

R

EXPLORERS

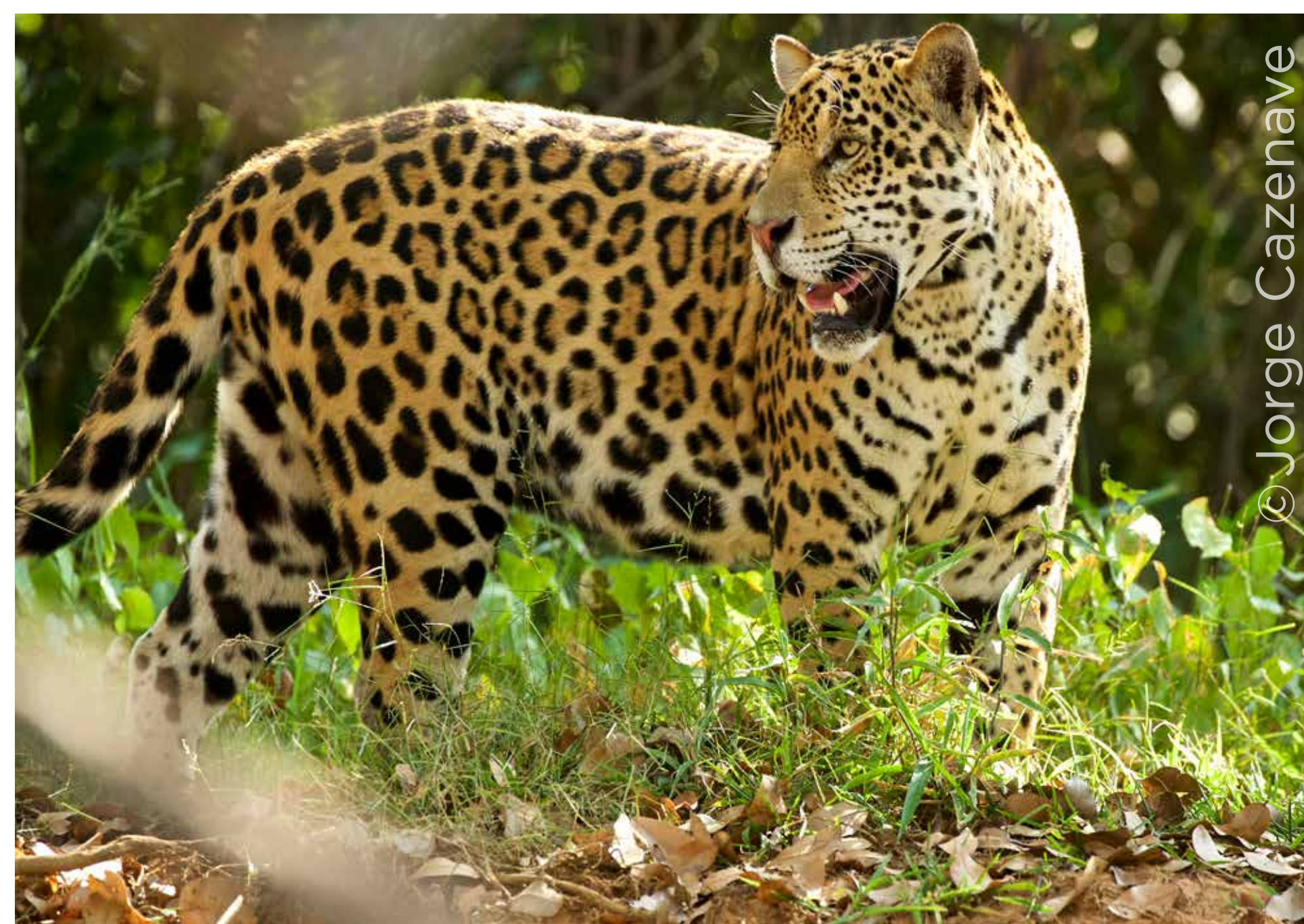
FEB 2022 / MAR 2022



INTO THE SKY
WITH **RAKESH
PULAPA**

JAGUAR - FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL
BY JORGE CAZENAVE

CONTENTS



EDITOR'S DEN
Welcome to PT Explorers
By Hank Tyler **004**

FOUNDERS' NOTE
By Nisha Purushothaman
& Hermis Haridas **006**

COVER STORY
Into The Sky
with Rakesh Pulapa **008**

CONSERVATION STORY
Australia's Endangered
Hooded Plover
By Rebecca Westlund **036**

THE SPECIES
Jaguar - Fighting for Survival
By Jorge Cazenave **058**

CUB'S CORNER
Nature Through My Eyes
By Jasmine **088**

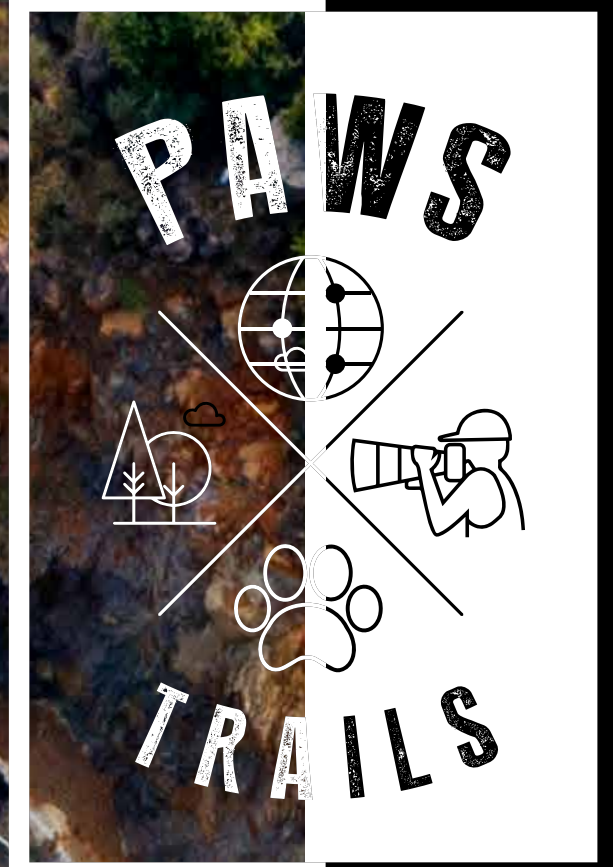
HER VIEWS & VISUAS
By Deepa Girish **094**

TRAVELOGUE
Life sciences and ecotourism in
the Atlantic Forest in Brazil
By Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo **118**

THROUGH THE LENS
Polar Bears of Churchill, Canada
By Meline Ellwanger **146**

WILD ARTS SHOWCASE
Diana Höhlig - Wildlife Artist **170**

YOUR GALLERY **186**



008
Cover Story
Rakesh Pulapa

Publisher: Paws Trails Explorers **Editors:** Hank Tyler, D.D. Tyler, **Associate Editor:** Raghul Patteri
Content Director: Nisha Purushothaman, **Director Photography:** Hermis Haridas, **Design Desk:** Nithya Purushothaman
Copyright © Paws Trails Explorers



Hank Tyler
Editor

Our cover story features Rakesh Pulapa from South India. He talks about his fascination with nature and his experiences and experiments in the field of Aerial nature photography. A winner of many prestigious awards, he is recognized as a master in his field.

Rebecca Westlund tells us the conservation success story of a group of dedicated volunteers, who work very hard to monitor and protect nesting mothers and chicks Australia's endangered Hooded Plovers. I recently completed a sculpture of a pair of Hooded Plovers that will be used to increase public awareness to protect this endangered species and its sandy beach habitat.

The Jaguar is America's largest wild cat. Noted wildlife photographer and biologist Gorge Cazenave describes the characteristics of the Jaguar's life.

Dr. Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo's Travelogue story takes us to the Cerrado region of central Brazil where he recently earned his PhD studying reptiles and amphibians.

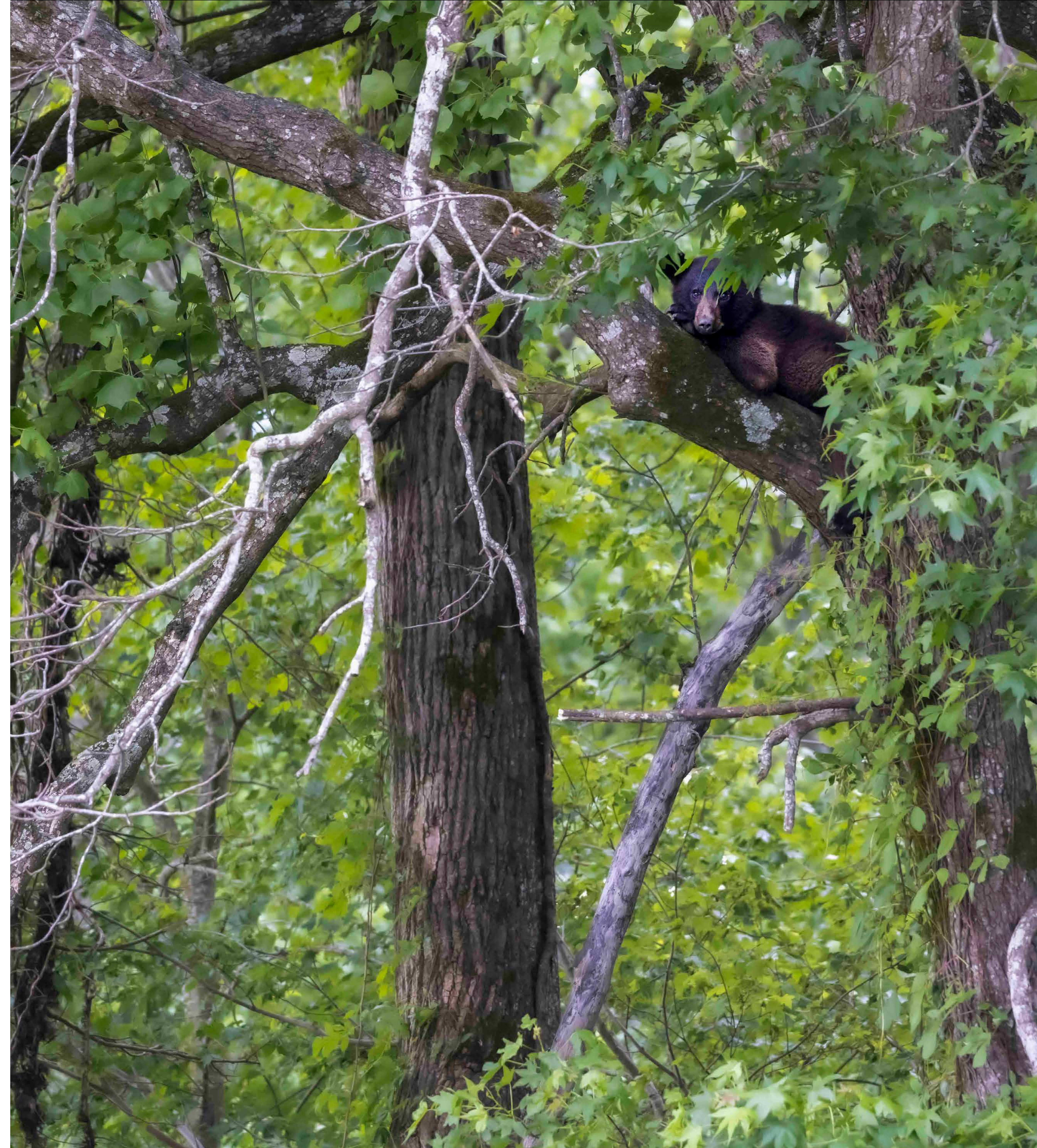
Meline Ellwanger's article in Lens takes us to Churchill, Manitoba, Canada to experience the lives of Polar Bears in November. This endangered species is threatened by climate change's negative effect on an icy habitat.

Deepa Girish in Her View takes us to the Massai Mara Reserve in Kenya. This talented young photographer is just beginning her journey in the field of wildlife photography - we look forward to seeing more of Deepa's photos.

Diana Höhlig, our featured wildlife artist tells her story of a biologist striving to become a full-time artist. Diana is a very talented young, self-taught artist who is skilled using a variety of media - pencil, scratch board, and acrylic paints.

In our Cubs corner we introduce a brave young 13 year old, Jasmine from the UK who is exploring photography inspired by her father.

We invite you to submit your best wildlife photos and tell your experiences in nature to our readers. Everyone who goes into the field with a camera usually come back home with an interesting story. We look forward to sharing your wildlife photos.



PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Goutham Ganesh Sivanandam
Black Bear
(*Ursus americanus*)
Pocosin Lakes, NC



FOUNDERS' NOTE

Welcome to the first edition of PT explores of 2022.

The end of 2021 had looked very positive with the covid situations in most places improving.

But in 2022 the world seems to have relapsed into a third wave.

Looks like the world will have to live along and cope with the pandemic for some more time.

Even though people are getting infected, it is encouraging to hear that the need for hospitalization and intensive care has come down compared to the first and second waves.

At PawsTrails we are excited for this year. We have some exciting adventures planned for the year, which we will plan in the later editions.

Depending on the travel restrictions of your native lands, we welcome you to experience the paradise of Massai mara. Our lodge Maara trails await you in this mecca of wildlife.

Please reach out to us to plan your great adventure in the bush.

This edition again gives us the opportunity to work with gifted photographers, scientists, explorers, and conservationists from around the world.

We love working with you and presenting your work to the global paw trails community.

Let us take the pledge for a greener future!

Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman

Founders - PT Explorers





© Rakesh Pulapa

COVER STORY

Into the Sky

with Rakesh Pulapa



Rakesh Pulapa is an award-winning nature photographer hailing from south India.

He has explored the still-evolving field of aerial photography like a devoted student and has contributed to developing and popularizing this genre in India and abroad.

A winner of over 50 National and International Awards, including the HIPA award and the Natural History Museum award, his works have been shown at a number of major galleries throughout the globe and published in CNN, BBC, FORBES, TIMES, etc.

Even when exploring exotic locales, Rakesh is a believer that the best may not be a flight away but maybe closer to home.

**rakeshpulapa.com/
[instagram.com/rakesh.pulapa/](https://www.instagram.com/rakesh.pulapa/)
twitter.com/rakesh_pulapa**





What was the inspiration for becoming an Aerial Photographer?

Views from airplane windows have always captivated me, and the idea of shooting things from a bird's eye perspective inspired me to begin aerial photography.

What are the specific technique or photographic methods you use?

I mostly like to chase a good story. One specific technique, I love is droneception, It is a technique where we have to take multiple pictures from different perspectives and blend them into one final output.

How does your style stay unique when compared to other aerial photographers out there?

I didn't try to shoot in any unusual methods when I first started aerial photography. I enjoy photographing landscapes and have attempted to incorporate my own flair. Also, it is possible that post-processing played a significant role. In certain ways, I believe that all photographers will develop their own distinct style over time.

Do you think post-production is as important as the actual shoot?

Post-production is a critical component of my workflow. I believe we may use it to convey our mood in a variety of ways. I spend a lot of time practicing dodge/burn.



What do you believe makes your images successful?

Apart from the technical aspect, what makes me feel images are successful is when we are able to express the story we want to convey, and when the final output is as close as to our pre-visualization.

How do you enhance your photography skills and widen your knowledge?

Learning photography is a never-ending process. I began by studying books and subsequently a variety of tutorials. Shooting with other photographers is quite beneficial. I also spent a lot of time looking over the portfolios of my favourite photographers.

Can you tell us about your most satisfying project and how did you meet that challenge?

My recent project for Vivo movies is to shoot wildlife and some unexplored landscapes of eastern ghats. It was challenging and exhausting as we were shooting continuously with very less sleep. But the end-product was very satisfying.

According to you, what is the most important element one should master in aerial photography?

To make the image look 3 dimensional when trying to show more depth. Without which, I feel such aerial images look flat. Including shadows or some elements may help.



© Rakesh Pulapa





What is your major achievements as an aerial photographer?

Most of my major awarding-winning shots were taken using drones. Beyond the different perspectives, to be able to tell those powerful stories through aerial photos is my major achievement.

Is there any specific favourite location you wish to shoot - and why?

Iceland during summers is my favorite location to shoot. Highlands there is magical along with some waterfalls and glaciers.

What is the One lasting impression you want to leave in your photos?

one lasting impression I want to leave in my photos is that paradise is not just flights away, you can find it around us.

Of the countless aerial photographs you have taken, do you have an all-time favourite?

Absolutely not. I love almost all my images and very tough to have one favorite.

Do you have any iconic places or locations that draw you back for more photography?

Kerala is one place that always makes me wanna shoot.

What are some of your future projects and goals?

My cute goal is to shoot more unexplored places and untold stories



What methods do you use to review sets of photographs to select the best work from a shoot?

While shooting itself, I will review all images which helps a lot to pick the best ones when picking from the laptop.

What preparations you do before you go to a location to do aerial photography?

Spending hours on google earth helps a lot to get a sense of the place. Apps like photo pills come very handy as well. Also, doing some research about drone permission and other aspects is essential.

As a photographer what do you think of the role of social media in photography?

To showcase our work on social media to a wider audience is a good thing. Many can resonate with our works and the ability to connect with others through our stories is a great feeling.

What is your advice for upcoming aerial or drone photographers and opportunities in the field?

To practice as much as possible and to master the craft. Have a pre-flight checklist and make sure you are not flying in restricted zones.

There are many opportunities in this field and having a good portfolio and a good social media presence helps a lot.



© Rakesh Pulapa









CONSERVATION

Australia's Endangered Hooded Plover

By Rebecca Westlund

Photos by: Mark Lethlean &
Teresa Madgwick

R

N



Rebecca Westlund is a writer and artist living on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula south east of Melbourne. She is also a nature enthusiast, with an active interest in conserving the native flora and fauna of Australia. She manages the Facebook and website for the Friends of Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula. Rebecca has a Bachelor of Visual Art, a Master of Art in the Public Space, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Creative and Professional Writing.

**www.hoodedplover.com
www.facebook.com/hoodedploverbormorpen**

**IG: rjwestlundartist
IG: birdlife_hoodie**



© Mark Lethlean



The Eastern Hooded Plover (*Thinornis rubicollis rubicollis*) is a medium sized Australian shorebird about 20 cm in length, weighing in at less than 100 grams. This sub-species is endemic to Australia's south eastern coastline, and can be found in scattered pockets from South Australia up to New South Wales. It is a diligent parent, a devoted partner, and an icon of Victoria's Mornington Peninsula's wild ocean beaches. Hooded Plover parents share their duties equally, from creating the nest scrape, to incubating eggs, to brooding chicks after hatching. They lay their eggs in scrapes directly on the beach sand, right out in the open. This is the same beach sand they share with many holiday makers and locals on the Mornington Peninsula, stunning shorelines that are also National Park conservation-status land.

Twenty-eight days later a tiny cotton ball sized chick hatches, fluffy and active, but unable to fly for another thirty-five days. However small it may be, this little chick can run around and feed itself from the day it leaves the egg, though it requires brooding from a parent to regulate body temperature for a short period after hatching. Once they can hit the sky Hooded Plover chicks tend to have long lives, but they have to make it that far first and most don't.

The peak of their breeding season happens October to February, overlapping with Australia's summer beach activities. Hooded Plover populations have been in decline for many years, with the bird now listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. Recent figures from Birdlife Australia show that

the Mornington Peninsula has the third highest density of breeding Hoodies - as they are affectionately known- but one of the lowest chick survival rates over the last decade.

In the 2019-2020 season there were roughly 30 active breeding pairs on the Peninsula. Those pairs made 62 nests, and those nests contained 135 eggs, which in turn hatched just 28 chicks. But only five survived. That's a pretty alarming result. I personally monitored one of those 28 hatchlings weekly. I watched it almost make it, I even named it Lewis. And then one day little Lewis was gone, disappeared with no explanation, as is the fate of most Hooded Plover chicks.

The more recent 2020-2021 season was a happy anomaly in that there were 79 nests (a single Hooded Plover pair will lay up to seven nests a season), with 49 chicks hatching and an extraordinary 21 fledglings surviving from the 30 pairs monitored. This improvement in breeding success during the COVID19 times of Summer 2020-2021 can perhaps be attributed to the lack of tourists and repeat lockdowns preventing a large portion of regular beach intrusion in Hooded Plover territories. Our Facebook page Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula also launched towards the end of 2020, helping inform more locals and Melbournians further afield of the plight of the Hooded Plover, possibly also contributing to a stellar year of fledging.

Studies continuously show that the highest risks to nests and chicks during the breeding season are: human



© Mark Lethlean



disturbance, predators (such as foxes, magpies, ravens and gulls), habitat changes, and off-leash dogs. So plausibly, without the crowds of so many unaware or underinformed individuals frolicking on the beaches, the Hoodies were able to flourish.

But this is not something that can just be presumed to continue. In the current breeding season so far only two chicks have fledged, and there have been abundant chick and nests losses. Tourists are once again flocking to the peninsula's ocean beaches for their summertime holiday activities and our hard-working Hooded Plover parents are once again struggling to hatch their nests and raise their chicks to fledging.

On the Mornington Peninsula the population has been stable for the last decade, remaining at approximately 30 pairs, though there are many suitable territories for Hooded Plovers which remain empty. According to Dr Grainne Maguire, Coastal Birds program leader for Birdlife Australia, Hooded Plover numbers in Victoria have risen from around 400 in the 1990's up to 550 in 2010, and now to the current approximation of 700 birds. This rise in numbers can be attributed to the hard work by Birdlife Australia and volunteer groups.

Volunteer group Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula, made up of 56 members, has operated alongside Birdlife Australia and Parks Victoria for 11 years to monitor and protect these little shorebirds. Dr. Kasun Ekanayake of Birdlife Australia works with us closely on the Peninsula throughout the year. He visits the plovers and their nesting

sites to gather data on their status and interference by beach goers, as well as data on predation by introduced foxes, cats and other avian species. In addition to this, Dr Ekanayake allows us to assist him in capturing, flagging, and measuring previously untagged birds (mainly new fledglings) at the end of every breeding season.

Our work is crucial to the survival of the Hooded Plover on the Peninsula, employing a variety of methods to safeguard the local population. This includes citizen science data recording, installing beach signage, running educational stalls and activities, watching over nesting and chick sites, and talking to beach visitors who may be unaware of Hooded Plovers or how to act around them. For a number of years, I have volunteered with the Friends group to monitor and protect the nesting plovers and their chicks. We are not alone in this work, and South Eastern Australia also has many other Friends of the Hooded Plover groups across various coastal locations.

A different avenue aimed at protecting and spreading awareness on threatened shorebirds like the Hooded Plover is The Overwintering Project organized by Kate Gorringer-Smith. Her project is an ongoing portfolio and exhibition series which features artwork - mostly prints - of a variety of shorebirds, and raises funds which are donated to shorebird conservation, including the Hooded Plover.

The local community and broader population can (and must) change the



© Teresa Madgwick





way they act on designated conservation-status ocean beaches, to assist in protecting vulnerable species like the Hooded Plover. That doesn't mean don't go to the beach. It just means be more aware of your natural surroundings when visiting the beach, and respect the endemic wildlife that calls it home.

There are five simple guidelines anyone can follow to help protect Hooded Plovers: Pay attention to any signs or ropes indicating nesting Hoodies and chicks on the beach, bring your dog to dog-friendly beaches rather than National Park beaches, take your scraps with you when you leave to prevent attracting scavenger predators, try to stay distant from any Hooded Plovers you see as they will leave their nest to draw you off leaving it open for predators, and finally walk below the high tide line where you will (hopefully) be well away from nests or chicks that may be camouflaged on the dry sand.

Anybody can still enjoy Victoria's ocean beaches while following these small steps. At the same time, visitors to the beach can know that through their thoughtful actions they are supporting the survival of an iconic Mornington Peninsula bird. We want them to be seen on our beaches for many generations to come, and hope that with the help of the community these birds and their chicks will not only just endure, but instead be able to thrive. Because without help, the Hooded Plover may be destined for extinction.

References

Birdlife Australia. (2021). Hooded Plover. Retrieved from <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Thinornis-rubicollis>

Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment. (2014). *Thinornis rubicollis rubicollis* [Hooded Plover (eastern)] conservation advice. Retrieved from <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/66726-conservation-advice.pdf>

Email Communication with Dr Grainne Maguire (2022)

Mornington Peninsula Season 2020-2021 Debrief. (2021). Presentation by Dr Kasun Ekanayake of Birdlife Australia.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Community Profile. (2021). Retrieved from <https://profile.id.com.au/mornington-peninsula>

Parks Victoria. (2021). Mornington Peninsula National Park. Retrieved from <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/mornington-peninsula-national-park>

State Wide Integrated Flora and Fauna Teams. (2021). Hooded Plover. Retrieved from https://www.swifft.net.au/cb_pages/sp_hooded_plover.php





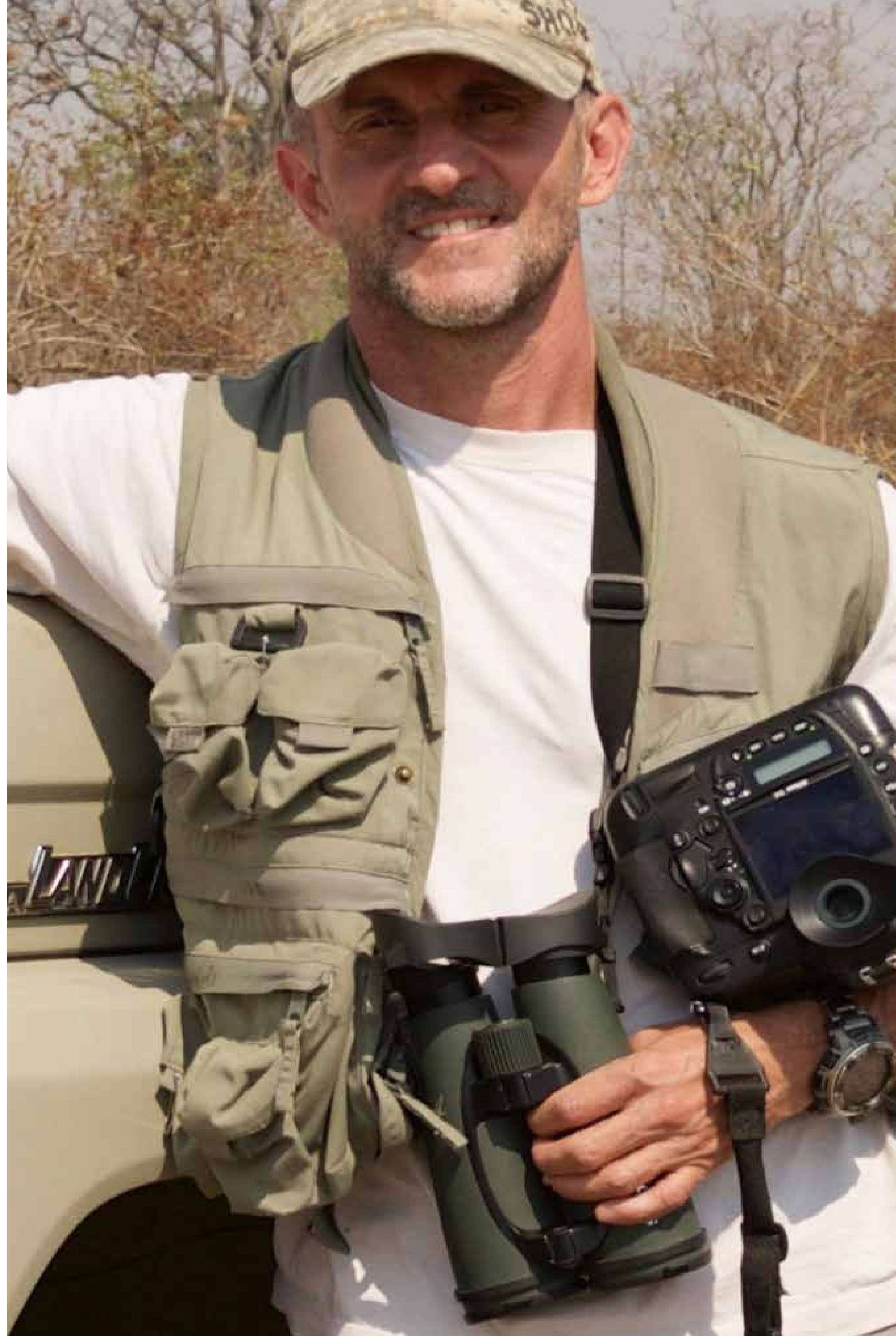


SPECIES

Jaguar - Fighting for Survival

By Jorge Cazenave





Jorge is a wildlife photographer, naturalist and expedition guide. He has made innumerable trips throughout the world, focusing on wildlife and horseback rides. He has worked in the travel industry for over 30 years.

Jorge has worked as a fixer for BBC, Nat. Geo and ZED. His photographs have been published in several scientific and commercial publications around the world, such as Quercus (Spain) and Patagon Journal (Chile).

www.jorgecaze.com

[@jorgecaze](https://www.instagram.com/jorgecaze)

Once, the top predator in a large portion of the American continent, from Northern Patagonia to the SW of the USA, the Jaguar (*Panthera onca*), the third largest cat in the world, has seen its domain shrink to patches of tropical and sub-tropical forests, in central and South America.

Known as yaguarete (real ferocious beast) to the Guaraní aboriginals, Nahuel to the Mapuche, tigre-tiger to the Spanish, Onca Pintada (*Painted panther*), this large cat, looks, for the uneducated eye, like a leopard on steroids.



© Jorge Cazenave



Jaguars weigh more, have stockier bodies, and also the most powerful bite, allowing them to hunt reptiles such as turtles and caiman. They are not only not afraid of the water, but great swimmers and tend to stalk their prey on the riverbanks, sometimes capturing them while swimming or diving.

A good way to tell the difference between the jaguar and the leopard is that jaguars have spots inside their spots. The spots on the leopard are clear. Of course, this is only possible in pictures as there are no jaguars outside the Americas and no leopards outside of Africa and Asia. One of the things they have in common is that both are called “black panthers”, a species that does not exist, but is just a darker version of both jaguar and leopard, due to melanism, a genetical anomaly.

Males can weigh up to 130 kg with an average life span of 13 years. Females are smaller. They have 2-3 cubs after a gestation period of just a little over three months. Usually weaned after 3-4 months, the cubs remain with the mother, for over a year. Males patrol and fight for their territories, so it is not uncommon to see scarred and “fallen” faces, as they tend to hit and bite each other. As they get older, their collection of scars can be seen from far away.

They are lonely cats. Females tend to share territory with other females, but a male’s territory will cover a larger area, and if it finds another male, they will fight until the looser escapes or is killed. This not a minor factor, because, like other cats, it is hunted down by ranchers, and when a dominant male is killed, a few







males will try to conquer its territory.

The jaguar has been hunted to near extinction in countries like Argentina, and the USA, and is only found, but hardly spotted in the jungle areas of most countries. It used to roam the grasslands too.

It is now a protected species in most countries, although poaching still happens pretty much everywhere. Something to point out is that the NGO Rewilding Argentina, after several years of breeding jaguars in captivity has released a few, into the marshes of Ibera, an area where it had disappeared.

Its main threat, and this is no surprise, is our species. Not only by directly killing them, but also by reducing and fragmenting their habitat. Fortunately, there are some strong NGOs working to protect it, in different countries. These NGO have purchased strategic patches of land that not only serve as buffer zones between the wild lands and the ranchers, but also areas which are adjacent to conservation areas, protecting the jaguar's environment.

Jaguars tend to be crepuscular but will hunt during the day if the opportunity arises. When resting, they usually stay in the shade, and close to rivers or lakes, and sometimes just watch the water for any distracted animal. Caypbara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), the largest rodent in the world, is one of its favorite preys. It lives in the wetlands and riverbanks, sometimes in large family groups. Of course, this means that several animals are better at being alert than



© Jorge Cazenave





lonely ones, so hunting capybara is not an easy task. The little ones are usually the ones that get captured. Tapir, marsh and pampas deer, anteaters and waterfowl are also part of the diet, and when jaguars become independent, and also when they age, they go after Yacare caiman (*Caiman yacare*), which are easier to catch. They will capture fish sometimes too. When hunting they stalk their prey and will chase them for a short distance, even diving and swimming.

The jaguar will not waste a free meal and will eat carrion too. Even when it is evidently rotting. I have seen a jaguar eat a surprisingly small bird and play with it like a house cat. Puma and other small cats can be seen in the jaguar's range, but they surely avoid any conflict.

For several years, and due to the transformation of cattle areas into conservation, the area of the Cuiaba River, and its tributaries, between Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, in Brazil have become the best place to spot jaguar in the wild. There are other good areas, like Caceres, or the Paraguay River, but the population density and the adaption of the jaguar to human-boat presence, makes the area of Porto Jofre, probably the best in the world to photograph this cat.

Self-regulation of the different outfitters, has ordered, somehow, the at times chaotic rushes to see the cats. The boat drivers use their radios to let the others know what they have spotted, and sometimes the "sprints" to get to the jaguars became dangerous races. Luckily, the locals have realized that a live



jaguar is much better than a dead one, for the whole community and recognize the species as a source of income. With a bit more of self-regulation, the locals and the jaguar can lead better lives in the area.

They can be seen all year around, although there is a rainy season, when the rivers flood the riverbanks. The sightings are still great, but it is hot and humid. Of course, you can also get wet, very wet.

In their “winter”, July-August, days are usually sunny, and the temperature is bearable.

A typical day starts before the sunrise, getting on the boat and patrolling the rivers. As with any wild animal, some days are easier than others, and if luck is on our side, we might be looking at a jaguar just off the pier. Sometimes, it is a bit harder, and if you are shooting for behavior, you might be holding your camera and lens for a while, falling prey of horse flies, which have a sting, strong enough to perforate a caiman skin. Of course, it is, most of the time, very well compensated, as these cats, don't usually sleep all day.

It is not uncommon to run into a jaguar, crossing a large river, or just resting on the riverbank. Amazingly, when they move just a few meters into the jungle, they completely disappear from our eyes.

Sometimes they patrol to find their prey but sometimes, they just wait, and the prey come to them. When attacking, they can dive directly from a branch into a river, completely submerging themselves, and usually re-surfacing with its kill.



© Jorge Cazenave





When they succeed in their hunts, they usually go into the forest, taking their prey, to eat it, in privacy. Unfortunately, I have never seen them feed during the day, having to guess that they were in fact doing so.

On a hot day, we usually return to the lodge for lunch and some rest, returning in the afternoon to the river. Sometimes, we do all day “runs” as we might go far away up the river, or we just want more time.

The adventure does not end on the river, as we always have the chance to find jaguar on the world famous Transpantaneira road, and we sometimes take a ride in a truck, at dusk, with a flood light.

From a personal angle, I have to admit that I have never been intimidated by a puma, but jaguars are a different thing. Walking in the forest, or just making a comfort stop at the shore, is something we do with a lot of care. Of course, we find an open area, look carefully and then, try to do our business as fast as possible.

However, I also have to say that spotting one, under the cover of the forest, or just relaxing on a big branch, absolutely always makes my day. If I can witness a hunt, cubs or mating, the day is more interesting. I just love being on the river, waiting for something to happen, even with the horse flies and the heat.





CUB'S CORNER

NATURE
THROUGH
MY EYES
BY JASMINE

@Jasmine

CUB'S CORNER

CUB'S CORNER



Jasmine is a 13-year-old from the UK who is bravely exploring the natural world.

My name is Jasmine. I have autism.

I love nature and the natural world.

It helps to keep me calm and warm, like a protective blanket.

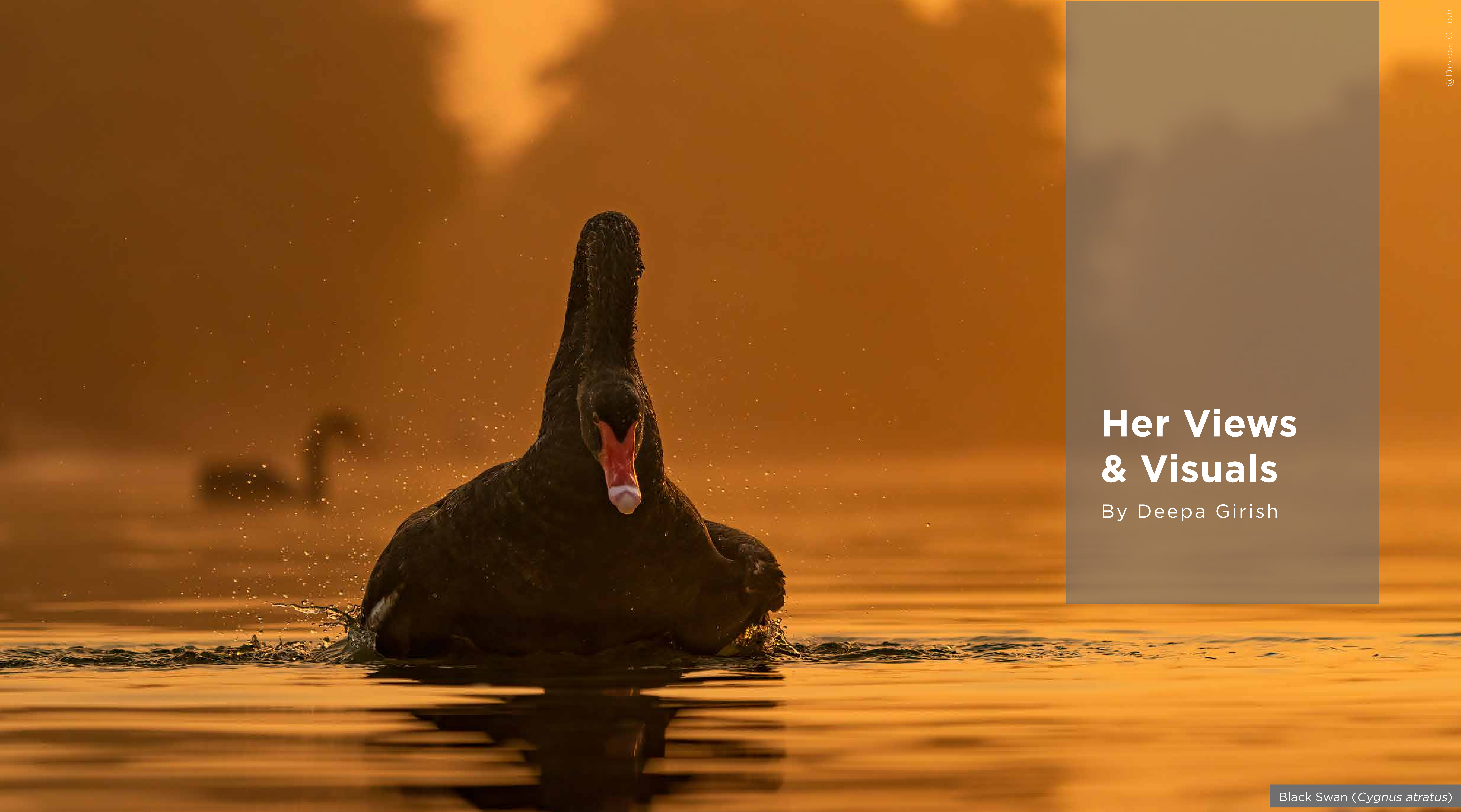
My dad is a photographer and I also enjoy photography.

This photo was the first time my dad let me have a go with his DSLR on my own, with no help. I showed my dad the photo on the camera, and he was so happy.





Swan (Cygnus)



Her Views & Visuals

By Deepa Girish

Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*)



Deepa Girish is a Dubai-based professional freelance event photographer. She loves photography as an integral part of her life. Deepa was born and brought up in Kerala, India, and her passion for photography started early in childhood. She quit her career in HR six years ago and has been focussing on developing her photographic career.

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

Her Views and Visuals





Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

How did your interest for wildlife arise?

Thank you so much for this great opportunity. For a budding photographer like me it is a great privilege to be on your prestigious platform. An urge for photography started early in my childhood. When I grow up, that dream also grew with me. Since my childhood, under the influence of my father, I have been a devout observer of nature. I used to trek a lot in lush forests, I admired the beauty of nature and its fauna. Gradually I noticed how we are endangering our nature and its lifeforms. My father also taught me the importance of protecting our enchanting world. That sparked in my mind the desire to do something for our nature. Eventually, when my passion met my interests, it opened another world to me and I realized that I could do something for our environment through this medium. I began my journey as a street photographer then recently got an opportunity to visit the Masai Mara National Reserve to capture the beauty of its fauna. It's been my long-term wish to become a wildlife photographer and visiting Masai Mara was on my bucket list for a while now. I firmly believe that everything happens at the right time and I'm glad that it happened now and to be a budding wildlife photographer.

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

As I mentioned above, photography has not happened for me overnight. I am wordless to explain my love for photography. This passion grew within me and once the time came up my husband gifted me my first gear, a Nikon D3100.



Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)



It was a watershed moment in my life. I started clicking for my dream to make it a reality. I am a self-taught photographer. Whenever I go for any kind of shooting, I search on YouTube, Google, and numerous photography sites to enhance my knowledge. It has helped me to improve my perspective towards it. Many world-renowned photographers and some of my photographic friends influenced me to take better images.

I worked hard, faced challenges and obstacles during my journey. I realised that this is my destiny, and nothing can stop me to achieve my dream. I resigned from my well-paid HR job and bought a full-frame DSLR and pursued my career in photography, now working as a freelance event photographer. Believe me, when my passion turns into my career, my whole life has changed in a positive way. It is not about dollars; it is about satisfaction. I believe that whatever we do in our life if we do with our whole hearts at the end of the day the ultimate thing we need is only satisfaction. And, if you have a strong desire to achieve something, whatever the situation arises you never give up on your dreams - that is what I have learned so far. I can't even imagine a life without photography. Photography is not just my passion, it is my life.

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

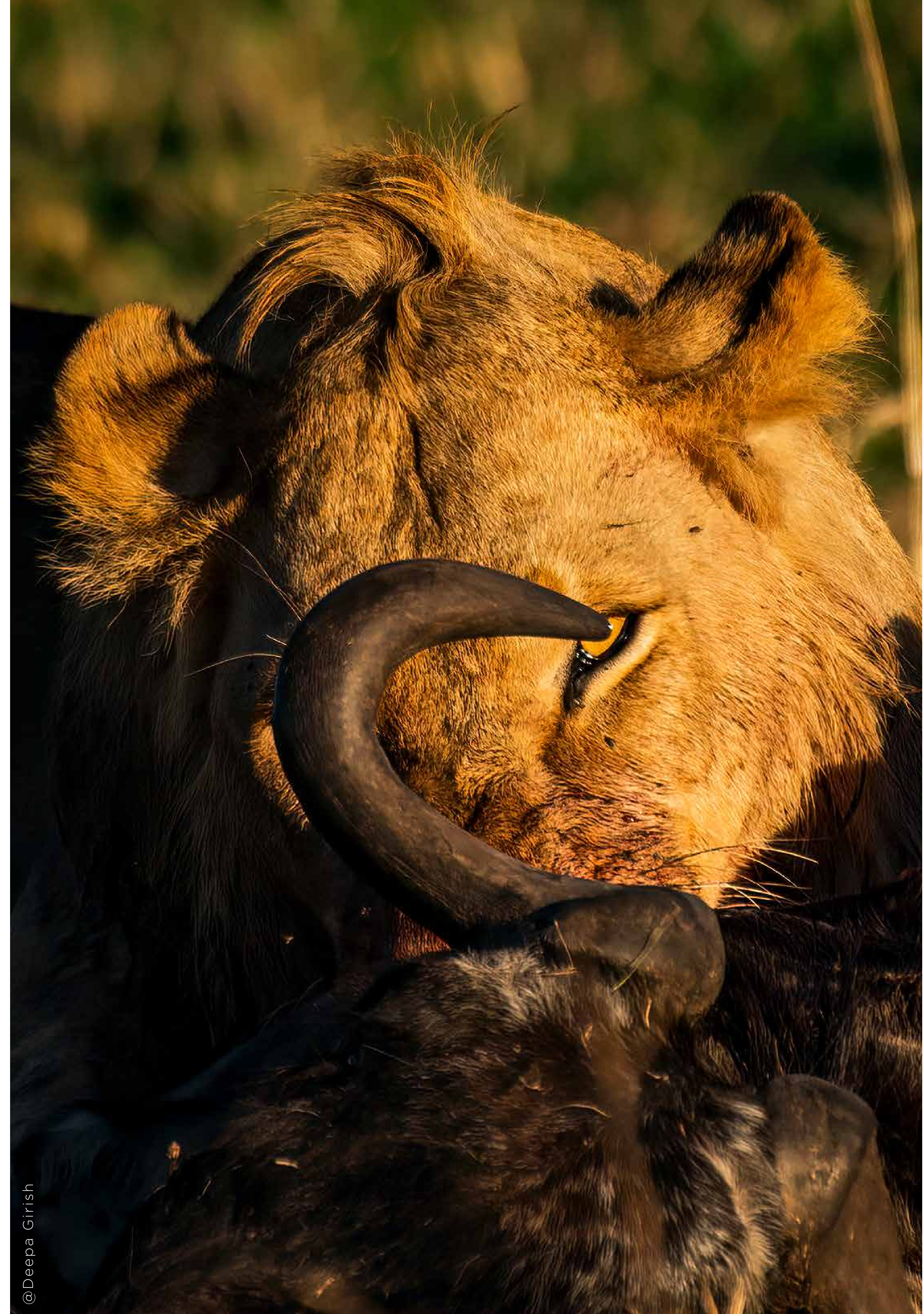
As we all know wildlife is one of the most significant aspects of our planet. Most of the time, humans ignore the fact that we are deeply rooted in nature and destroy

it instead. As everyone knows we are the last generation with a real opportunity to save our world. This is a final call for us to awaken and act for the sake of our environment. We all know how a single organism can impact our lives. Our existence is reliant on every organism on the planet. Despite our best efforts, even a small distraction can have a drastic effect on the environment. We can enrich our relationship with nature by valuing and conserving forests and wildlife.

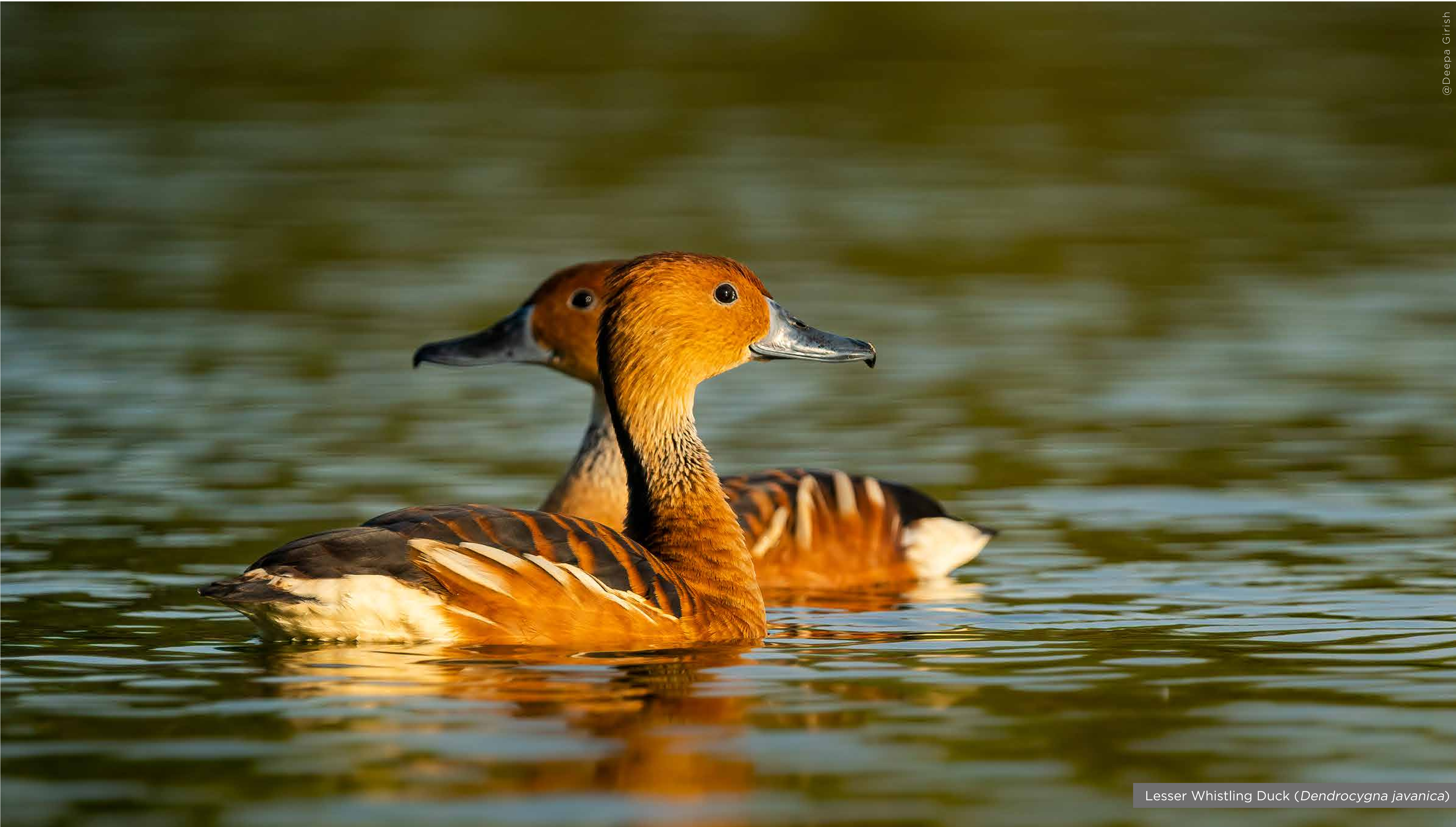
As artists, we can make a huge impact through our images. Visual imagery is a powerful tool for storytelling and public outreach. One of the thoughts behind this is that people will not destroy what they love the most and they tend to protect it at any cost. Capturing wildlife in their magnificent natural habitat and writing about how their habitat is endangered raises peoples' awareness on conservation worldwide. In addition, we must keep in mind that, photographing wildlife is accompanied by the immense responsibility to adhere to ethical practices and zero disturbance to the animals. Animals should never be disturbed, nor the natural settings be manipulated.

Can you give our readers the best wildlife photography tips?

Be a naturalist first to be a good wildlife photographer. Learn about nature and the wildlife around you. Respecting their life in its natural habitat and following ethical practices is something that should be followed by everyone. The second thing is patience, and that's the key to any genre of photography.



@Deepa Girish



@Deepa Girish

Lesser Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna javanica*)





Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)

When capturing wildlife, you need an extra deal of patience because nature is unpredictable. If you want the perfect shot, plan to wait for it. You need to be a quick thinker and decision-maker while photographing wildlife as there is no re-take in the wild. My understanding is that there is no substitute for hard work and passion. Never forget that no photograph is more important than the well-being of wildlife. Take only pictures and leave only footprints. And Keep Practicing, practice ultimately makes perfect.

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

I just started my journey as a wildlife photographer, and I need to learn much more to reach my goal in this genre. I am looking forward to expanding my body of work this year, especially in wildlife. Furthermore, I want to explore the world's many beautiful regions, have great adventures while documenting its wildlife is very fulfilling for me. I hope to continue my journey as a wildlife photographer and to share my findings with others in the hope of raising awareness and promoting the conservation of our treasured place.

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

I'm a Nikon lover. The support they are giving me to date is much appreciable. I always carry two Nikon full-frame bodies (DSLR & Mirrorless) and lenses depending on what event I shoot. During my Masai Mara visit, I carried two full-frame bodies i.e., D780 & D750 with 200-500mm, 70-200 mm, and 24-70mm lenses.



During this trip most of my photographs I shot with 200-500 mm only. In my limited knowledge, I understood that gear matters, especially in wildlife photography, and helps you secure better photos, but it is only one part of the game.

The real fun begins when you challenge yourself to take better photos that push both your technique and artistic abilities. Recognizing the exceptional light, exploiting exciting angles, exploring unique compositional possibilities, and mastering it to make storytelling images. The power of photography resides in the artistic vision and on-the-ground techniques of the photographer wielding the technology.



@Deepa Girish



TRAVELOGUE

Life sciences and ecotourism in the Atlantic Forest in Brazil

By Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo

TRAVELOGUE

© Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo

BR



Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo grew up in the great metropolis of Sao Paulo, but he has always been much more attracted to natural landscapes. He has a PhD in Applied Ecology from Universidade de Sao Paulo, and currently works for his own tourism and research company, Herp Trips. He sees photography not only as a powerful research tool, but also as one of the best ways to show nature in its entire splendor.

HERP TRIPS: herptrips.com.br/

Personal website: brunoferreto0.wixsite.com/brunoffiorillo

The Atlantic Forest has bravely resisted through centuries of human exploitation. The area now covered by the Elguero farm was once a center for coal extraction and today is supported by the production of resin from the pine trees that border

the forest. Before the pine trees prevailed, the plum trees ruled the business, attracting and agglomerating several individuals of the local tapir population. Some small plantations still exist and continue to attract these animals, rarely



Southeastern Four-eyed Opossum (*Philander frenatus*)





Cicada (*Cicadoidea*)

seen in nature. They now symbolize the beginning of an era of ecotourism and wildlife contemplation. Betting on this endeavor, I joined forces with the Manacá Institute team in an attempt to add amphibians and reptiles to the research and ecotourism repertoires.

Herp Trips (my company) is the first to officially provide people with the joys of amphibians and reptiles observation in Brazil. After graduating in Ecological sciences, a few years of research in the field put me in company with virtually every kind of person. It made me realize that, as much different those people were from me, their reaction wasn't. There was always a great satisfaction, mostly related to the excitement of discovery. That was the main objective when I opened my company, create opportunities for laypeople who are willing to have a "natural history experience".

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 has slowed down the business and, as expected, tourism hasn't engaged. I have taken advantage of this adversity to let mature my knowledge regarding the biodiversity of my new workplace, the Elguero farm. I started a new research project approaching the ecology of small vertebrates inhabiting the reserve encompassed by the farm, the Private Natural Heritage Reserve Trápaga.

Trápaga harbors a rich vertebrates' community and until now I have already found more than 50 species, among amphibians, reptiles, rodents, and marsupials. I wonder how these species are distributed within Trápaga vegetation gradient. I have also been addressing



other questions (e.g., diet composition, home range, survivorship) to the populations of particular species, such as the quite charismatic White-faced Horned Frog (*Proceratophrys boiei*) and the Ihering's Fathead Lizard (*Enyalius iheringii*).

My research has been hugely time-consuming. As soon as I had the project ready, I moved to my study area and kept my traps working 20 days a month. Pitfall traps allowed me to acquaint myself with a group that, until recently, was completely odd for me, the small mammals. Rodents and opossums are astonishingly diverse in the Atlantic Forest. Dealing with such diversity has been challenging but incredibly rewarding. Although certain species are widely distributed and often observed within urban centers, like the White-eared Opossum (*Didelphis albiventris*), others, like the Southeastern Four-eyed Opossum (*Philander frenatus*) are rarely seen if you aren't on the right track or if you don't spend enough time in the field. For this part of the project, I have got a lot of help from Professor Ana Paula Carmignotto, zoologist from Universidade Federal de São Carlos.

In the same way, finding snakes usually asks for dozens of hours of active search, preferably at night. Unfortunately, so much time spent checking the traps was more exhaustive than expected, so I got forced to save energy some nights. Even though they were few, I had beautiful encounters with these mysterious creatures. The first to fall into my traps was a Painted Coral Snake (*Micrurus corallinus*) which beautifully



Ihering's Fathead Lizard (*Enyalius iheringii*)

Two-headed Sipo (*Chironius bicarinatus*)





Jararaca (*Bothrops jararaca*)

presented me with its tongue dart in one of my pictures. I love to add this detail in snakes' photographs because I think it brings personality and some of their ecological features to the scene.

In the first field course promoted by my company, a student found a newborn Jararaca (*Bothrops jararaca*) coiled on a fern about two meters high. I really can't say what satisfied me the most if it was my usual excitement or to see the students' excitement. They immediately took their cameras off and started asking themselves about the context which led that individual to forage on that site. As said before, this was the main reason for my company's foundation.

A different but equally nice event happened when a friend of mine, Arthur, came to Trápaga for helping me in my research. Arthur is the most snake-fascinated person I have ever known. Unfortunately, he was very busy working on consulting reports in the office and wasn't able to keep up with me every day in the field. One day he commented to me: "I dreamed that I have seen you catching a Two-headed Sipo (*Chironius bicarinatus*)". Two days later, I indeed grabbed one. I was heading back to the farm quarters, having done some repairs to one of my pitfall-trap lines, when an adult female appeared moving about 20 meters in front of me. It was great to see his face when I put the subject of his dream on the same table he exhaustively worked on that boring report.

Even though snakes are probably the sexiest among herps, amphibians can be as just interesting as them, with one huge advantage, they are everywhere.

My best encounters with frogs happened in moments of profound exhaustion as if they had happened just to bring my spirits back. Coming back to the accommodations of Trápaga after a long, hard, and extremely hot day I see this couple of Bahia Forest Frog (*Macrogenioglottus alipioi*) in amplexus in the transition between the reserve and the pine tree forest. Although this is a widely distributed species (occurring since the southeastern to northeastern Brazil), it seems to be sensitive to habitat disturbance and it is rarely observed. Highly coveted among herpetologists, the species has been reported only in preserved remnants of the Atlantic Forest after heavy rains. I took this opportunity to put in practice the focus stacking technique and expand the depth of the field to include both individuals, male and female, completely sharp.

A similar situation occurred after one of my nocturnal searches. That wasn't one of my best nights and the combination of the lack of success and a tiresome two-hour hike knocked me. As soon as I walked out the track, I found a couple of Atlantic Forest Dwarf Frogs (*Physalaemus olfersii*), spawning in a pond. The water was muddy, but it was possible to see their reflex anyway. Another feature that made my night, was the fact that I was able to frame the male tapping his legs to transform the gelatinous substance expelled by the female into a kind of "egg whites". It is also possible to see a few of the hundreds of eggs that will remain in that spawn until becoming tadpoles. So much natural history in a single image.

In addition to all these magnificent



© Bruno Ferrero Florillo

Pine trees



Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*)



© Bruno Ferrero Fiorillo

Painted Coral Snake (*Micrurus corallinus*)

vertebrates, I intend to add arthropods to my repertoire next year. That may be useful to understand the distribution of their predators (especially marsupials and lizards). However, I am not just interested in understanding their role as prey within the ecosystem. I also want to address the same questions that I had on vertebrates. For instance, I have already noticed that some species are practically omnipresent. That is the case of wandering spiders of the genus *Ctenus*. On the other hand, Tarantulas (family Theraphosidae) are much more common in two specific sites, where the vegetation is more conserved. I am very anxious to see if such speculations are really true after the collection and identification of the specimens by researcher Thiago Novato.

What a wonderful task it has been to work in the largest remnant of the Atlantic Forest. Out of being in touch with a surprisingly rich community, I have the opportunity to document their life histories through photography and science. New adventures and exciting scientific outcomes are to come.

Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful to Felipe Gobbi Graziotin and the São Paulo Research Foundation (Project Escalas da Biodiversidade, grant #) for funding my research; Mariana Landis, Maria Virtudes Medina, and José Ignacio Palácios Barrasus as well as Manacá Institute and Elguero Farm for providing accommodation and all the support; Ana Paula Carmignotto, Arthur Diesel Abegg, Felipe Osmari Cerezer, Gabriel Paganini Faggioni, Rebeca Stella Khouri, Renato Christensen Nali, Thiago Ferreira Rodrigues, and Thiago da Silva Novato for their contribution on the project; Guilherme Oliveira, Hiago Ermenegildo, Julia Mayumi, Lucas Neves, and Rafael Carlos Benetti Paredero for helping in fieldwork.

This research was supported by grant #2016/50127-5.

Tarantula (*Theraphosidae*)



© Kaushik Vijayan



Wandering Spider (*Ctenus* sp)



THROUGH THE LENS

Polar Bears of Churchill, Canada

By Meline Ellwanger

THROUGH THE LENS



Meline Ellwanger is an 18-year-old wildlife photographer. In 2018 she embarked on an arctic expedition to Greenland and discovered her love for wildlife photography there. Since then, she has traveled around the globe in search of wildlife to document and photograph.

Through her images, she hopes to encourage people to protect our fragile ecosystems and help restore them.

melineellwanger.com/
[instagram.com/meline.ellwanger/](https://www.instagram.com/meline.ellwanger/)

Churchill, Canada. Home to the biggest land carnivore of the world, the Polar Bear.

My first encounter with these incredible animals was in 2018 on a trip to

Greenland, watching them from our boat. Even though they were pretty far away, watching them through my binoculars was a feeling like no other. Since then, I had always dreamt of getting more intimate close encounters with polar



© Meline Ellwanger





pears. And in November of 2021 that dream became reality.

Churchill, Manitoba, Canada is known as the polar bear capital of the world. There are no connecting roads that lead to the small town so the only way to get there is by a 48-hour train-ride from Winnipeg, or a short flight. Churchill is located at the Hudson bay, every winter the bay freezes and the bears head out onto the ice to hunt seals. For the bears, there isn't much food on land that gives them any nutritional value so in autumn they all migrate towards the bay and wait for it to freeze.

On my first day we went out at around 7:30 am to look for the bears. After just one hour in we were extremely lucky and came across two male polar bears (also referred to as boars) that were sparring. Sparring is a form of play behavior that prepares them for later when they fight for breeding rights or maybe to defend a good spot for hunting. We watched these two bears spar for about 1 1/2 hours before they went in to take a nap.

We had many encounters with bears, but there are two that stood out the most to me and that have left a permanent mark on me. The first one was with a huge male. We found him a day resting underneath some bushes. After waiting a while, we decided to leave him and check back the next day. The next morning, we headed out and went straight to him. He had moved out of the bushes and was laying in an open area. He had such a unique look about him. Every time he looked right at me, his eyes pierced through me like sharp needles. I





can't describe the feeling I got being so close to him. It wasn't a feeling of fear, but more a feeling of respect. They are such relaxed animals, and he gave me a feeling of calmness. He stood up, shook off the snow that had piled up on him and walked straight towards me, looking right into my camera. My heart stopped and for a moment I was frozen in place. I looked at my guide to see what she was doing and if I should return to the car, but the bear turned and went back into the bushes. My heart was beating incredibly fast, but I turned around with the biggest smile on my face. Every time I think back to this encounter, I immediately get goosebumps.

The other encounter was with what we believe to be a female. It can be tricky to identify the gender of polar bears so mostly we just went after size. This bear was quite small. She was sitting at the beach looking for seaweed. We parked the car a little further along the beach to have her walk towards us. She sat down not far from us and started eating some washed up seaweed. About an hour before, we had a short encounter with another bear that was close by in the area. I was watching her dig when my guide tapped me on my shoulder and pointed toward some bushes where another bear emerged, the one we had seen an hour ago. He laid down on the ice and took a nap. Neither one of the two bears acknowledged the other's presence. A few minutes later another bear emerged from the bushes, headed straight towards the female that was digging on the beach. She started lifting her head and sniffing the air when she saw the other bear. She stood up and



© Meline Ellwanger







they both came quite close. She stood her ground, never taking her eyes off of him. He circled around her, this went on for about 10 minutes, and then went the other way. I could feel the tension of these bears through every fiber in my body. It was incredible having three bears in the same area at the exact same time.

Due to climate change and global warming the bay freezes up later and later each year. Not having eaten for over 150 days the bears are just waiting to get onto the ice and hunt seals. On land there is not much for them to eat. Often they will waste more energy obtaining food on land, then they will eventually get out of it. One food source that the bears can find on land are berries. During my five day stay in Churchill, every day that we went out we found one bear that was always in the exact same area, digging, looking for berries and grass. We also came across a bear on the beach that was digging for hours and hours, eating and licking seaweed that was washed up on the shore. Because the freeze up is starting to be delayed each year, the bears have to come up with alternative food sources that will get them through until the freeze up happens. But our climate is changing faster than the bears can adapt, making it very hard for them.

The small community of Churchill has adapted very well to living among these apex predators. They have a polar bear hotline where people can call when they see a bear close to the village. They immediately send out a team to scout the area and if necessary, they will capture the bears, hold them for a short while in the so-called 'bear jail. They are then being relocated and sent back out into the wild further away from town. Organizations such as Polar Bears International work every day to ensure safety for the bears and the people, so a conflict-free life among each other is possible. On our last day, before we headed to the airport, we found a polar bear close to the train tracks by the town. Our guide called in the polar bear alert hotline and in less than three minutes they were there. It is incredible to see the dedication of all the people in Churchill, that work to ensure a future for these animals.







Diana Höhlig – Wildlife Artist

WILD ARTS SHOWCASE



Diana Höhlig (*1985, Germany) is a wildlife artist and ornithologist – awarded with the Germany price for bird painters. She is a member of the Society of Animal Artists, Artists for Conservation and Scratchboard Art Society and brings the viewer closer to nature by sharing the passion for wildlife and conservation through fine art. Diana lives in Sugeiz, Switzerland.

FB: Diana Höhlig Wildlife Art

IG: diana_hoehlig_wildlifeart

www.wild-glance.com

A Bird Lover's Paradise

The red sandstone cliffs of Heligoland island in the North Sea are standing strong in the weather and storms of times. This tiny landmark on the map zoomed in closer is unfolding in a unique

costal habitat providing not only resting and breeding spots for countless number of birds.

When I set first foot on this island, located in the North Sea – far away from the German mainland, I did not know it

would change me forever.

During my biology study time I worked for my bachelor thesis at the internationally known Bird Observatory in Heligoland. I spent six months on the 170 hectare island surrounded by the ever changing tides of the Wadden Sea. I enjoyed myself every day watching the bird colonies at the cliffs and in my free time I would go help in the ornithological

research station. Warm summer nights were spent equipped with headlight roaming the foothills of the cliff to search Guillemot chicks to be ringed. The call of the Kittiwakes and Gannets above our heads, the magical sunsets painting the ocean in fire red color, reflecting the sandstone walls upon us. Heligoland is where I found my love for the birds, and which marks the key experience in my artistic endeavor becoming a bird artist.



Black-legged Kittiwakes at Heligoland
40 x 60 cm
Acrylics - 2013

Diana Höhlig

The Artists Journey

I had a strong love for all kind of animals since I was a little child, and I began to draw insects, frogs, birds and mammals since I could hold a pencil.

I grew up on an old farm in East Germany where my grandparents' kept sheep and rabbits. As a teenager I had a dog, several cats, as well as many chickens and ducks. I was also interested in aquaristic and I built my own pond and water filter systems. So, I was always influenced by the different animals and pets around me. They were a part of my family.

I also remember when I was a child, I would chase lizards in our garden and collect snails and bugs to draw them on paper. Later my pet chickens became a favorite subject and I loved to portray each hen and rooster of the flock. From there it went on and later I would do pet portraits for friends and family.

I started to draw with pastel pencils and acrylic colors during my school time when I was introduced to these techniques in art class. I soon bought my own colors and paper to use it at home. Over the years other tools and materials were added, like colored pencils and Scratchboard.

Becoming a young adult my interest to observe and paint wild animals became stronger and I found out more about the exciting art scene by looking in internet art communities.

From there my journey began with the aim to become the best wildlife painter

that was possible to be. I was eager to learn and build up my skills, shooting for that star on the horizon.”

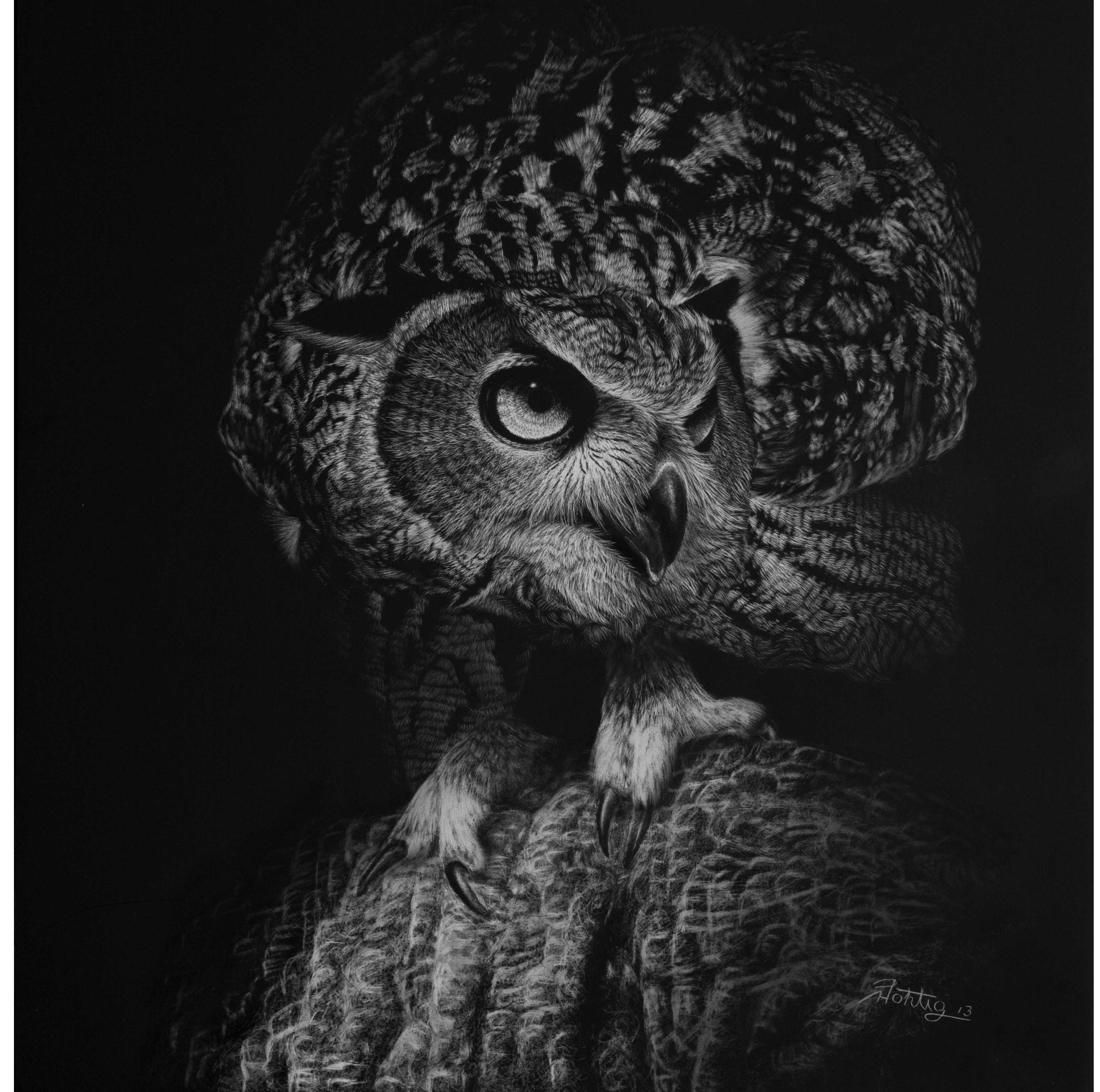
I became especially inspired by the art of the famous Canadian painter Robert Bateman and his dedication to environmental education. It fueled my long-lasting dream to travel to North America to experience the nature and animals at a different continent.

But in the meantime, I went on finishing my study time in Germany with university degrees B.Sc in Biotechnology and M.Sc in Biology graduating at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg.

Although I wasn't sure about a career in my life within any of these study-fields I was serious about my free time spent improving my skills as an artist.

However, it wasn't until my late twenties' when I submitted artwork to an exhibition. Encouraged by my first mentor, the Dutch bird painter Léon van der Linden it was the visit of Europe's (former) largest wildlife art exhibition 'Wild in de Natuur' in Enschede (NL) which opened a new world for me as a young artist, leading my steps into the international wildlife-art scene.

One year later, influenced by the avian encounters at Heligoland, I submitted for the first-time artworks to the exhibition 'Modern Bird Paintings' in Germany. The show is dedicated to bird art and held biannually at the museum of natural history in Halberstadt. In this show as a 28 years old debuting artist, I was named 'Best Bird Painter Germanys' judged with the 'Silver Owl' award in 2013.



Eurasian Eagle Owl
40 x 30 cm
Scratchboard -2013

Over the last decade, my wildlife art works have found new owners all around the world and have been exhibited in international shows from 'Modern Bird Paintings' in Germany, the 'Wildlife Artist of the Year' exhibition in London, as well selected three times for the prestigious 'Birds in Art' exhibition at the Leigh Yawkee Woodson Art Museum in Wausau (USA), with the purchase of my painting "Rustic Residence" (Barn Owl - ink on clayboard) in the permanent Museums collection in 2017.

I enjoy the experience and unfolding possibilities by navigating through the wildlife-art world, travelling to exhibitions, other countries, discovering nature and wildlife that I have never known before.

I love to recall the feeling, to wake up on a cold morning by the melancholy song of the Swainson's Trush in the Pacific rainforests during a trip to North America, or to watch the elegant Secretary bird wandering in the African plains during the glimmering heat of the day. In my paintings I want to transport the feeling about my experience and observation, of the animal, place and environment.



Diana Höhlig

Secretary bird
Höhlig

Secretary Bird
ballpoint on toned paper -2019

Closer to Nature

As a biologist the desire to gain a deeper understanding of the natural world equals my drive to capture the beauty of the animals I portray in my paintings. It is important for me to learn about the species I paint and to have the understanding from a biological standpoint. Because birds have become the main subject in my works, I took the chance to study for 1 & 1/2 year under the BirdLife Switzerland program to become a Field Ornithologist. I am a member of 'Ala Bern' bird society which is a section under Bird Life Switzerland and I also partake in field monitoring in my spare time for the ornithological station in Sempach.

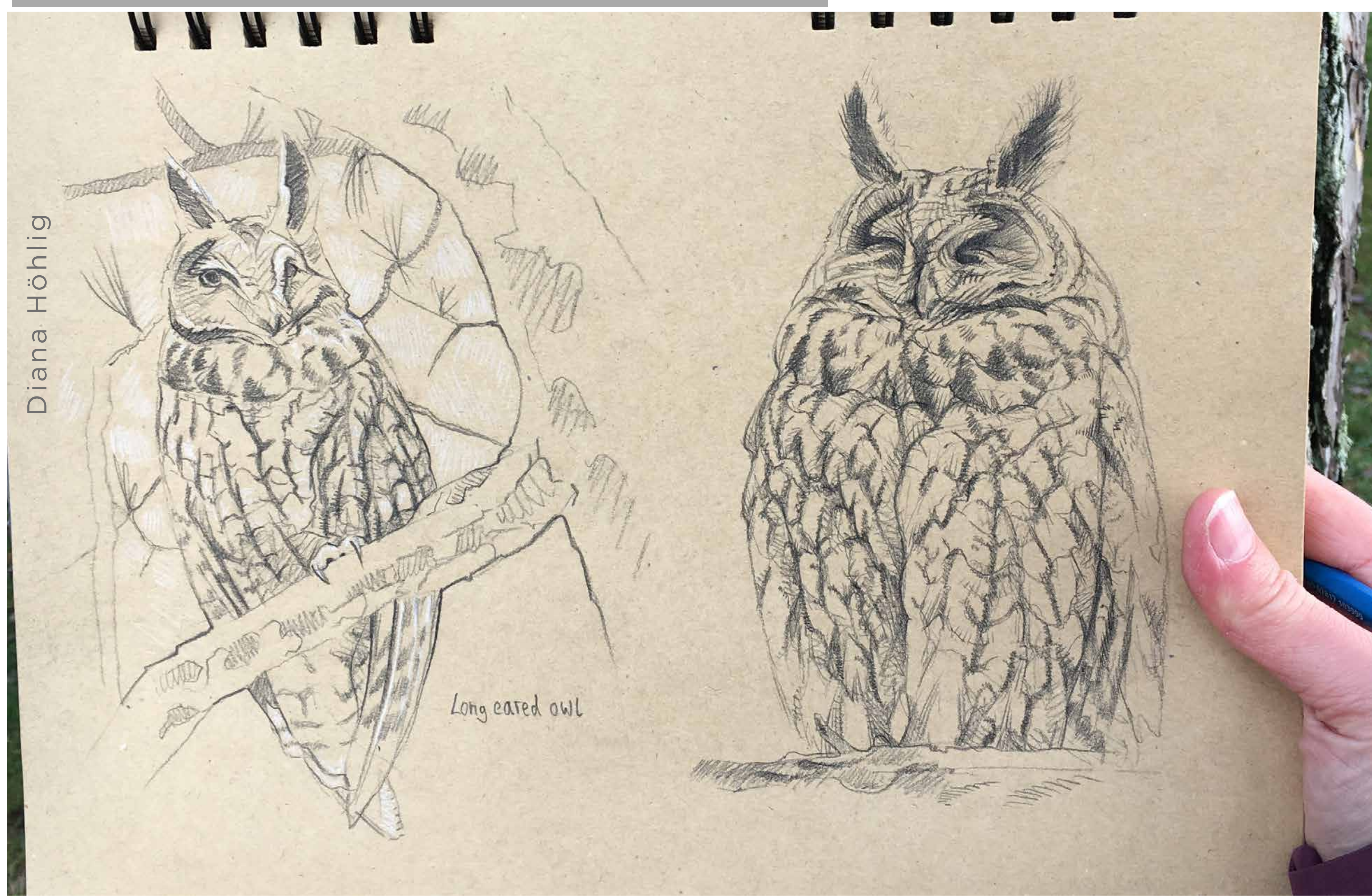
It has been six years that I have moved to Switzerland to my husband's home settled in the lake district. Beside an office part time job, these days my free

time is designated for my art career spending time working at new artwork in my small studio at home.

The most challenging endeavor is to improve my skills as a birder and wildlife artist spending time observing and drawing in the field. Surrounded by the big lakes with some of Switzerland's ornithological hotspots, I find inspiration close to my doorstep. A glance through the spotting scope brings the birds even closer to me and to be beautifully captured with a pencil sketch in the sketchbook. The variety of birds I observe, and sketch ranges from long-eared owls roosting in pine trees to waders and gulls at the lake side. It is fascinating to watch wild animals and birds, their behavior and movement in the surrounding habitat. When I spend time in nature, I learn something new every day.

The time spent honing my skills as an artist and ornithologist is honored with the inclusion of my work in international publications like the New European Breeding Bird Atlas (EBBA2), published in 2020. Turning Ideas into Artworks

Long-eared Owl
Pencil sketch through Spotting Scop -2020



Northern Gannets at Heligoland for European Breeding Bird Atlas
20 x 20 cm - Pastel - 2018



Growing up in a village with pets and farm animals, surrounded by woods and fields, I was drawn to portray subjects

in my art where the habitat meets the requirement of the species living within it, and where human and wild animals can

still coexist. I am interested in rural areas, old farmhouses and diverse landscapes, places which are providing an ecological

infrastructure. This is where I find the best ideas for my work.

Barn Owl // 40 x 60 cm
Ink on Clayboard - 2017



Equipped with a camera, ideas and reference material is collected / sketches are made on trips outdoors and into nature that I later use in the studio to create the final painting composition. I always use a lot of artistic licenses in my artworks. Reference-photos as well as collected feathers and sketches are helpful tools in my box. To work out a concept I will combine different photos, fill sketchbook-pages, puzzle out my vision, adding light and color harmony to my painting subjects.

In addition to my sketchbook drawings

in various techniques like pen, ink and watercolor I work on paintings in soft pastels, acrylics and scratchboard. As a self-taught artist each medium is mastered through building my skills over years of practice. Each medium has its own feeling and characteristic and allows me to tell a different story in depth of color, detail and atmosphere.

Probably the most unique technique out of my chosen set is scratchboard where a clay panel is covered with a layer of black Indian ink. I use a scalpel to scratch on the board. Only the tip of the sharp knife

touches the surface, exposing the white clay by creating meticulous fine lines and textures.

Scratchboard is a simple, subtractive (material-removing) but very efficient art form to convert a simple black board into an artist's masterpiece.

My Scratchboard works have received awards multiple times in national and international exhibitions. I am a Signature member of the International Society of Scratchboard Artists since 2017"

Artist Commitment

I regularly donate work and proceeds to projects for the cause of education and nature conservation.

My wildlife artwork was auctioned in Helping Rhino Society fundraiser for the Ol Pejeta National Park in Kenya, East Africa in 2020 and 2021. It is important for me to have a direct link to the projects. I visited the national park in Kenya back in 2018 with a group of other artists, led by Jan Martin McGuire, a well-known American artist and conservationist, now living in Tanzania.

Another milestone was my donation of 17 illustrations to the new European Breeding Bird Atlas in 2020. Together with some of the other participating artists I raised additional funds for the project through the proceeds from the artwork sales. It makes me happy to support such an important project which is investing in environmental research.

But the most rewarding part for me as a Wildlife Artist is to portray the beauty of nature in my artworks bringing excitement and joy directly to the viewer. I hope to transport my own emotions about wildlife and nature to others, inspire them to look closer, fall in love and to learn about nature. Because I believe the emotional bond is the key to learn and appreciate the natural ecosystems around us. In today's world it is most important to raise awareness for the fragility of nature and the need to protect it. As an artist, painting animals and birds is my visual commitment to this cause.







YOUR GALLERY



Rishi Rudani
Giraffe (*Giraffa*)
Maasai Mara, Kenya.



YOUR GALLERY



Mohan Raj

Great Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*)
Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India



YOUR GALLERY

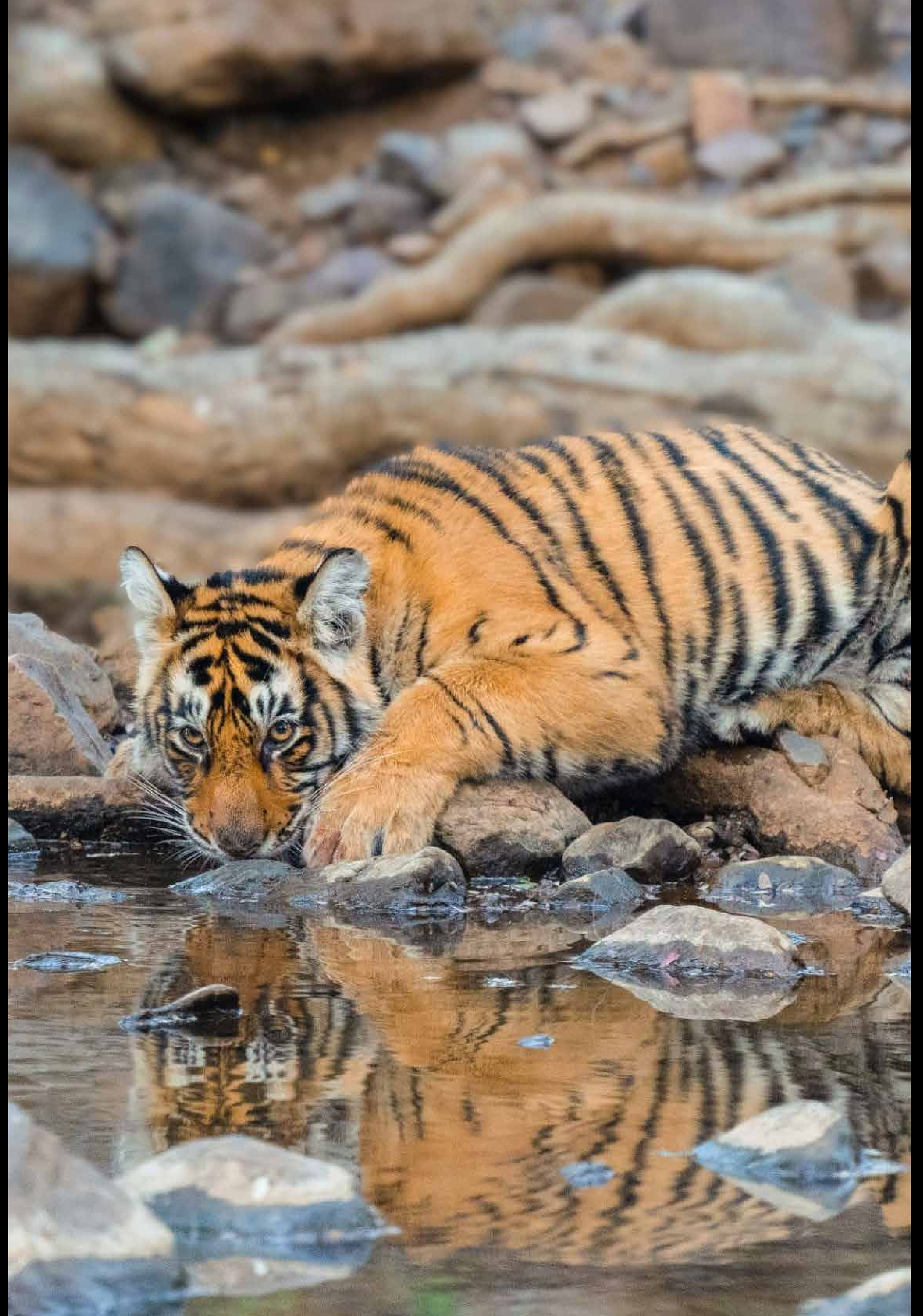


Raghuvamsh Chavali
Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
Ameenpur Lake, Telangana, India



YOUR GALLERY

Sajeev Krishnan
Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

Moti Manas Pradhan
Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)
Kerala, India





YOUR GALLERY



Shabu Joseph

Robber Fly (*Promachus hinei*)
Munnar, Kerala, India



YOUR GALLERY



Shabu Joseph

Purple Rumped Sunbird (*Leptocoma zeylonica*)

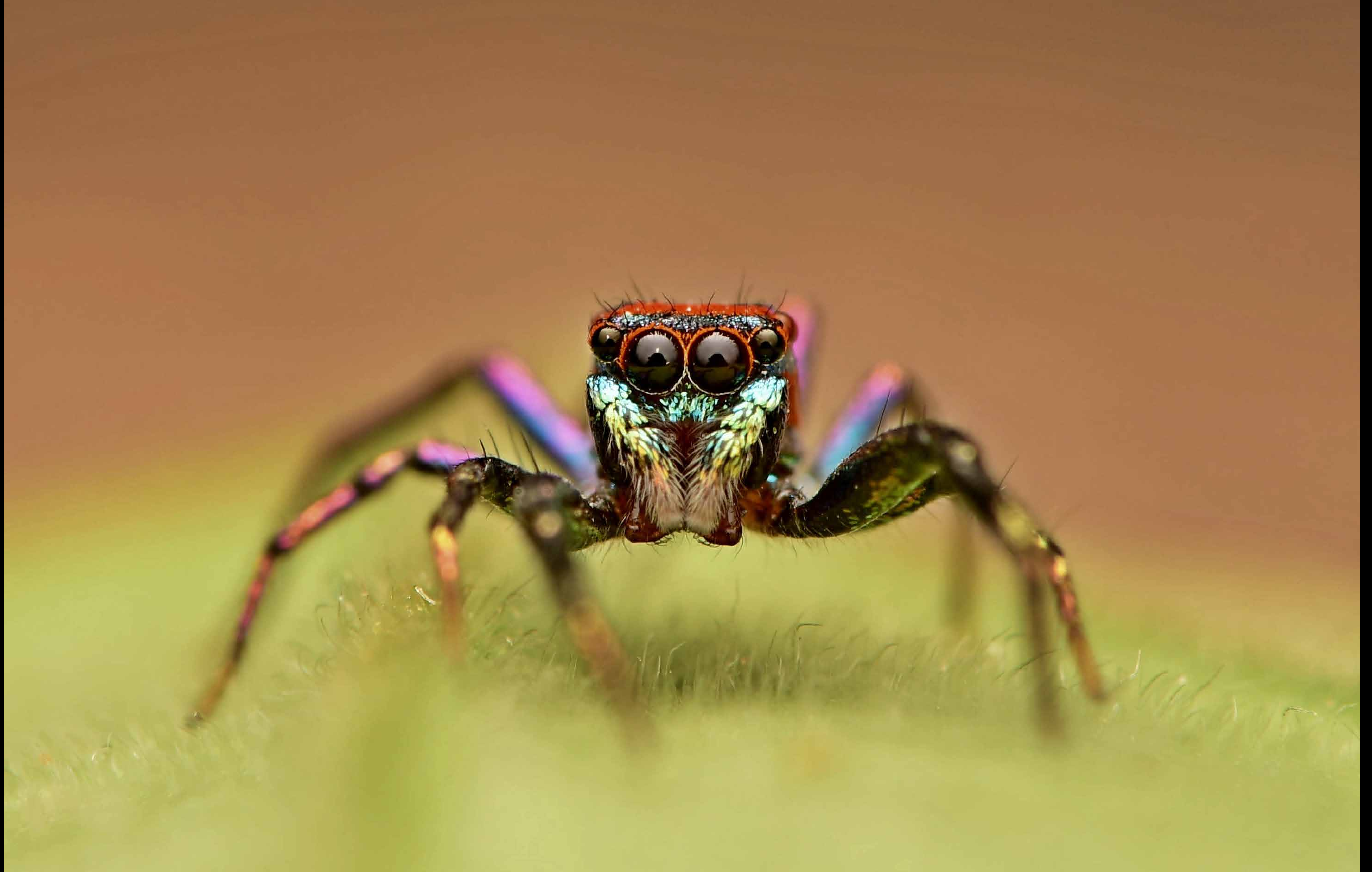
Munnar, Kerala, India



YOUR GALLERY



Sajeev Kumar
Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)
Doha



YOUR GALLERY



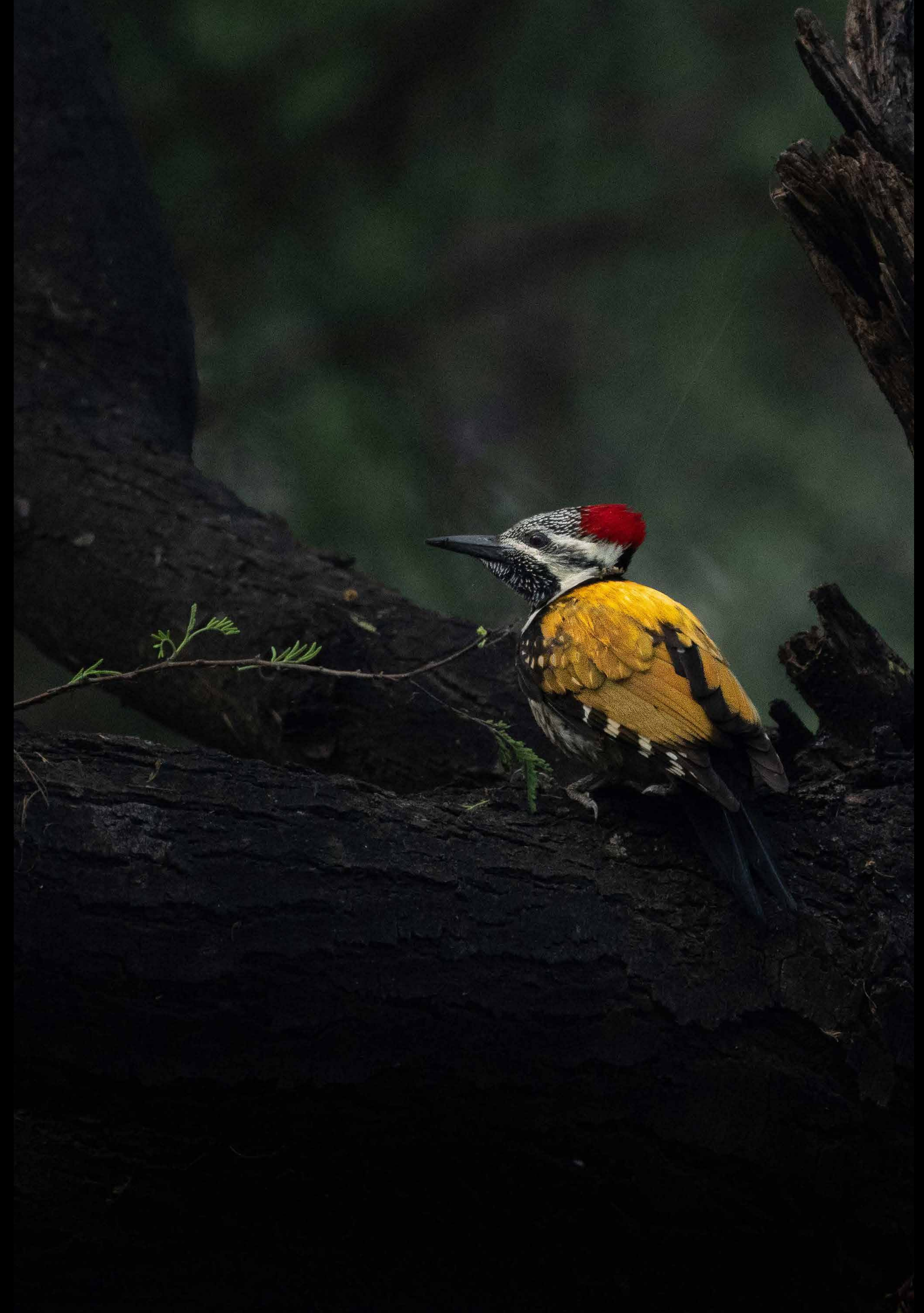
Krishna Devangamath
Chrysilla Volupe (*Salticidae*)
Dharwad, Karnataka, India



YOUR GALLERY



Gunasekaran Ramadoss
Great Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*)
Valparai, Tamilnadu, India



YOUR GALLERY



Kanishk Jain
Black-rumped Flameback (*Dinopium benghalense*)
Menar, Rajasthan, India



YOUR GALLERY



Shyaam Maniraj
Great Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*)
Valparai, Tamil Nadu, India



YOUR GALLERY



Andrea Aastelli
Dik-dik (*Madoqua*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

P

EXPLORERS

UPCOMING
FEATURES



© Wilma McKenzie

OWLS OF PACIFIC NORTHWEST

By Wilma McKenzie



© Ana Robino

HER VIEW & VISUALS

By Ana Robino



© Natalia Suarez

WILDLIFE ARTIST

Natalia Suarez