level of local employment in the hotels





and tourism industry and it is clear to the local people how the money flows into the community to provide jobs, schools and health care centers. You will be stunned to see how clean Rwanda is and they have banned plastic bags and every month everyone comes out of their house to clean the locality of any rubbish.

The late Dian Fossey is the champion who initiated protection and mountain gorilla recovery. She single-handedly made the world aware of the plight of these big gentle giants and she fought hard to stop poaching, removed thousands of snares and stopped people taking young gorillas for zoos. Dian Fossey was very concerned about the snares that were placed in the forests, often to catch game but were inadvertently getting caught around the limbs of gorillas, causing infections. She raised funds to hire James Foster in 1986 to be the first Gorilla Doctor who had the skills to anesthetize gorillas, remove snares and treat wounds and treat some infections.

Mountain gorillas are still listed as Endangered by the IUCN, the population have been increasing and doing well as a direct result of conservation efforts, so they are no longer listed as Critically Endangered. They are the only great ape with increasing population in the world. Their main threat is the habitat loss. As humans have moved into areas near mountain gorillas, they have cleared land for agriculture and livestock. Even land within protected areas is not safe—in 2004, for example, illegal settlers cleared 3,700 acres of gorilla forest in Virunga National Park. There is little to no direct targeting of mountain gorillas for bushmeat or pet trade, but they can be caught and harmed by snares set for other animals.







© Hermis Haridas



© Hermis Haridas





@ Sheri Sather

CUB'S CORNER

FOR THE
LOVE OF
FROGS.
JUSTIN
SATHER

By Sheri Sather

CUB'S CORNER

CUB'S CORNER

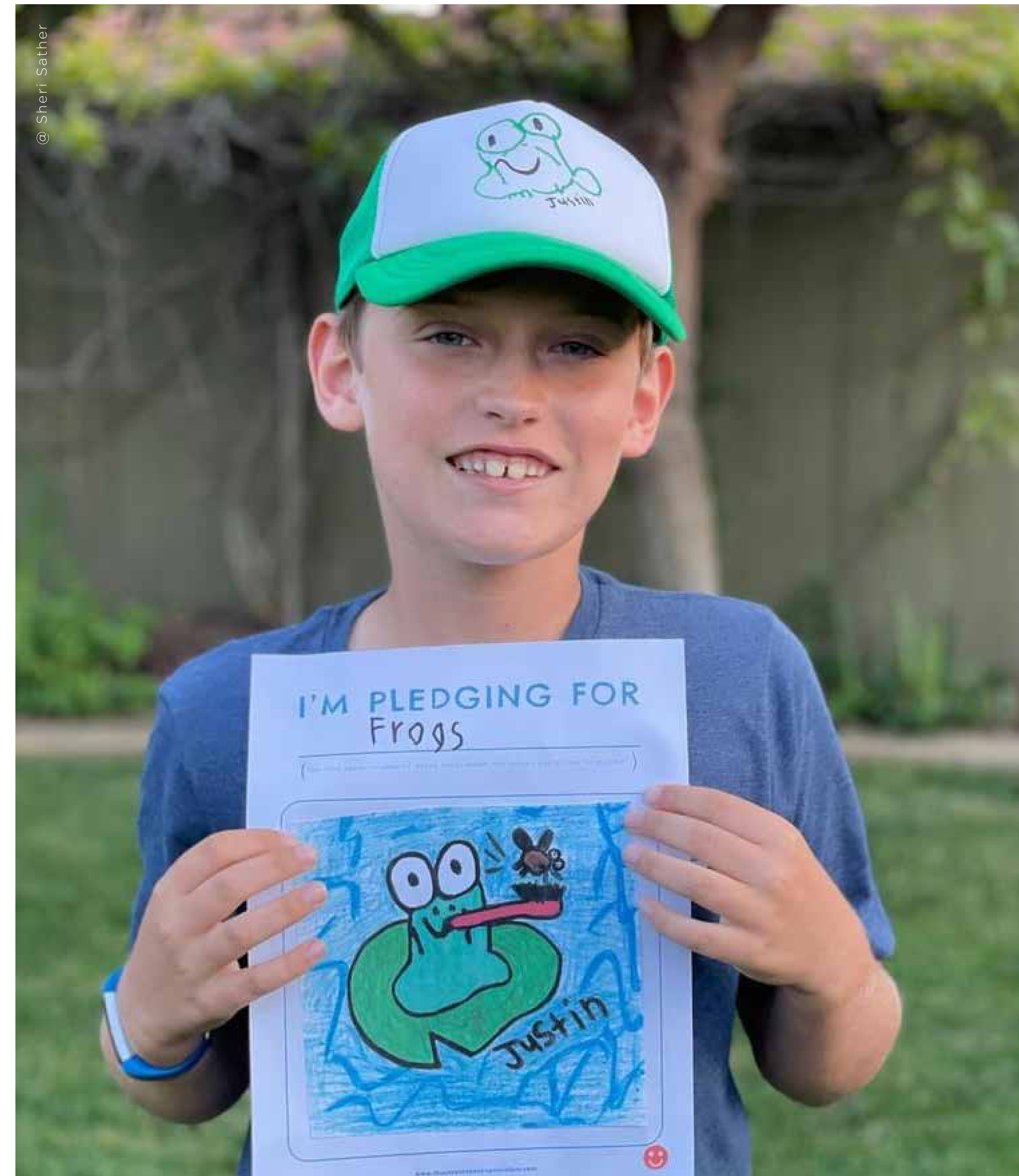


Justin is from Los Angeles, California. Justin Sather is like most 10-year-old boys: he loves to play sports, hang out with his friends, and build things. And he also loves FROGS, which might seem just like another ordinary thing- except he has taken that love to another level.

fortheloveoffrogs.com/

[youtube.com/channel/UC0tXiP4e2ecjSZsNBM5f16g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0tXiP4e2ecjSZsNBM5f16g)

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



@ Sheri Sather

In kindergarten, Justin learned that almost one-third of frog species are on the verge of extinction due to pollution, pesticides, contaminated water, and habitat destruction. When Justin learned frogs are an indicator species- he knew the frogs were a true sign that the planet needs help.

It was the book **What Do You Do With An Idea** by Kobi Yamada that inspired Justin to create change. With his mother's help, he set out on a mission to raise funds for frog habitats by selling toy frogs in his Los Angeles neighborhood. Justin used frog art combined with scientific facts to attract people's attention. His message spread quickly and he raised his first \$2,000 for the non-profit Save The Frogs. When Justin learned one idea could change the world he knew he needed to be brave and stay determined to grow his idea.

Justin's idea continued to grow. For his 8th birthday he had his party at the Ballona wetlands near his home and him and his friends picked invasive weeds and discussed the harms of plastic pollution. He even created his own frog shoes with PLAE shoes and had a worldwide art contest to tell the world about the frogs. Justin wanted people to know that frogs breathe and drink through their skin, so they are sensitive to the environment and frogs getting sick meant the frogs were telling us the planet needs our help. Justin's determination to save the frogs and help the planet got a massive boost when he met legendary conservationist Dr. Jane Goodall.

At a Roots and Shoots event, Justin got

to present his project to Dr. Jane. He presented Bravery Magazine to her and was excited to share he was featured as the Brave Kid in this first edition. She was so impressed with Justin's enthusiasm for helping frogs and his bravery at such a young age that she inspired him to take his work one step further to include plastic pollution in waterways. Justin accepted her challenge and soon started learning the dangers of plastic in the environment. Justin read many books including a book called, Garbage Guts, which explained how animals were eating plastics that entered ponds, lakes, streams, and oceans.

In the following months, Justin learned how to turn fishing line into bracelets, transform plastic bags into doormats, and shred plastic to make bowls. He loved turning trash into treasures because it felt like magic. He even collected 200 pounds of plastic caps and transformed this trash into a buddy bench for his school. This got the attention of a 22-year-old environmental student in Cameroon who reached out to Justin for help.

One might think Justin is doing enough to help the frogs, but he didn't stop there. Justin's love for frogs has led him on a mission to protect the planet. His goal is to conserve 30% of the planet by 2030. Justin is currently working to create the first fully youth funded 244-acre reserve in Ecuador with his Reserva Youth Council. He has raised enough funds through his Go Fund Me Campaign to purchase and protect 30 ACRES on the reserve and currently traveled there this summer to Ecuador to meet face to face with the frogs.

©Anay Simha

Spread the Word!

with Justin & The Parallel Projects and The Create Space

Animal Pledge Posters



THE PARALLEL PROJECTS PLEDGE

I _____ promise to do my best to conserve Earth's resources and reduce plastic pollution. I pledge to do the following actions to help protect our planet.

- I will not litter.
- I will help keep our land and oceans clean.
- I will use less single use plastic items.
- Other _____

Signature: Justin Sother
Justin Sother
FOUNDER

I'M PLEDGING FOR

(Use this space to draw or write words about the animal you'd like to protect.)

Make a pledge to reduce plastic pollution through Justin & The Parallel Projects and spread the word about protecting animals with The Create Space's Pledge Poster!

@the.create.space
@the.parallel.projects



Justin Sather has been featured on many podcasts, magazines, newspapers, and in books for his work. He has also won awards for raising awareness and making impact to help the planet. A few include Go Fund Me Kid Hero, Points of Light, Action for Nature, Gloria Barron, President's Environmental Youth Award, Grades of Green Campaign Winner for Community Builder. Justin can be seen in Ranger Rick, TIMES for Kids, and is featured in book "The Last Straw" and is part of the "Young Change Makers" Book Series coming out later this year.

----- STRONGER ENDING...

Justin's goal is to inspire others to help him create change. He has created lessons such as an animal pledge or is asking those to join in The Million Letters Campaign. Or to start their own idea. Justin tells kids to "Start Off with A Small Idea and Then Get Bigger and Bigger, Be Brave, Stay Determined, and Change the World!"



Her Views & Visuals

By Anagha Peethambaran



Fly (*Diptera*)



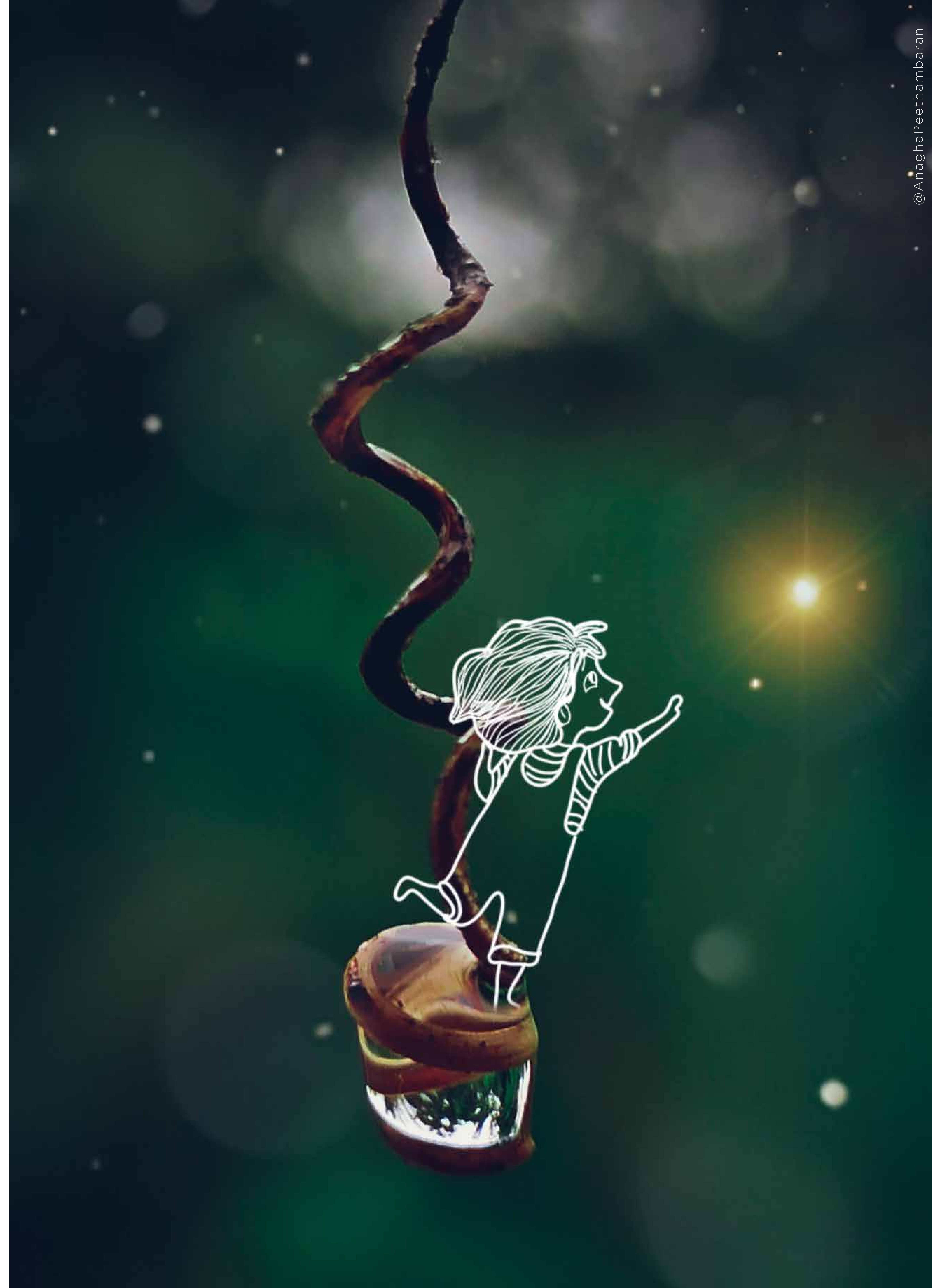
Anagha Peethambaran is a BSc Botany graduate, currently pursuing a one-year diploma in VFX and Graphic designing. She is an artist and a photographer focused on mobile photography and videography.

She is a global influencer @xiaomi.global

[instagram.com/anagha_peethambaran/](https://www.instagram.com/anagha_peethambaran/)
[instagram.com/de.signdot/](https://www.instagram.com/de.signdot/)

[youtube.com/channel/
UCSB1qW5PhvB3UAnnfu6h-0A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSB1qW5PhvB3UAnnfu6h-0A)

Her Views and Visuals





Jumping Spiders (*Salticidae*)

How did your interest in nature arise?

My interest in wildlife/nature started from my own surroundings. From childhood itself I was very curious about nature. So when I started photography my frames were filled with the beauty of nature.

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

When I was doing my graduation my parents gave me a smartphone for the first time, from then I started taking random photos, without taking it seriously. Later I started posting those photos in my social media accounts and showed some of them to my parents and friends. I got appreciations for those clicks. Later it became my hobby and turned into my passion

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

For me nature conservation need more attention in today's scenario, we need to change our selfish attitude towards nature. We must understand that our mother nature belongs not only to man but also to other living beings.

As wildlife photographers we have a great role in conserving nature. Our photographs can talk to the world .Through that others can understand the value of our nature and the life forms depending on it.

Can you give our readers the best mobile photography tips? Do you have



Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*)

@AnaghaPeethambaran

Paper Wasp (*Polistinae*)



any recommendations on settings or gear for nature photography using a mobile phone?

You can try taking photos in the pro/expert mode in your mobile, there you can manually adjust ISO, shutter speed and focus.

But before taking any photos it is important to clean our lens to get clear pictures. Also, we can enable grid in the camera settings to follow the rule of third, so you can compose your shot in a better way. If there is no pro mode in stock cam we can download and use other camera apps to take photos.

There are different types of clip lens available for smartphones like macro lens, wide angle lens, Tele lenses and so on. You can easily clip it to your phone camera and click amazing pictures.

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

Photography is my passion, in future I would like to focus more into wildlife photography and like to travel for taking photos.

Tell us something about the gears you use.

Currently I am using my mobile phone to click photos so I use some external lens too. The lens I use are 12x, 24x macro lens, a wide-angle lens and a 28x zoom tele photo lens.



Common Picture Wing (*Rhyothemis variegata*)

@AnagilaPeethambaran





Dragonfly (*Anisoptera*)



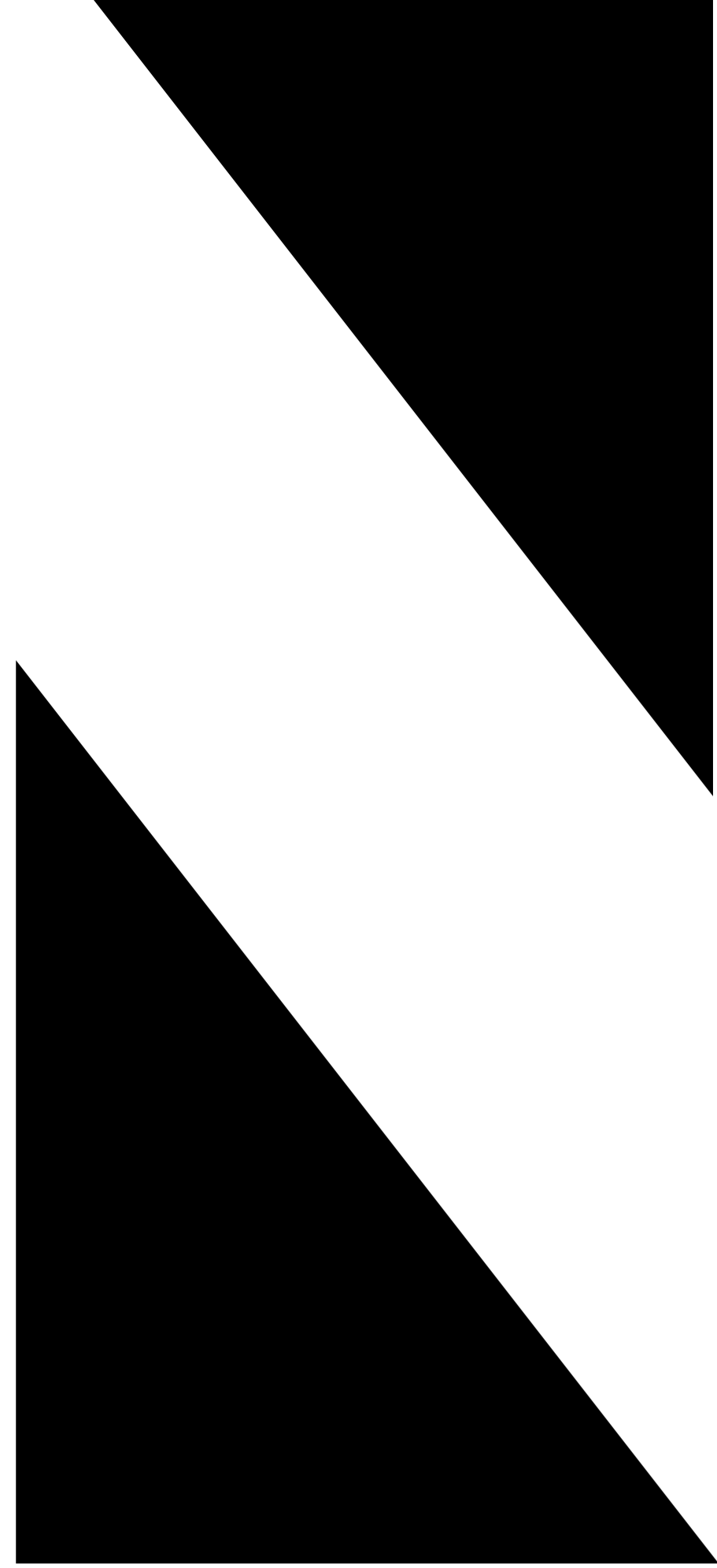
TRAVELOGUE

Pantanal - Land of the Jaguars

By Nitin Michael

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)

TRAVELOGUE



Nitin Michael is based in Dubai, UAE. He went on his first ever safari when he was 14 years old, and fell in love with wildlife instantly. An avid traveler and wildlife lover, Nitin has been an active contributor in the wildlife photography industry over the last ten years, having travelled across Southern and Eastern Africa, South Asia, as well as the Arctic region in his more recent travels.

His passion for wildlife photography and travel experiences have led to him being a humble and award-winning wildlife photographer. 2020 saw him winning an award at the One Eyeland Photography Awards and he was also a finalist at the Natural History Museum's Wildlife Photographer of the Year.

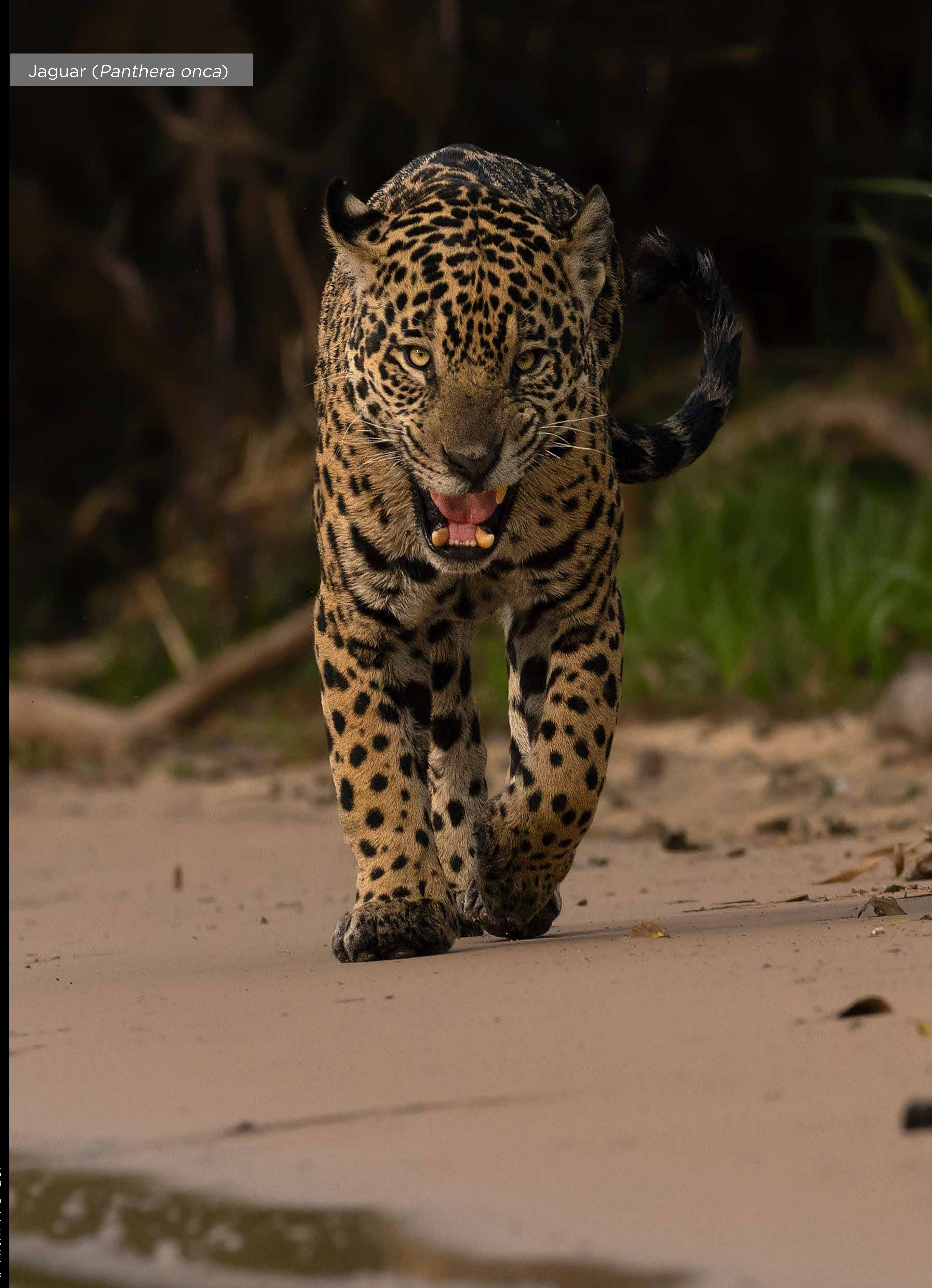
<https://www.instagram.com/wildlifewithnitin/>

Getting a glimpse of the largest cat native to the Americas, the jaguar, roaming in its natural habitat has been a bucket list thing for me. And when it comes to making this a reality, there is no better place to see them than the Pantanal in

Brazil. The Pantanal is a natural region encompassing the world's largest wetland area and the world's largest flooded grasslands.

For someone like me who resides in the

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)



© Nitin Michael



UAE, Brazil is a quite a distance when it comes to travel, seventeen hours of flying to be precise! So, when I decided that I was going to do this trip I wanted to make the most of it. While jaguars were certainly top of the list, I also wanted to see and possibly photograph some of the other inhabitants that called the Pantanal home. These included a variety of birds like the toco toucans, hyacinth macaws, blue and yellow macaws, chestnut eared aracari's, and a red legged sereima. There was another very interesting mammal that I was hoping to get a glimpse of and that was the giant anteater! With this wish list and a lot of excitement I boarded my flight to Brazil.

I started my tour in the south of Pantanal which was mainly for birding and giant anteaters. I landed in Sao Paulo, took another flight to Campo Grande and then drove to our lodge in the south of Pantanal. While jaguars do inhabit this part too spotting them is a lot trickier and harder than in the north which is why our focus here was mainly on the rest of what I wanted to see. Fortunately for me I was in the best company when it came to spotting birds as I had two of the best birders and bird photographers with me for this trip, Magdalena Sanchez and Supreet Sahoo, who ensured that I wouldn't miss seeing and even photographing most of the birds that resided here. One of the many scenes that I remember vividly was the trees in the backyard of my lodge getting full of toco toucans that came to feed off the fruits on them. In fact, it was not just them but also plush capped jay's, red crested cardinals, monk parakeets, nanday parakeets and so many colorful birds that



Red-legged Sereima (*Cariama cristata*)



Chestnut-eared Aracari (*Pteroglossus castanotis*)



filled the space. Seeing these amazing birds at such proximity and with so many opportunities to photograph them is something I won't forget for a long while.

The highlight of my stay in south Pantanal though had to be sighting the giant anteater and not just one of them, but six! Three of which were amazing from a photographer's standpoint. To put things in perspective we spent almost half an hour walking less than hundred feet away from one individual who was completely relaxed with our presence and even decided to cross the road where I had a chance to lay down flat on the road and shoot low angle pictures of him.

Finally, it was time for the last and most important lap of the trip, my visit to north Pantanal home of jaguars. I knew I was in the right hands when I met our guide there Andre Moratelli. He is truly a treasure trove of information about the Pantanal, jaguars and pretty much anything to do with the flora and fauna of Brazil. Besides that, he's also a very enthusiastic photographer too who loved his cats just as much as I did. After flying into Cuiaba and then taking a long road trip which included a dirt road part on the legendary Trans Panteneira and its over hundred and twenty wooded bridges, we arrived at our hotel which was right next to the jetty from where we had to board our boats daily in search of our cats. When you're in north Pantanal the best way to see jaguars is by boat. These cats come by the sand banks there to hunt their favorite prey, the caiman. The landscape and sight of a jaguar walking on the sandbars is a sight to behold.



© Nitin Michael

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)

Caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*)

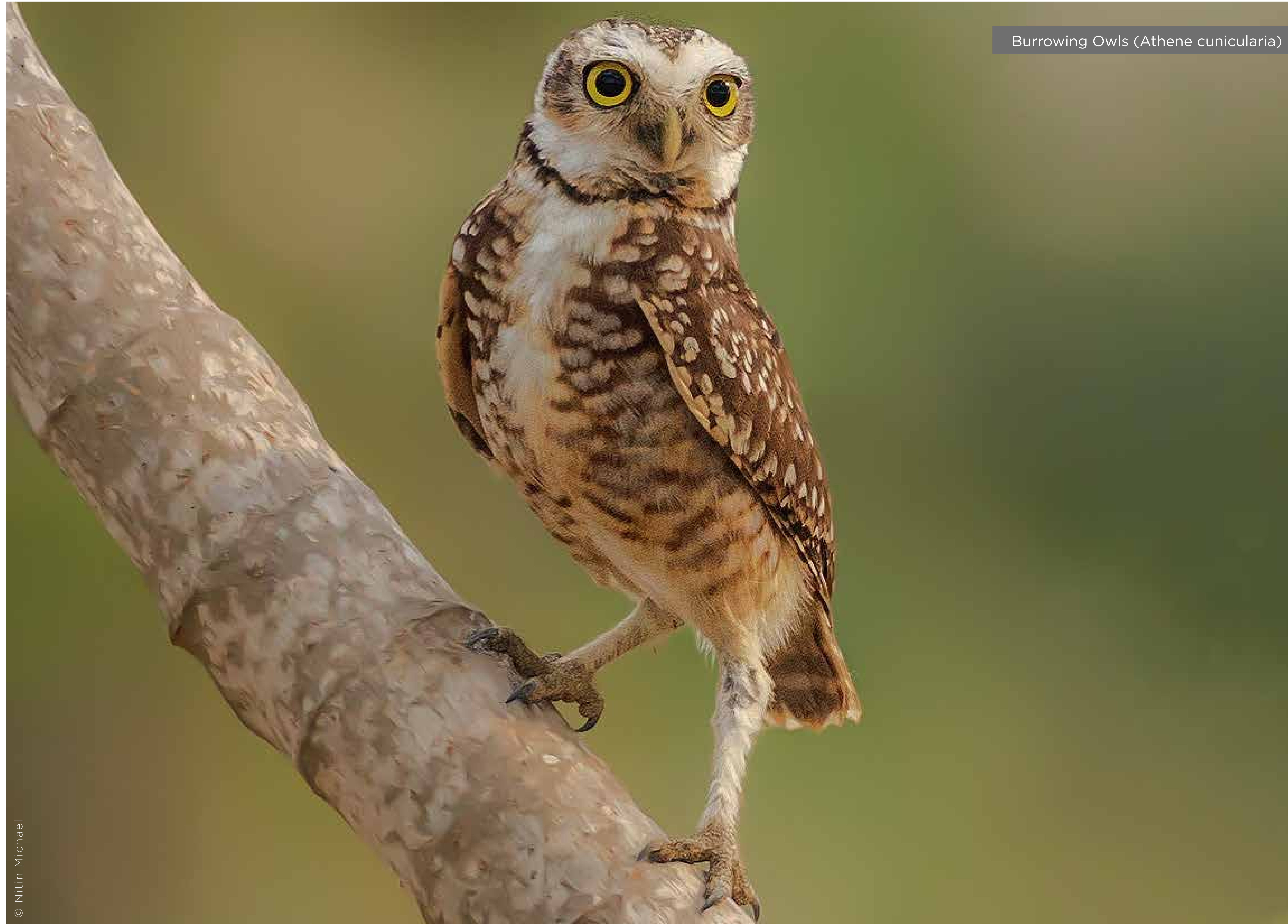


I couldn't have asked for a better start to this leg of the trip as on our very first boat ride within fifteen minutes of being in the water we saw our first Jaguar a rather shy female who gave us a few minutes to take a few shots before she was gone. We couldn't believe our luck when ten minutes later we saw our second jaguar, this one though was a lot more relaxed, she walked on a small sand bar, then into the bushes and was back on another sandbar again giving us ample opportunities to photograph her.

The second day was even better than the first, not only did we see our first jaguar early in the morning. She was an old female called Patricia and she wasn't alone! She had two cubs with her who were probably four or five months old. They were behind the bushes where the mother had a kill from the night before and three of them were relaxing close by. While the tall grass didn't give us much of a chance to see them or get clear shots, the curiosity of the cubs of that age meant patience would yield rich dividends. After spending an hour at that spot, we got our first few shots of the cubs as they moved down one by one to the kill which was stashed away in another bush. We got a nice look at their faces as they passed. After a few hours we decided it was time to move and scout the area for other Jaguars.

Twenty minutes later in the distance we saw what seemed to be a jaguar running on the sandbar. Our hearts raced at the prospect of seeing a jaguar taking down a caiman. It wasn't to be though as she missed the caiman by a whisker. This female called Ague, she did make up for that disappointment by putting up

Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*)



© Nitin Michael

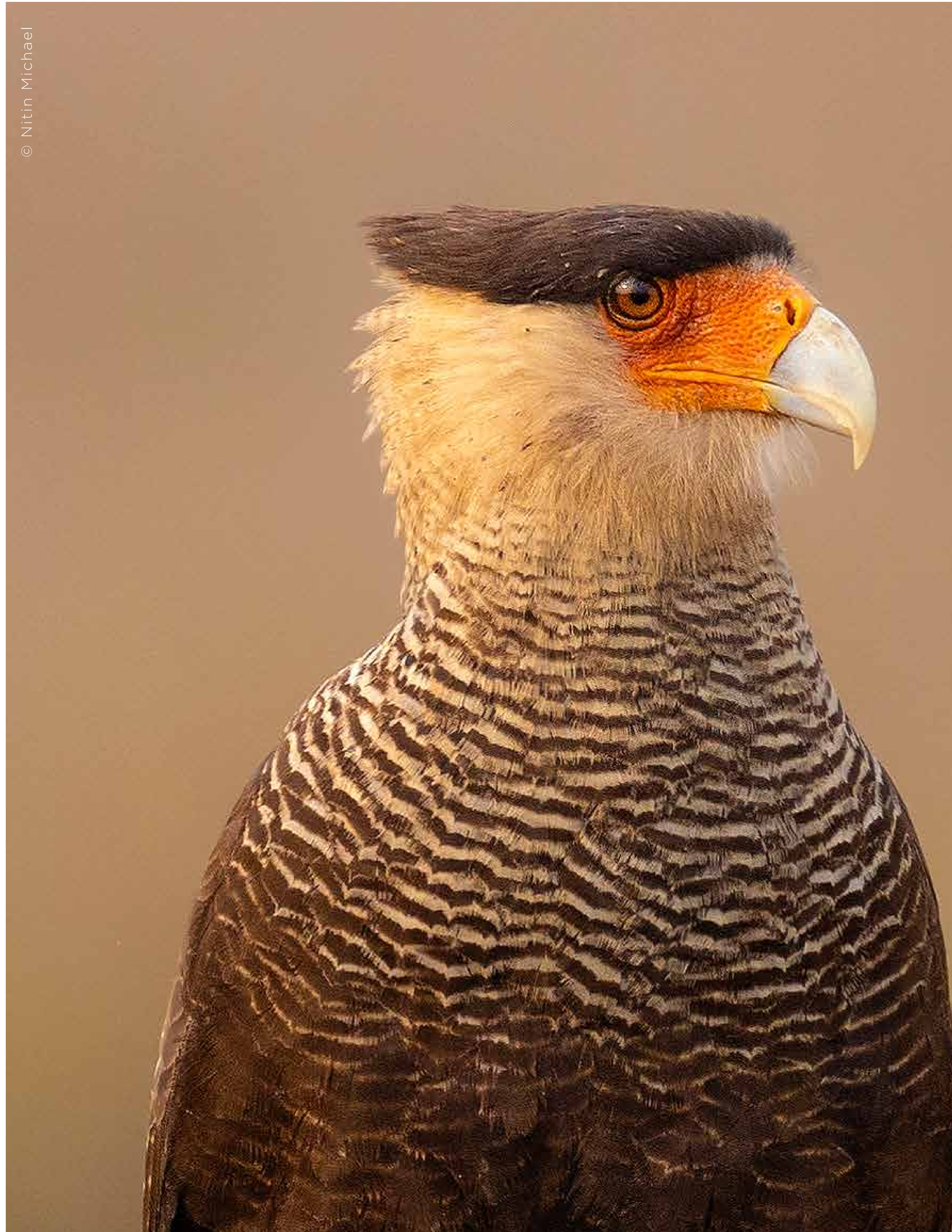


Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*)

a show for us, she sat for a while on the most picturesque sandbar, then walked across it, got into the water, swam across, got out shook her head, continued looking for caimans, walked further to a completely different area, walked towards us on a fallen tree while making full eye contact all through out, sat there with the most perfect light and then finally disappeared into the bushes. We had four hours with this cat!

After three days of seeing and photographing jaguars, caimans, and other water birds on the Pantanal, we thought we had done it all. What more could we possibly get? Then came a big male jaguar who almost got a capybara and one large female with two tiny little cute cubs.

Our final day began when we heard on the radio that a large male jaguar was spotted walking into the bushes. Since he already was in the bushes, we didn't have much hope but even the slight chance of seeing a big male was worth going to that area and giving it a shot. Lady luck was definitely smiling at us all through this trip and this time was no different. Within moments of us getting to the area around where he was last seen he emerged from the bushes and walked right in our direction. He was hungry and was on the lookout for food. He got into the marshes and began to wade through them looking for caiman. His eyes caught sight of something else though, a capybara in the marsh. Despite their relatively smaller size catching a capybara is never easy even for a jaguar. Nevertheless, he made his way closer to a point where was less than fifty feet away.



© Nitin Michael



Toco Toucan (*Ramphastos toco*)



Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)

We thought that was it, but miraculously the capybara ducked into the water and just disappeared. The look of surprise and frustration was so obvious on the poor chap's face. But as far as we were concerned our hearts were still racing with excitement.

The final show for our trip was put up by this large female jaguar who showed up with two of the cutest little cubs who were probably about two months old and just stayed at the edge of the water relaxing, nursing her cubs, and finally drinking water with one of them. This was a show that lasted for five whole hours.

Calling my trip to Pantanal a resounding success would be putting it mildly! To add to this given the unfortunate situation in Brazil due to COVID tourists were at an all-time low which mean almost all the sights we saw were exclusively for us and that is a photographer's delight! One thing's certain, even though I had such an amazing time, I am not yet done with the Pantanal or Brazil. I will be back and real soon!



© Nitin Michael

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)



Beauty in the Barren

By Debarpan Datta

© Debarpan Datta

THROUGH THE LENS





A final year student of Master's in Environmental Studies, actively working with Wildlife Research and Conservation Organization - Nature Mates in Kolkata since 2018. For the last 10 years I have dedicated myself in observation of birds and documenting wildlife and I want to study the avian diversity, especially the behavioural patterns of High-Fliers and waders more intensively. I aspire to work in the field of Nature for my entire life and seek answers to feed my never-ending curiosity to understand the natural world.

https://www.instagram.com/debarpan_datta/

<https://www.facebook.com/anirudha.datta.5>

Often, we believe that “A desert is a place without expectation”. When we are not expecting anything specific and be happy to experience whatever surprise may be found in there, we actually step closer to an overwhelming treasure that remains

deep-rooted in our hearts for years. The Great Indian Desert (Thar) in the Western part of the Indian Subcontinent, spreading for around 200000 Sq. Kilometers is a hot subtropical desert where life itself seems to be like a mirage. At the heart

Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*)



Yellow-crowned Woodpecker (*Leiopicus mahrattensis*)



Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)



of this barrenness, there is a treasure-land that defines the desert ecology at the highest level. Spread for an area of around 3162 sq. kilometers this area is made of craggy rocks and compact salt lake bottoms. 20% of this entire area is made of sand dunes and in some intermediate areas, there are patches of grass and thorny bushes. Established in 1981 Desert National Park thus stands to be one of the largest and the most unique of all national parks in the entire country. This place has its special appeal to me because I have always loved a desert and believe that a desert always tells its own rustic story, so distinct from other places, and all you have to do is be engulfed in that story with all eyes and ears, silently.

Just around 40 kilometers away from Jaisalmer, the Desert National Park has its own significance in many ways. First of all, it is the only ecosystem of its kind in the entire Indian landscape. As a result, the place is host to some unique endemic species. Secondly, it has a high-value conservation aspect as there are certain endangered species for which DNP is one of the last few homes left on this globe. The weather of the area is typically the trademark hot subtropical desert weather; very hot when the sun is at the top and much cooler during the evening. The temperature variation in summer and winter is also extreme. The sandy and stony landscape also keep challenging the existing biodiversity every day in its fight for survival. The biggest disadvantage is the scarcity of water in the entire region. The floral diversity of the region is mostly consisting of herbaceous or stunted scrub; drought-resistant trees. *Prosopis cineraria* trees are found throughout this

landscape. With less than 100mm rainfall every year, the hot, arid desert has the Aravalli hills at its Easternmost side, the Western part is guarded by the fertile plains of Indus, the Greater Rann of Kutch at the South, and the sub-Himalayan plains at the north.

If “barren” is one word for this place, then “beauty” stands strong to justly glorify the grandeur. The crimson glow of the sun starts painting the canvas of the DNP every morning. It is an incredible experience when the entire stretch of sand dunes turns golden, and the cool breeze of the morning welcomes you to the wonders waiting in the way. The song of the small birds like Larks begins. Gradually the darkness fades away to introduce you to a never-ending stretch of sands and the faraway horizon where sometimes your heartbeat can break the silence. The sudden harsh and loud call of the National Bird from far away can easily send chills through your spine. Gradually with the rise in temperature, all the creatures begin their venture for the day and the time begins for the birds of prey to take a leap from their nests to fly high in search of food. This place is an absolute paradise for raptors. Red-necked Falcon, Lagar Falcon, Tawny Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Booted Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Indian Spotted Eagle, Greater Spotted Eagle, Short-toed Snake Eagle, varieties of Harriers, Buzzards and Kites are found roaming all around in the hot daytime. They mainly prey on smaller birds like Doves, Rollers, Pipits, Larks, and so on. Their prey base also includes reptiles. The spiny-tailed lizard is an iconic reptile species of this area which has a high rate of poaching

Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*)



© Debarpan Datta

Short-toed Snake Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*)



threat as the oil from its fat mainly from the tail (according to the locals) helps in producing aspirin and aphrodisiac. This is also among one of the most favourite food of the raptors. The Desert Monitor Lizard is another attractive species that is found only in this part of India. Apart from these, three of the “big four” snakes of India; the Common Krait, the Spectacled Cobra, and the Saw-scaled Viper are also residents in this place. Among the mammals, Bengal Fox, Desert Fox, Desert Cat, Indian Gazelle, Blackbuck, Wolves are the major species which are found here. Thus, the Desert National Park is home to uncountable species of different taxa of which some are facing existential threats and enlisted in the threatened categories of the IUCN Red List.

From the conservation angle, the Desert National Park is one of the most sensitive areas all over the world. Six species of vultures out of the nine found in India have prominent distribution in the area which includes Critically Endangered White-rumped Vulture, Indian Vulture, Red-headed Vulture, and the Near Threatened Cinereous Vulture. Egyptian Vultures and Griffon Vultures which are fortunately still not enlisted in such categories are also residents here. There are also records of Himalayan Griffons visiting this place in winter. Therefore, this place falls both in the breeding range and wintering range of several vulture species which are exposed to the threat of extinction very prominently. So, when the entire nation is putting its efforts to save the vultures, this place has its own importance as a preferred refuge of the species.



© Debarpan Datta

Indian Desert Gerbil (*Meriones hurrianae*)

Desert Monitor (*Varanus griseus*)



However, the importance of the Desert National Park from a conservation angle on the pan Indian landscape is at the highest level because it is home to the last remaining batch of Great Indian Bustards in the entire world. Around only 250 mature individuals of the species are now roaming in the wild and the scientists are working their hearts out to ensure the sustainability of the species. This place is very much suitable for the bustards. The Wildlife Institute of India is presently pursuing the revival initiative of GIB in the Breeding Centre right at the heart of DNP. We hope this unique landscape will be able to sing the success story of saving GIB in the near future.

The Great Indian Desert holds the record of the most densely populated desert in the world with 83 people per square kilometer. However, the population density in DNP is on the much lower side with 5-7 persons per square kilometer. There are 73 villages and some other settlements inside the Desert National Park. The inhabitants here have been sharing a unique confluence of several religions and they rarely get time to engage in communal conflicts after their day-to-day struggle to overcome the hardships of living in a desert. The nomads of the region are called 'Banjaras' who travel a lot with their cattle to earn their bread. The biggest challenge to the locals is finding potable water. These people were very much into hunting to procure food and this practice continued for centuries. The terrifying statistics of the population decline of the Great Indian Bustard are also a result of this practice. These people are very sensitive regarding their age-old traditions and their

existential threats have turned them somewhat very aggressive. Living in close proximity to one of the most sensitive international borders has also contributed to their struggle of living a peaceful life. It is very tough to convince them into something which is beyond their knowledge and therefore creating awareness among them against poaching is always a tough nut to crack. With the help of local authorities, the conservationists are putting everything into convincing them to stop poaching but for the people who don't know how they will survive the next day, conservation of wild animals is of little value. Here lies the greatest challenge to the people involved in saving the ecosystem of DNP. But with the persistent effort, they are achieving small but significant success in this area and with these small successes, the Desert National Park is one of the potential places which are being considered for the reintroduction of Cheetahs in India.

It is often said "a rose in a desert can only survive on its strength, not its beauty." But that strength to defy all odds can never outclass the beauty of the rose. That's where the Desert National Park is a mysterious land where on one hand we see nothing but void, hardships, and lifelessness and on the other hand, we see some iconic creatures of Mother Nature flourish. Often the lack of water and the cruel sand dunes brings sad consequences to both humans and wildlife. Still, the desire to survive, overcoming the vicissitudes of the desert life is a burning example of never giving up. In the evening when the tired sun decides to set, giving up his day-long resilience, the entire desert replenishes to fight another day. The sand dunes get enveloped in a golden aura during dawn and dusk showcasing the magnificence of the landscape. "Night comes to the desert all at once as if someone turned off the lights" and the morning awaits us with a promise of a new beginning where the beauty hidden in the treasure-land will again win over the bareness.

Vulture Colony



© Debarpan Datta

Spiny-tailed Lizard (*Uromastyx*)



SNIPPET

Fairy-Wrens are among the most spectacular birds found in Australia. They are tiny, brilliantly colored with splashes of azure-blue. Fairy-Wrens are always very active in the bush and on the ground – they are constantly flitting around, never sitting still and always jumping from one branch to another. They are eye-catching species that brighten one's day when spotted and watched. Of the nearly 900 species of birds in Australia, Fairy-Wrens are real gems.

Fairy-Wrens are distributed throughout Australia. There are nine species of Fairy-Wrens in the family Maluridae. In southwestern Australia where I live, there are four species. The Splendid Fairy-Wren (*Malurus splendens*) occurs in much of western Australia. The male is a brilliant turquoise blue, and the female is a dull brown. The long, vertical erect tail is the signature of the Fairy-Wrens. The tail is about five to six cm long and comprises one-half the bird's length.

Red-winged Fairy-Wren (*Malurus elegans*) is an endemic to a very small range in the extreme south-west of western Australia. The male has a brilliant blue head, brown back, and black bib and breast, while the female is a dull brown. Also known as the Marsh Wren, this species frequents thick

Australian Fairy Wrens

By Heather Thorning

Red-winged Fairywren (*Malurus elegans*)



© Heather Thorning

scrub and swampy vegetation in the jarrah-karri forests of western Australia. Photographing Fairy-Wrens is challenging because they are tiny, very active and constantly flitting around and inhabit the edge of the bush and scrubby vegetation. Late Winter to early Spring is when the dominant male Fairy Wrens start to change color. The male Splendid Fairy Wrens have the most striking iridescent

blue feathers during breeding season and highly promiscuous. Often, he will have a harem of female Wrens. So entertaining and interesting to watch, they really make your day.

Heather Thorning is a nature photographer living in southwestern Australia. Instagram: heather-thorning.

Red-winged Fairywren (*Malurus elegans*)

© Heather Thorning



Splendid Fairywren (*Malurus splendens*)



Splendid Fairywren (*Malurus splendens*)





The Long and winding road...
to naturalistic illustration
Rodrigo Verdugo Tartakowsky

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Rodrigo is a Chilean wildlife artist and illustrator who tells his story of evolving from a photographer to artist. Rodrigo has illustrated a number of books on Chilean wildlife.

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

<http://rodrigoverdugo.cl/>

At the age of 10, I would go with my father to drawing competitions at the Santiago Zoo, in Chile, a very particular place located on a hill in the heart of the capital. That marked my life, although it would be a long time before I began drawing illustrations. In my teens I entered a photography workshop at school and fell in love with lights and shadows, but I also saw the opportunity

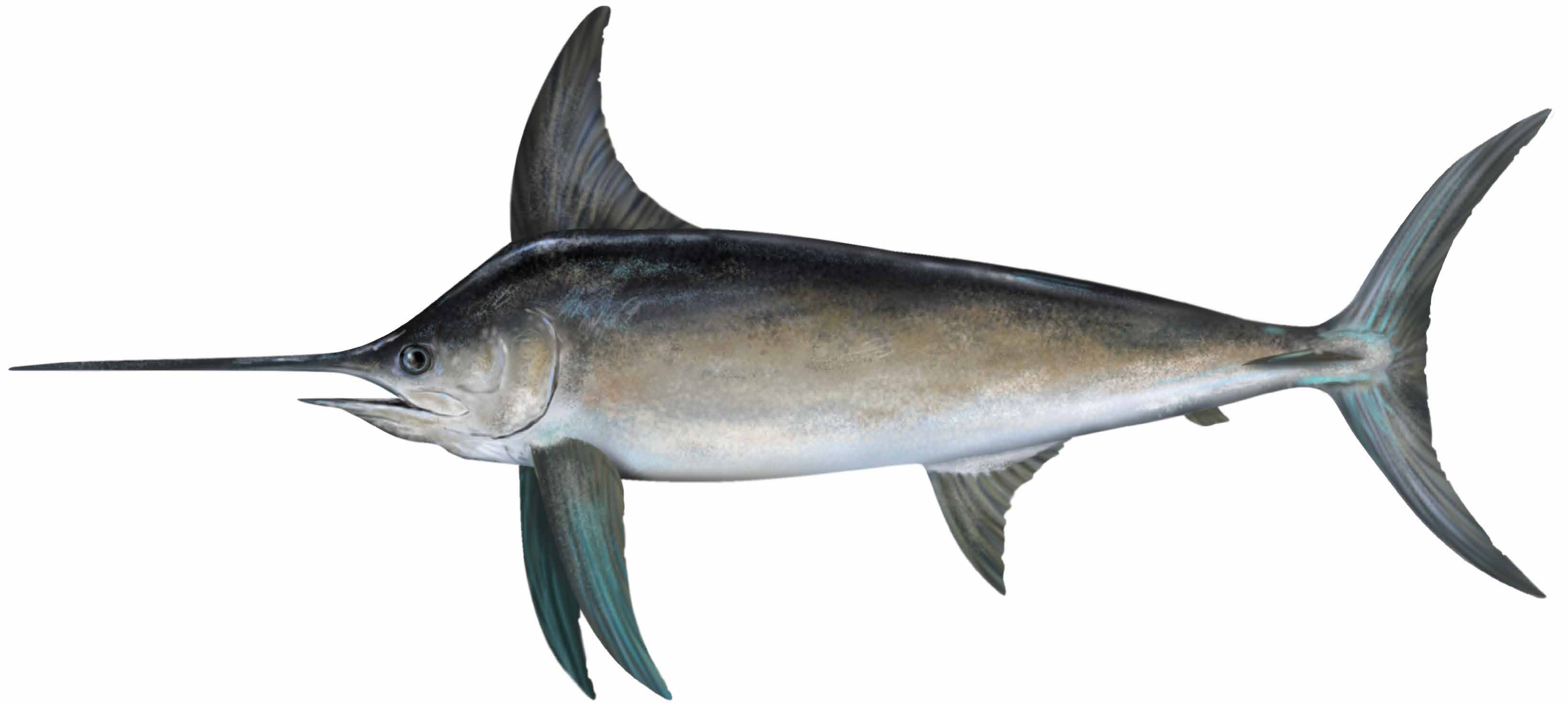
to complement my passions without even having any idea what the future would hold for me.

After studying advertising, I worked in agencies, something that was comfortable for me, with languages that I knew and challenging quite often to me, almost perfect ... just almost, because the life of the publicist does not give time to



© Rodrigo Verdugo Tartakowsky

Altiplano Chinchilla Mouse - (*Chinchillula sahamae*)



Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*)

rest or enjoy. That machinery caught me absolutely, until the point that one day I decided to travel through Europe for three months without clear destinations.

On my return I resigned and started independently. At first it was not easy, more than once I had to give up my ideas, but a magical moment occurred, I had always used Photoshop to retouch photos, but one very particular day that I remember perfectly, almost 15 years ago, I decided to use the application brush on an empty digital canvas, after a while an amphibian was produced and later a lovely bird. I did not expect the results that came out and eager to use them I focused on finding what to do with them. That day everything changed. It was a day that changed my life.

Printed in hand, I went to the place where they would appreciate the potential of that work. At the door of the National Secretary of the Environment, I ran into a well-known biologist in the country who later became a recurring partner with his projects. In his office I was able to see the first draft of "Mammals of Chile", the largest book he would work on to date. The project was slow and at times very complex, it was necessary to find an attractive design so that the nearly 300 pages were not boring and at the same time, made it easier to read.

Then more challenges would come, getting photos of a certain level, which in those years was a daunting task, since technology was not overcrowded as today, and only a few photographers had quality images. I remember many photos of rodents taken by the tail to prevent their escape while they were

photographed and many others inside cages, resources widely used among biologist but also not very aesthetic. Photoshop was very helpful in disguising those shortcomings and allowed me to play visual games that improved the book design.

Finally, the biggest task, illustrating species that had vague records or simply no references. I remember as if it were yesterday a couple of complex cases. Using "google" of those early years and finding an image of *Chinchillula sahamae* I got a pretty small image, therefore without details, of an animal that I assumed dead and placed on purpose on a rock to give the impression of a living creature. With that image I interpreted something similar to a long-tailed guinea pig that is in the rodent section and that for years was the reference for those who wanted to know it (you can see the differences in the drawings attached below). Another example of a problem to deal with was a rodent that I drew based on comments from the biologist. After many years I saw this rodent again and I seriously doubt that there is an animal on this planet resembling what I drew.

The book has been a success and became a vital work of this type of literature in the country, which led to a small guide on the same subject. I already handled an old Wacom tablet well that facilitated the illustration of countless cetaceans that had to be included. I never had classes on illustrations and drawing - everything flowed instinctively.

Since I also have a type of color blindness that complicates my life, I had only ventured to draw without painting.



Buller's Albatross - (*Thalassarche bulleri*)



Bronze-winged duck - (*Specularia specularis*)



a) Southern River Otter (*Lontra provocax*) b) Marine Otter (*Lontra felina*) c) Coypu (*Myocastor coypus*)



Cougar (*Puma concolor*)

With that problem Photoshop opened the possibility for me through a tool to investigate each pixel and determine the color I needed, which on paper was impossible. That way I technically solved a big problem for me. To be honest I still require the opinions of my daughters and wife in some extreme cases, as I once painted a cat's tail with some green.

The books began to follow one another, then "Carnívoros de Chile" and several volumes for many species with conservation problems were published. My mission there was to design and provide some illustrations, along with a large number of high-level Chilean illustrators participated in this project.

I learned from this collaborative project, but also I made important conclusions. I always loved the watercolor or pencil drawings that I saw in the rest, but once I was forced to incorporate them I could appreciate the problems that these types of techniques offer in publications, and the amount of extra work they generate. Well, a traditional drawing requires to be digitized and then cleaning and retouching to erase the imperfections and the background that can cause so many complications, because both the textures of the papers and their tones directly affect the result of the design.

With that experience I decided to try the new Cintiq, a very promising product of Wacom that eliminated the strange unnatural effort of looking and drawing on two different perspectives. Anyone who has not used a digitizing tablet will hardly be able to understand that one needs to be certain of where the line of an illustration is. The beginning was quite

encouraging, but the feeling grew that the technology still had mistakes that did not give me the fluidity that I was looking for, if to that you added the limitation produced by connecting three cables in parallel, I began to question the full potential of the tool.

One day, what I consider to be an important milestone for me took place, when a group of biologists invited me to a very interesting project on conservation in a distant archipelago in the Pacific Ocean. Among the Juan Fernández Islands, there is a small island known as Robinson Crusoe, where Alexander Selkirk was abandoned by his ship, inspiring the famous novel. The photographic work was amazing for me. I would visit a place known by few people, where I developed my passion for photography. What followed was the factor of changing my illustrations... my entire working life has been at the hands of Apple, from my first and beloved Apple SE computer to the iMac where I write today.

The project team gave me an iPad pro, a tablet that I had seen from a distance because it did not convince me at all. Researching its use, I was able to find an application that initially seemed useful to me and that I have never stopped using, Procreate. Upon arrival from the expedition, I developed a beautiful animation as a product of the trip and millions of ideas exploded in my head. One of them was to take advantage of the iPad. Well, I could see the potential of this tool, which coincided with one of the most beautiful books I have been able to work on, "The Birds of Prey of Chile," a luxury book, by format and

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Atacama Myotis - (*Myotis atacamensis*)



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Southern River Otter (*Lontra provocax*)



Torrent Duck (*Merganetta armata*)



photos, printed in hexachromia (6/6 colors instead of the traditional 4/4 colours) which enhanced the pics that were inside and that I illustrated like never before.

The requirement of one of the authors forced me to polish my technique over and over again, and to me, it was the beginning of my consolidation as a naturalistic illustrator, without technique and color blind, but with a deep love for what I do, and wanting not to stop until this planet is a little better than when I was born.



Darwin's Frog - (*Rhinoderma darwini*)



Rhodolirium Montanum - (*Rhodophiala rhodolirion*)







YOUR GALLERY



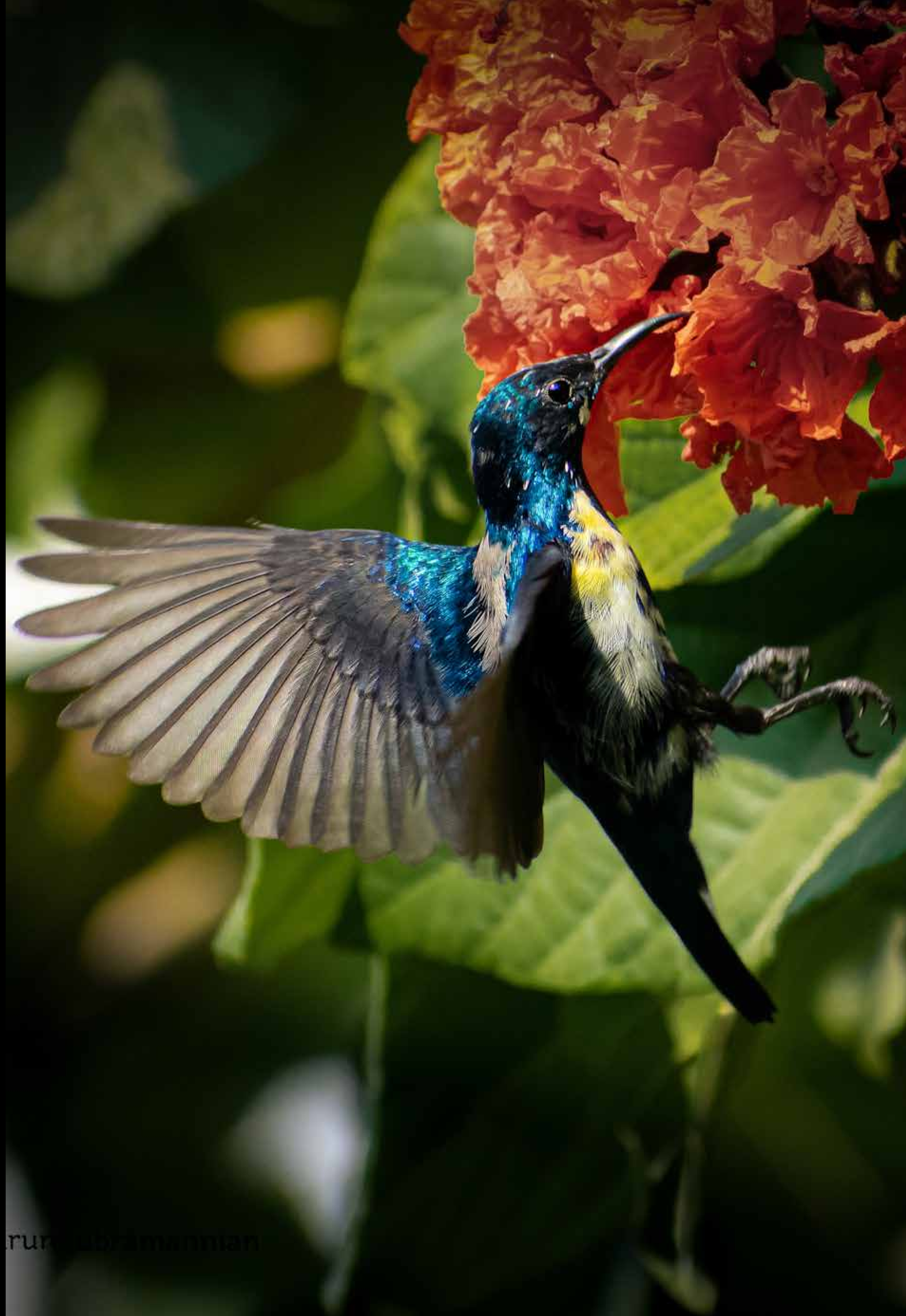
Israel Sade
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops superciliosus*)
Israel



YOUR GALLERY



Dr Rajesh karoht
Loten's Sunbird (*Cinnyris lotenius*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



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YOUR GALLERY



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Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*)
Dubai



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YOUR GALLERY



Arun Subramannian
Snail (*Gastropoda*)
Kerala, India



YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Bharat Ravat

Robber Fly with kill (*Asilidae*)
Shoolpaneshwar, Gujarat, India



YOUR GALLERY



Andy Clark

Gannets (*Morus bassanus*)

Bempton Cliffs East Yorkshire, UK



YOUR GALLERY



Haarish Mohammed
Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)
Nagarhole Tiger Reserve, India



YOUR GALLERY



Shyaam Maniraj

Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*)

Valanchery Vattappara, Kerala, India



YOUR GALLERY



shahul Valasy

Scaly-breasted Munia (*Lonchura punctulata*)

Valanchery Vattappara, Kerala, India



YOUR GALLERY



Shraddha Namdeo
Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)
India

PRI

EXPLORERS

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FEATURES



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INTO THE WILD

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ZANSKAR, INDIA

By Dheeraj Khandelwal



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Socotra Cormorant

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