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EXPLORERS

APR 2022 / MAY 2022

WOMEN'S EDITION



INTO THE WILD WITH AISHWARYA SRIDHAR

OWLS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
BY WILMA MCKENZIE

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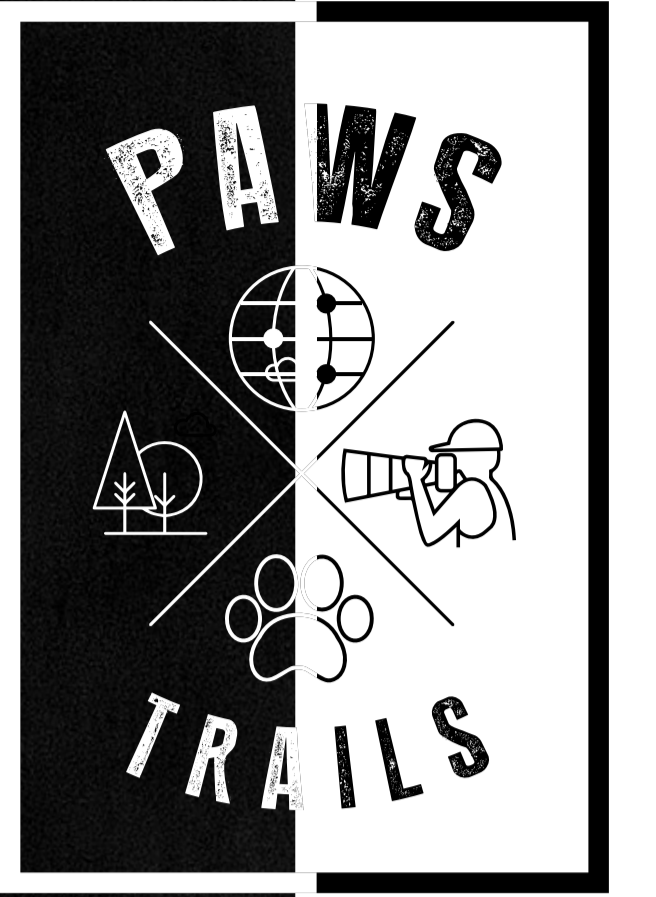
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Cover Story
Aishwarya Sridhar

© Aishwarya Sridhar



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Cynthia Bandurek
Editor

This is our fifth edition dedicated entirely to women connected to the conservation of nature, through science, photography, visual storytelling, and art. In this edition we will enjoy the outstanding works of some of the amazing women making a real impact to our natural world.

Aishwarya Sridhar is an international award-winning wildlife photographer and filmmaker and an Emerging Fellow at the International League of Conservation Photographers. Catch her in the cover story feature.

From Canada, Wilma McKenzie takes us on a journey to discover the life and behaviors of the owls that inhabit British Columbia with her magnificent photographs and storytelling.

Claudia Brasileiro, takes us through the different ecosystems of the biggest country of South America: Brazil. Claudia's magnificent photos highlight the rich diversity of Brazil's colorful birds.

We can enjoy the beautiful work of Reva Duraphe, just a 13 year old girl, an avid traveler in the forests and national parks of India.

From Argentina, Ana Robino tells us how she gets involved with nature photography, and she shows us her beautiful bird portraits.

Natalia Suarez, also from Argentina delights us with her art and her dedication to the details, while she allows us to immerse in her story as an artist.

This edition marks our first collaboration with a women's collective, Pune Ladies birders, from India. They are a 140+ member group of passionate nature and bird photographers. Most of the beautiful images you see in your gallery section has been contributed by this awesome group of ladies. Thank you for the treat, ladies!



PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Amita Naik
Amur Falcon
(*Falco amurensis*)
Lonavala
India





FOUNDERS' NOTE

March 8 was International Women's day. Pt Explorers carries on with our tradition of dedicating the immediate edition post Women's Day to the women of the world.

Each article you see in this edition has been contributed by a dedicated woman, who has chosen to be an advocate for nature and all the beings in nature.

Each of them has bravely taken on a male-dominated world, especially in wildlife photography and conservation, and proved that they are equally good, if not better.

Giant strides have been made by women in the field of science and research and many of them are luminaries in the field of natural science. We hope these women act as inspirations to those parts of the world where girls are denied education and woman are denied equal opportunities.

At PawsTrails we salute all the brave women who have decided to be warriors for mother nature. We renew our pledge to stand by them and provide them a platform to talk about their work and share their experience. We believe that there is a lot the world can learn from the fairer sex.

We have had the pleasure of associating with some of the best female minds in the field of photography, research, and conservation and we have learned a lot from you and drawn inspiration from your life.

Thanks again to all the contributors for this edition.

Let us take the pledge for a greener future!

Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman

Founders - PT Explorers



© Aishwarya Sridhar

COVER STORY

Into The Wild

with Aishwarya Sridhar

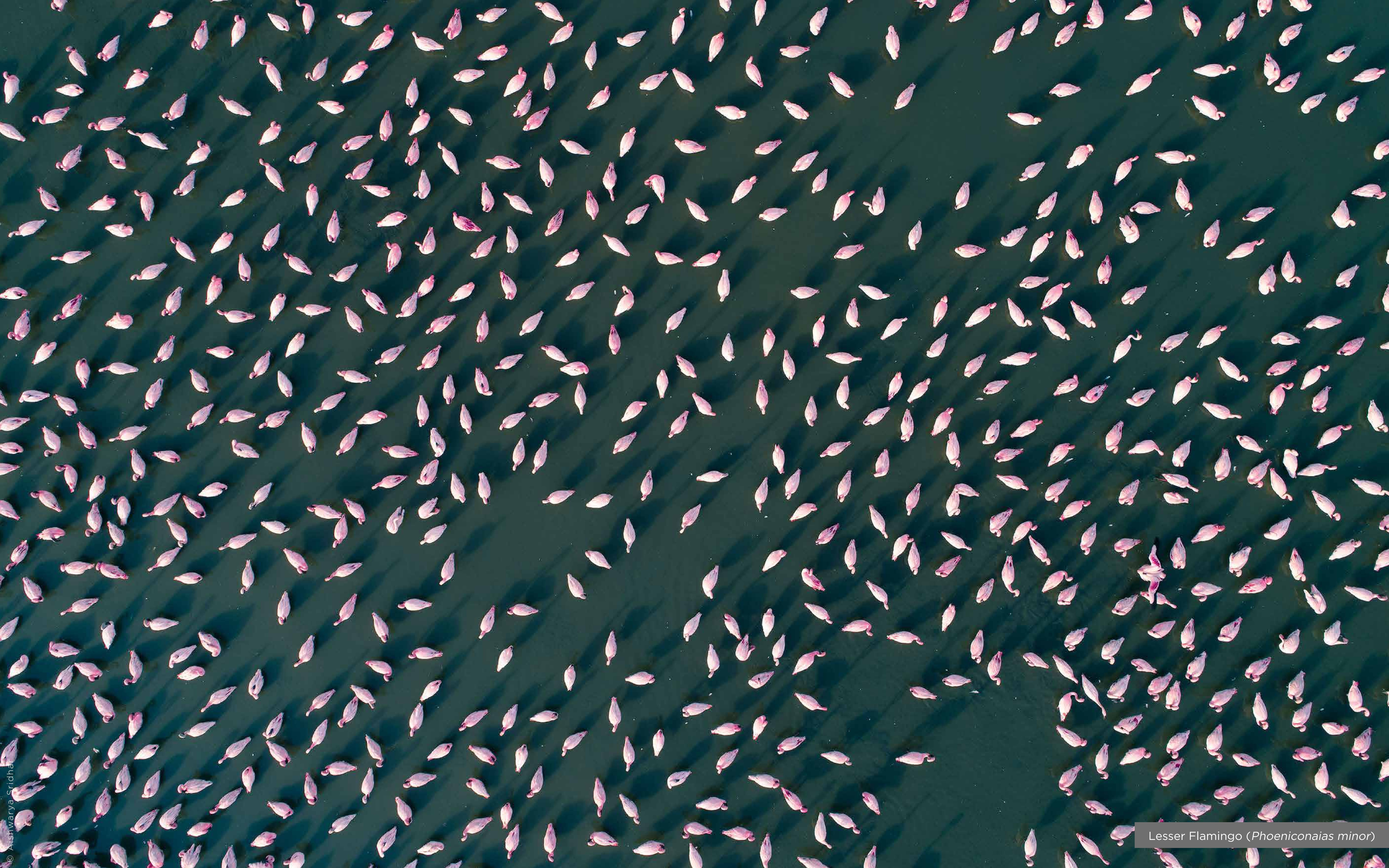


Aishwarya Sridhar is an international award winning wildlife photographer and filmmaker.. An Emerging Fellow at the International League of Conservation Photographers, she has been working towards policy protection for wetlands using the visual medium.

She has produced and directed for leading networks like National Geographic, Discovery, BBC Earth and DD National. Her debut feature film Tiger Queen of Taru is airing worldwide on National Geographic WILD and Disney+ Hotstar. In 2020, she became the first Indian woman to win at the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Awards, London for her image of fireflies titled “Lights of Passion”.

In 2021, she was named a “Sheroe” by Hershey’s Chocolates as part of their Sheroes Campaign on International Women’s Day. Currently, she is working on another full-length wildlife documentary for a prominent broadcaster.

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[instagram.com/chikoo_wild/](https://www.instagram.com/chikoo_wild/)
[facebook.com/aishwarya.sridhar.5/](https://www.facebook.com/aishwarya.sridhar.5/)
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Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*)



Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*)

An explorer, writer, poet, storyteller and presenter, filmmaker, photographer, you placed many roles in a short span of time. And everything is in line with nature. What's your story?

I have always been in love with nature since the time I can remember. Growing up in the foothills of Matheran, meant wildlife was in my backyard itself. My childhood has shaped me into the girl I am today. It started out with writing poems about nature and wildlife. Slowly, the bug of wildlife photography bit me and I received my first camera as a birthday gift. My camera became my favourite companion on all my adventures. I also used to watch a lot of documentaries on National Geographic & Discovery, featuring Sir David Attenborough and I desired to be like him! I too wanted to travel the world and tell stories of unexplored places and species. So, when the time came to choose my career, I decided to take the plunge and become a wildlife storyteller!

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

Yes! Being a woman is never easy! Society has certain stereotypes for a lady and if you don't conform to them, life becomes tough. In India, women are not visualized in outdoor jobs. I have had to brave the constant tirade of my friends and cousins about how I am ruining my life if I pursue wildlife filmmaking as a profession. Their comments would be "Oh you will never get married," "This isn't a job for a girl!", "Why do you want to do something so manly?" etc. Initially it used to



Lion-tailed Macaque (*Macaca silenus*)

affect me, then I realized naysayers will always be there. I could prove everyone wrong if I just let my work speak. So, I concentrated on enhancing my skills and becoming better at what I do every single day.

What's your workflow as a filmmaker?

My workflow is quite simple. Before going for a shoot, I have a shot list ready- a list of every shot I plan to film during the shoot duration. This gives me like a check-list which I can tick-off as the shoot progresses. Once I am back, the back-up process starts for all the footage. Then I move on to logging the footage using Da Vinci Resolve. And then ship it off to my editing team for editing!

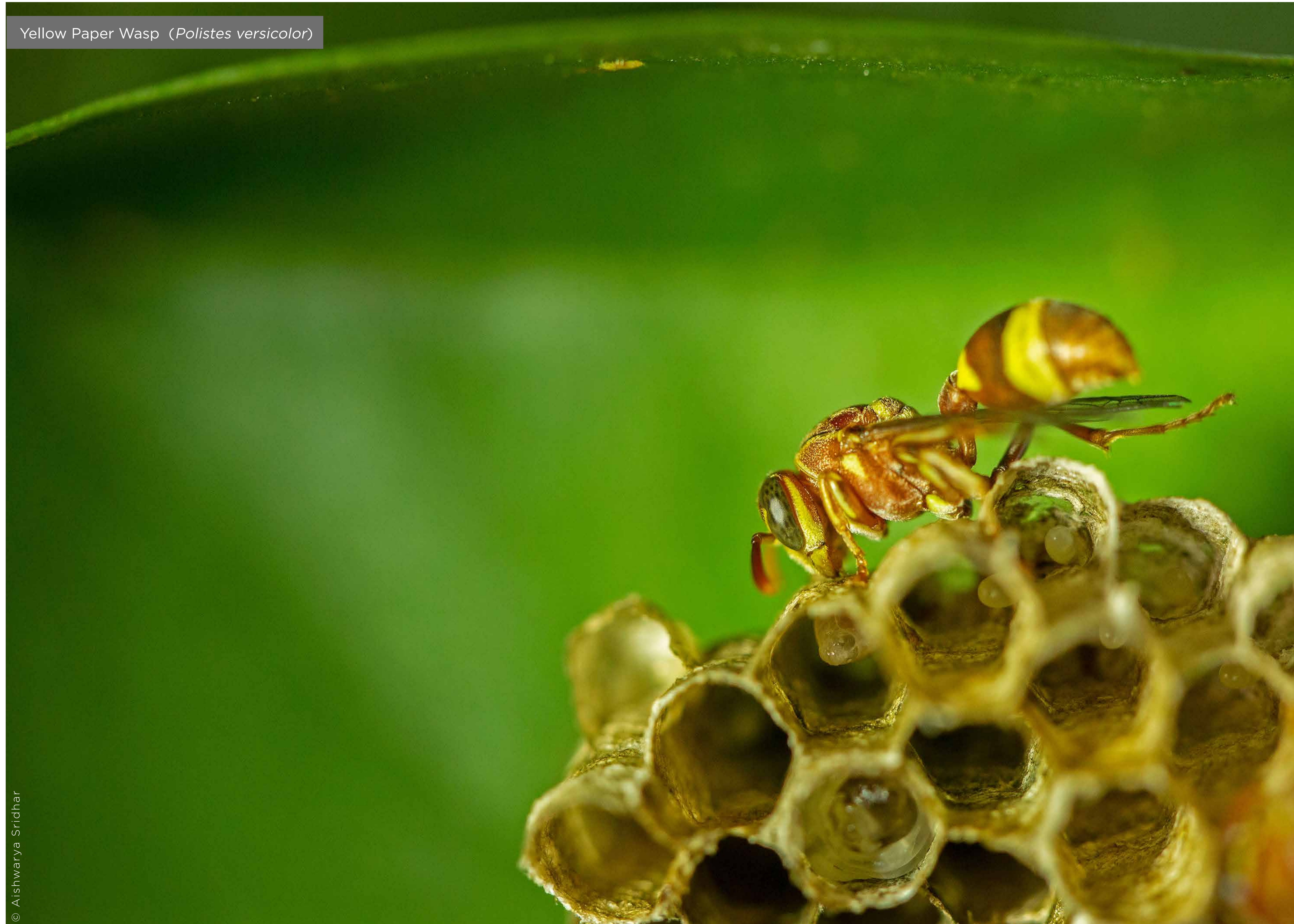
What do you enjoy most between photography and filmmaking? And why?

I enjoy doing both equally. Both of them provide an opportunity to tell a story. While one does through still images, the other focuses on videos and sound. I enjoy the process of scripting, presenting, editing and then showcasing the film to the world as much as waiting for hours on the field for the perfect shot!

Have you had any formal photography/filmmaking training and how did you get to where you are today?

No. I have had no formal training in either photography/filming. Though I opted for Mass Media in my graduation, there was no option to study filmmaking. Instead, I was forced to major in Advertising. So whatever knowledge I have gained in this field as been through the internet and through practice. However recently I have

Yellow Paper Wasp (*Polistes versicolor*)



© Aishwarya Sridhar





Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*)



Bonnet Macaque (*Macaca radiata*)

© Aishwarya Sridhar

become a part of certain mentorship programs and that has given me access to some amazing mentors who are now helping me become better.

All your activities are in line with nature. Would love to know your views on conservation as an artist?

I feel as an artist, I can harness the power of visual storytelling to create positive conservation impact. Visuals can evoke emotions and inspire action. I believe in the fact that "***you protect what you love, you love what you understand and you understand much better what you can see***". That puts all photographers and filmmakers including me in a very powerful position. And it is important that we use our talent to spread the right message to the public.

You are an Emerging League member of iLCP (International League of Conservation Photographers). Would like to know your experience in iLCP, and how does iLCP influence your work?

It's been my dream to join iLCP from the time I have come across the organization. It stands for creating impact with your work and joining iLCP as an emerging fellow is a huge honor for me. Currently I am working towards providing national level protection for shallow wetlands in Maharashtra, India, and joining this prestigious organization has provided me guidance from world-class conservation storytellers. It's an excellent learning opportunity I am able to hone my skills. Further, it has helped amplify my wetland protection advocacy campaign which could result in the protection of not only critical habitats but the preservation of livelihoods of indigenous fisherfolks.

While blue-chip documentaries have always been popular, conservation driven films need more

attention. One of my main goals is to create conservation programming for global mainstream

television and joining iLCP has been a major milestone in this journey.

Your preferred gears and the reason behind your choice?

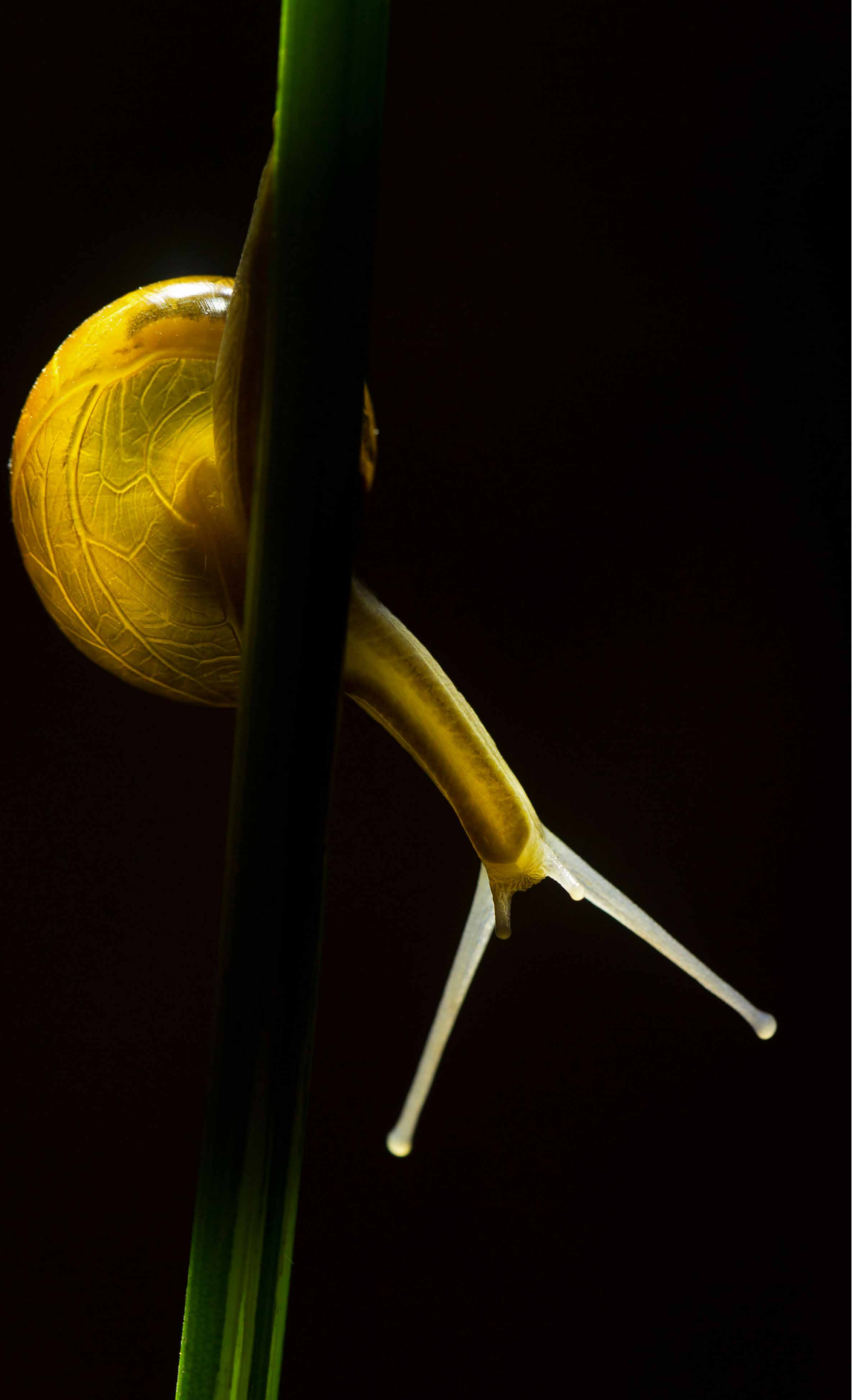
My choice has always been Canon. My camera bodies are Canon 1Dx Mark II and Canon 5D Mark III. My choice of lens varies with the type of shot I am looking to do. But my favourite lens are Canon EF 600mm f/4, Canon EF 100-400mm IS II, EF 100mm macro and the EF 16-35mm f/2.8.

Being a multiple international award winner, what's your opinion about the impact of awards in an artist's life or work?

Awards certainly add credibility to your work. It provides the recognition and it can help amplify your work. It is also a motivator for the artist to work harder and push their boundaries.

Can you please mention a special moment from your journey?

There are several special moments, in fact every trip into the forest has given me an opportunity to witness an exceptional moment in the wild. But if I have to pick one, it would be when I witnessed an Asiatic Lioness carrying her tiny cub by its feet. Not by the neck. While it was a tender moment to behold, it also conveyed the lioness's inexperience as



Horntail Snail (*Macrochlamys indica*)



Hawk Moth Caterpillar (*Sphingidae*)



she was a first-time mother.

Have you ever faced a difference of opinion about your work? And how do you approach criticism?

Yes! A few times! I am my biggest critic actually! I am never really satisfied with my work. And if someone does criticize, I try to see their point of view. If it is constructive criticism, I accept it and work on it. But if it is someone simply trying to push my morale down, I simply ignore it. There have been social media trolling as well, but I try not to pay attention to such people. It is better to ignore such bullies as when you give them attention, that's when things can get ugly.

Which professional photographer/filmmaker/conservationist has influenced your work the most?

So many! Jane Goodall, Beverly Joubert, Sir David Attenborough and Sylvia Earle have been the biggest inspirations for me. Their incredible work inspires me every single day.

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

There is a huge scope of a career in wildlife filmmaking and photography, provided you are really good at your job. That goes true for any career! There are people who are pursuing it as a profession. But since the industry is niche, it is also very competitive. You have to be really good at what you do, otherwise you won't get picked up internationally as most of the opportunities are created in the UK, USA.

What are your future and projects related to conservation?

I will continue to work to protect the Panje wetlands and hopefully we get a victory soon with the State government declaring it as a Bird Sanctuary. In addition, there is an impact driven documentary and a blue-chip film I am working on so they will be releasing soon. Many more projects are in development too!

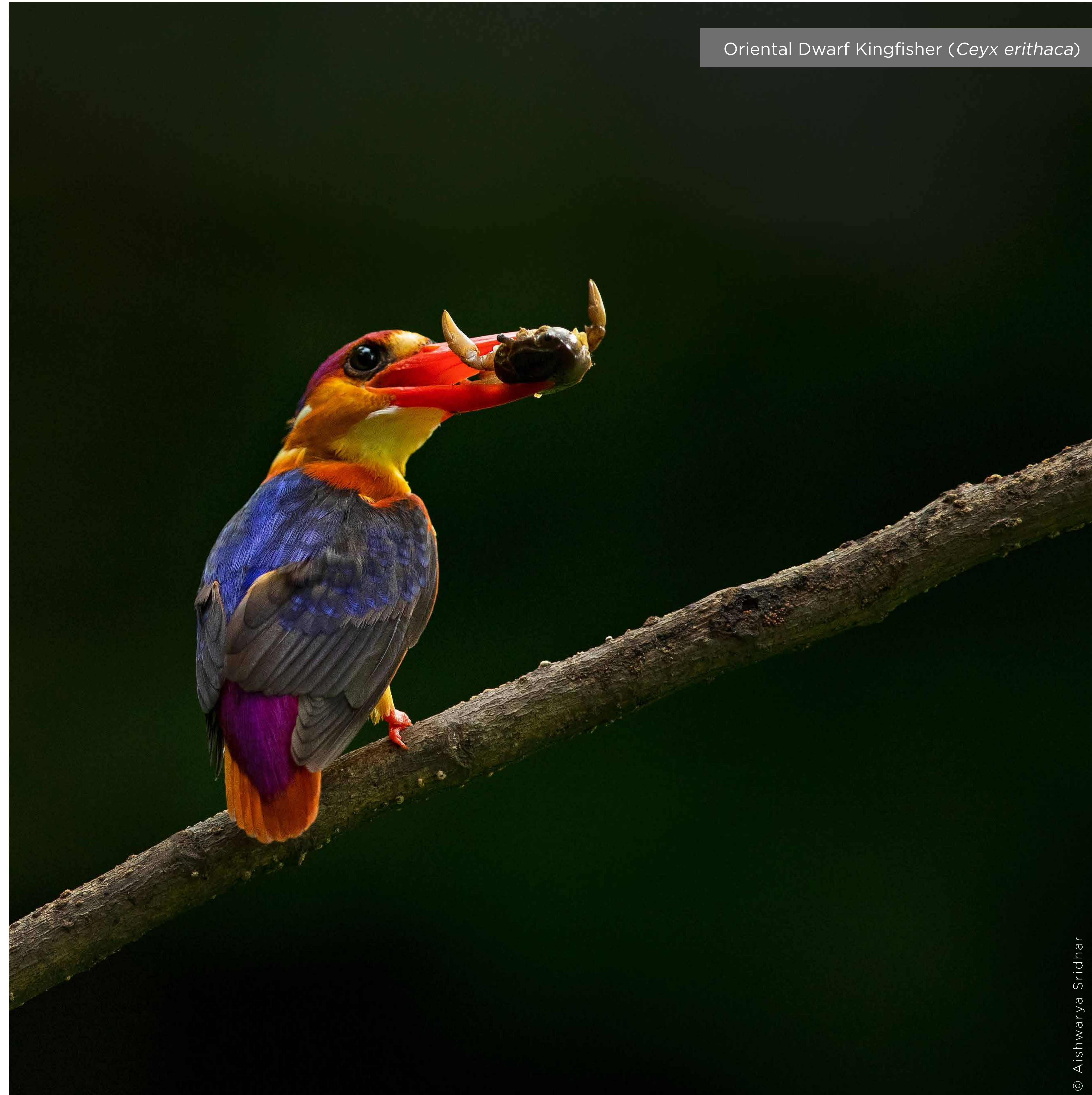
What's the best advice you've ever got? And what will be your advice for nature lovers and upcoming photographers?

The best advice I received was from a mentor-"Try to capture as much as you can today, because you never know which species will become extinct tomorrow." This advice has stayed with me in a profound way because we are at the tipping point. And my advice to nature lovers would remain the same. Never let go of a single opportunity to make the world a better place. Remember we have borrowed this planet from our children, and we need to give them one which is sustainable. There is no Planet B, Mother Earth is all we have.

Your message for every woman following their dreams.

Do not let gender limit your dreams. Have faith in yourself, be confident and learn from every failure. Every girl's voice can be heard. You can accomplish anything, overcome any obstacle, as long as you believe in yourself. There is no gate, no lock or bolt that can imprison you, unless you let it. Women are strong, only what needs to change is the way our strengths are perceived.

Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher (*Ceyx erithaca*)



© Aishwarya Sridhar





Spider (Order araneae)

CONSERVATION

Owls in British Columbia, Canada

By Wilma McKenzie



Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)



Wilma McKenzie is a wildlife photographer from British Columbia, Canada with a love for adventure travel and the natural world. She has been interested in photography since her first job at a photography studio when she was 16. Her work has been published in magazines such as Canadian Geographic, BBC Earth, BBC Wildlife Magazine and local travel guides. She hopes her work inspires appreciation and a desire to protect animals and their habitat for future generations.

**wmckenziephotography.com/
[instagram.com/wmckenziephotography/](https://www.instagram.com/wmckenziephotography/)**



© Wilma McKenzie

Northern Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium californicum*)



Northern Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium californicum*)



Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

© Wilma McKenzie



Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*)

© Wilma McKenzie

Owls have existed in mythology, folklore, and culture as mystifying creatures. Their camouflage, secretive nature, and nocturnal life are part of their mystique. It seems very special when nature reveals itself and we do see them. The unique characteristics that fascinate us, also make them a challenge to find and photograph.

In British Columbia, Canada we have a number of owl species that are resident or migratory, common or rare. They can be nocturnal, diurnal (daytime hunter) or both. Each species has their own distinctive adaptations and behaviour.

The Great Gray Owl, (*Strix nebulosa*) one of my favourite owls, lives in the boreal forests of north and central BC. Being in their presence feels magical due to their size, wing span and beauty. Largest by size, but not weight, they are built of mostly feathers right down to their talons to insulate them from the snow and cold. Their antenna-like facial disc allows them to hear prey up to 60 cm (2 ft) beneath the snow. This laser-like perch, pounce and plunge hunting behaviour is special to witness and photograph.

Knowing the habitat of the Great Gray Owl is key to finding them. They prefer conifer forests and/or deciduous birch and poplar groves that border open meadows and fields. Their primary diet is voles from the meadow. They nest in broken off snags or abandoned nests of other big birds. I love photographing them during snowfalls where you see their unique adaptations for hunting in the snow.

Opposite in size (less than 18 cm tall or 6 in), the Northern Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium*



© Wilma McKenzie

Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

Western Screech-Owl (*Megascops kennicottii*)



© Wilma McKenzie



Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

© Wilma McKenzie



Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

californicum) is the smallest owl but has big attitude. Until you become practiced in spotting them, they're difficult to find on your own, especially when they like to perch atop the tallest tree around. Again, knowing their habitat is key to finding them. They commonly dwell at higher altitudes in the mountains, but will descend lower in search of food in winter. The Pygmy Owl's distinctive "toot toot" call can be heard across the clear cut areas they like to hunt in during winter. Sometimes they move to bird feeders in winter to catch unsuspecting birds. Another perch and pounce hunter, the Pygmy Owl will take down prey three times their size. They will hunt voles, reptiles, frogs, insects and other birds. They like to cache their food in cavities in winter. Like the Great Gray Owl, they are most agreeable to photograph while hunting, as they move from perch to perch. Both of these owl species will hunt during the day, dawn or dusk. The Great Gray Owl seems to particularly like hunting during the day when overcast and/or snowing.

During each winter in coastal BC, we have two migratory owls that travel great distances to our salt marshes and fields. Some Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) will travel from Alaska. This diurnal owl is an amazing acrobat in flight. Their distinctive moth-like flight pattern is an identifier and one owl I get really excited to see in the distance. Competition for food is tough among the raptors in the salt marsh, and these feisty owls will engage in dynamic flight and fight acrobats to keep their prey. Twice I have also witnessed their extraordinary wing clapping to ward off eagles in their



© Wilma McKenzie

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

© Wilma McKenzie



Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

© Wilma McKenzie



Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

territory. These wing claps occur at a pace of 2 to 6 claps per second, almost too fast to capture with a camera!

The nocturnal Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*) is a secretive owl and is rarely awake during the day. Their camouflage make them difficult to see while roosting in bushes. Most times it is pure luck to come across them as you see some brief movement. They also are communal roosters, so it is not uncommon to see more than one at the same bush or tree. They are similar in appearance to the Short-eared Owls, but have longer ear tufts and are more orangey in colour - a very handsome owl.

Contrary to what most people think, some owls are all around us. In particular, urban owls, such as the Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) and Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) live in many neighbourhood parks. Being nocturnal, they can be most often seen during spring and summer. At this time, they are active during the day hunting in order to feed their babies and fledglings. Crows, hummingbirds, and other small birds will alert you to them by making a big fuss. Follow these bird to find the owl. The Great Horned Owl is the earliest nester of all raptors, starting in January. I am always amazed with both of these owl species in their dedication to rearing young. It is amazing to see their affection to their mates and babies, the non-stop feeding and caring, and later teaching the fledglings to hunt. They raise their young well into the fall, after which they send them out to find their own territory. The Barred Owl can be heard most often during courtship and when coming to feed the owlets. The identifiable “who cooks for you” call is so



© Wilma McKenzie

Barred Owl (*Strix varia*)



Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

much fun to hear and can pinpoint where they are!

I find many urban owls by simply exploring city parks. When I carry my camera, dog walkers will often chat and tell you if they have seen an owl. They are often out early and late in the day when the owls are. One time I found a rare and endangered Western Screech Owl (*Megascops kennicottii*) this way. It was one of the only two nesting pairs in the south western corner of BC. A dog walker started chatting about my camera and showed me where he had seen an owl in a dead log opening. I recognized that particular owl by his description and the habitat which fit the area. A friend and I searched for several months after he heard it call. Since it was endangered, we had to be particularly careful not to alert the Barred Owl or Great Horned Owl we knew were nearby, which would have killed them. They successfully raised one baby and moved on. It was quite an experience but a big responsibility in being extremely careful in photographing it, and not revealing the location to anyone except biologists studying the species.

My appreciation, respect and empathy for owls grows the more I learn about them. With habitat loss, many of these owls are threatened or endangered. It's important to be aware of their sensitivity to human behaviour. I reread ethical birding photography tips from Audubon often and do my best to follow the guidelines. I am very careful not to trample their dwindling habitat or leave evidence that alerts them to predators.



© Wilma McKenzie



Barred Owlet (*Strix varia*)

For those interested in photographing owls, I recommend doing so in very small groups, alone or with one other person, and limit time around them when photographing.

Although it won't always be obvious, an owl may change their behaviour because of your presence or if what you are doing causes them stress. Sometimes there are "celebrity owls" that draw attention. This tends to happen during an irruption year (a season of large breeding numbers) when a rare owl to the area arrives, such as a Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*) or Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*). I will limit my time if this happens, go when crowds are smaller at sunrise, or not at all. As a photographer my goal is always to capture the animal's natural behaviour, and crowds have definite repercussions on owls. If migrating owls waste energy running away from photographers after flying thousands of miles, they may starve.

The cues that each owl species shows when they are stressed are important to learn and respect. Nocturnal owls don't have the same adaptations during the day as they do at night. They won't flush during the day until the last moment because it might get them killed by a predator. The common misconception that "birds will fly away if bothered" is not always true. If any owl is continually staring at you and seems agitated, it is time to back away.

Great care must be taken, especially around nesting owls and fledglings if you see them. Many sites don't allow photos of nesting birds for this reason. Fledgling owls are commonly on the ground before

branching on to trees. Mom and dad will call them up the trees. Technical aspects of photographing owls are different for each species. Photographing nocturnal owls or owls at the start and end of the day can be challenging due to the lack of light. Longer exposure on a tripod and shutter release is best for these situations if the owl is perched and not moving. Shooting in forest parks can be difficult as well. A lens with a bigger aperture may be useful in this situation. Flight shots need a fast shutter speed and I usually hand hold even my largest lens. Some owls in flight require a very fast shutter speed while others are slower moving. I usually start at 1/1250 and increase if needed. Flight shots with owls take much practice. I have still not managed to get flight shots of the very fast Pygmy Owl. The Northern Hawk Owl is another very fast owl!

Photographers should never chase an owl, so I try to anticipate what an owl may do by learning their behaviour. I research online and learn as much as I can about a species and then spend time observing. Owls are creatures of habit and prefer the same perches. They will often repeat their flight patterns at the same time every day. As a wildlife photographer you can never predict what an animal will do, but knowing their habits increases the odds of capturing that moment. There are several more species of owls in British Columbia that I have yet to photograph, such as the ever-elusive Boreal Owl. It's nice to have the goal of seeing one someday. Whether you are a bird-lover or not, it's an honour to be in the presence of such fascinating and mysterious creatures.



Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)

© Cynthia McKenzie



Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)



SPECIES

Dusky Leaf Monkey (*Trachypithecus obscurus*)

By Mona Patel





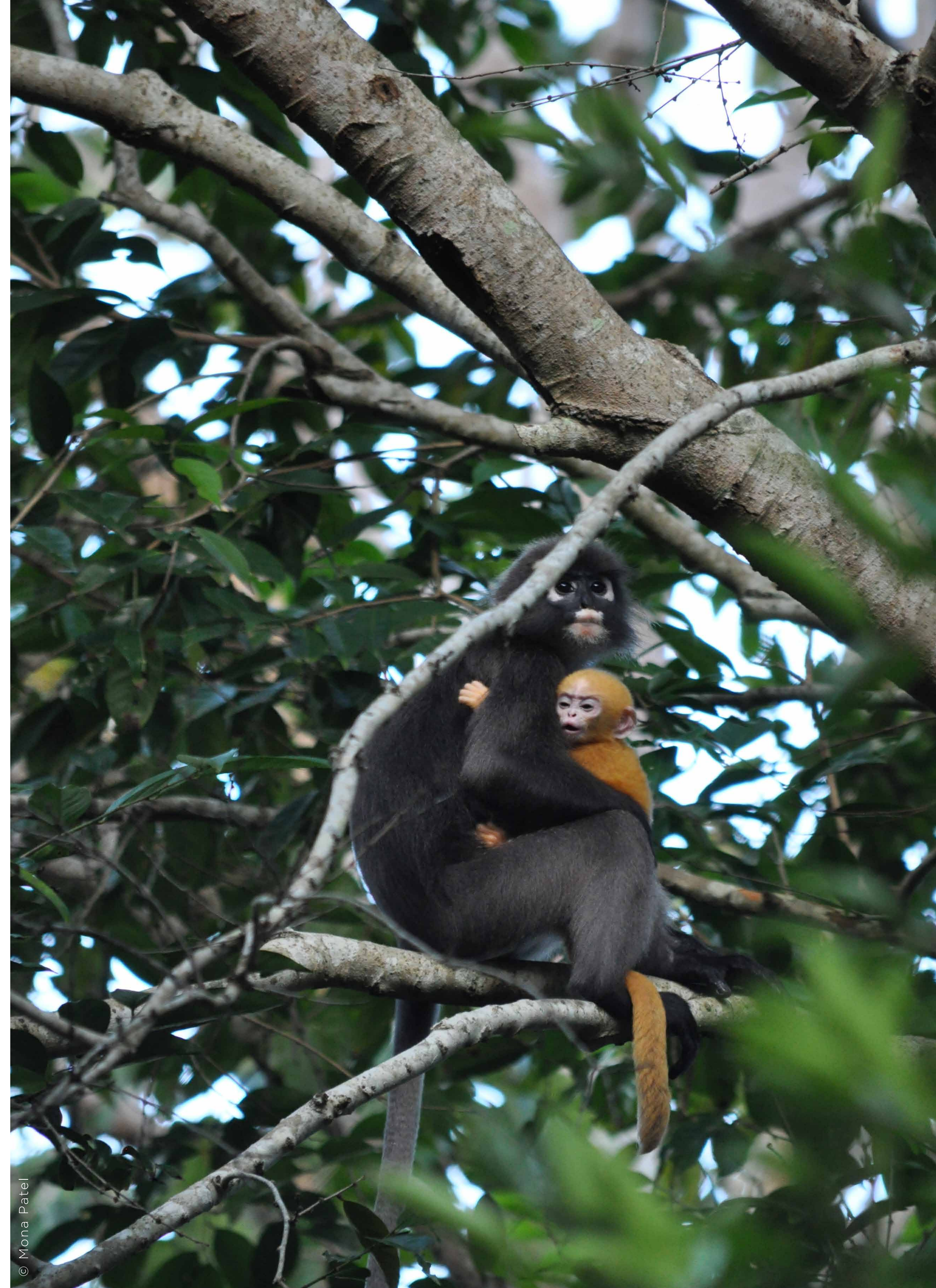
Mona Patel is a Wildlife photographer and is well known for her efforts in Marine & Rainforest Conservation. Mona is the Head of Dept. of Architecture, Property & Business at Berjaya Group of companies. She is the proud recipient of the Nari shakti-Mata Yashoda State Award from Government of Gujarat.

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

The Dusky Leaf Monkey is a native of the Kedah Mangrove forests in Malaysia.

This lovely little primate with a unique appearance (*Trachypithecus obscurus*) benefit the local ecosystem by their leaf-based diet, due to which these primates act as key seed dispersers of their range. Furthermore, they are an important prey species for many predators of the area.

Dusky Leaf Monkeys can be found in various habitats, generally preferring dense forests abundant with tall trees.



© Mona Patel



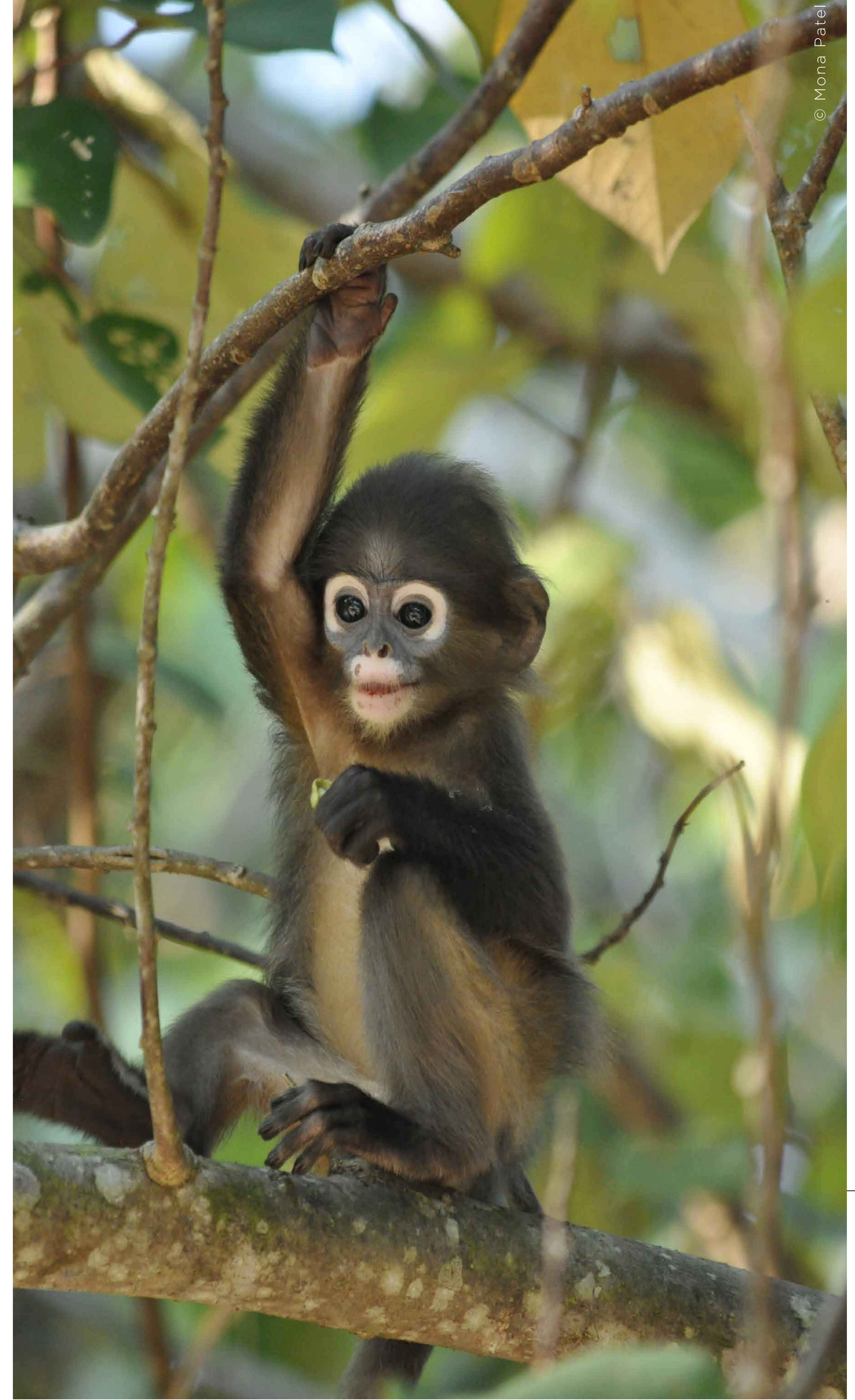
Dusky Leaf Monkeys are arboreal and are distributed across the Malay Peninsula in southern Myanmar and some parts of Thailand. The natural range of these primates also include the islands of Langkawi, Penang, and Perhentian Besar.

These social animals, travelling in groups of 5 - 20, typically consist of one or more mature males as well as two or more mature females. Mature males of these groups spend their time keeping watch for potential predators, holding the group united and patrolling the home range of the community. As diurnal animals, these monkeys are active during the daytime hours.

During most of their active time, the primates remain in the tree canopy, at heights of over 35 meters. When travelling between trees, they climb, leap, and walk along tree branches, using all of their four legs. With nightfall, the Dusky Leaf Monkeys move to their roosts, located in the trees. Their communication system includes a complex system of vocalizations. The group communicated with each other using snorts, hoots, murmurs and squeaks.

Dusky Leaf Monkeys are herbivores that generally feed upon young leaves, fruits, shoots, and seedlings.

They have a polygynous mating system where the males compete for their mating rights. As a general rule, the largest, strongest and most aggressive male will breed with the females. Breeding occurs periodically during the year with a gestation period of about 145 days, yielding a single young. Females produce







offspring at intervals of two years, typically in January-March, although some may give birth in the summer months.

During the first 20 days after birth, the infant is almost constantly with its mother. At around one year old, the baby begins climbing, venturing away from its mother, and taking solid food. Individuals of both sexes reach sexual maturity at 3 - 4 years old. Dusky Leaf Monkeys are born with a very distinct coat, typically orange or bright yellow. During the first six months of their lives, this vivid color pattern gradually turns to grey.

Dusky Leaf Monkeys are currently hunted for their meat throughout their range. These animals also suffer from loss and degradation of their natural range because of urbanization, agriculture as well expansion of oil palm plantations. Additionally, population in Peninsular Malaysia is threatened by a high level of roadkill.

The IUCN Red List and other sources don't provide the exact statistics of the Dusky Leaf Monkeys' total population. This species' numbers are on a steady decline, and the animals are classified as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List.



© Mona Patel





CUB'S CORNER

NATURE
THROUGH
MY EYES

REVA DURAPHE

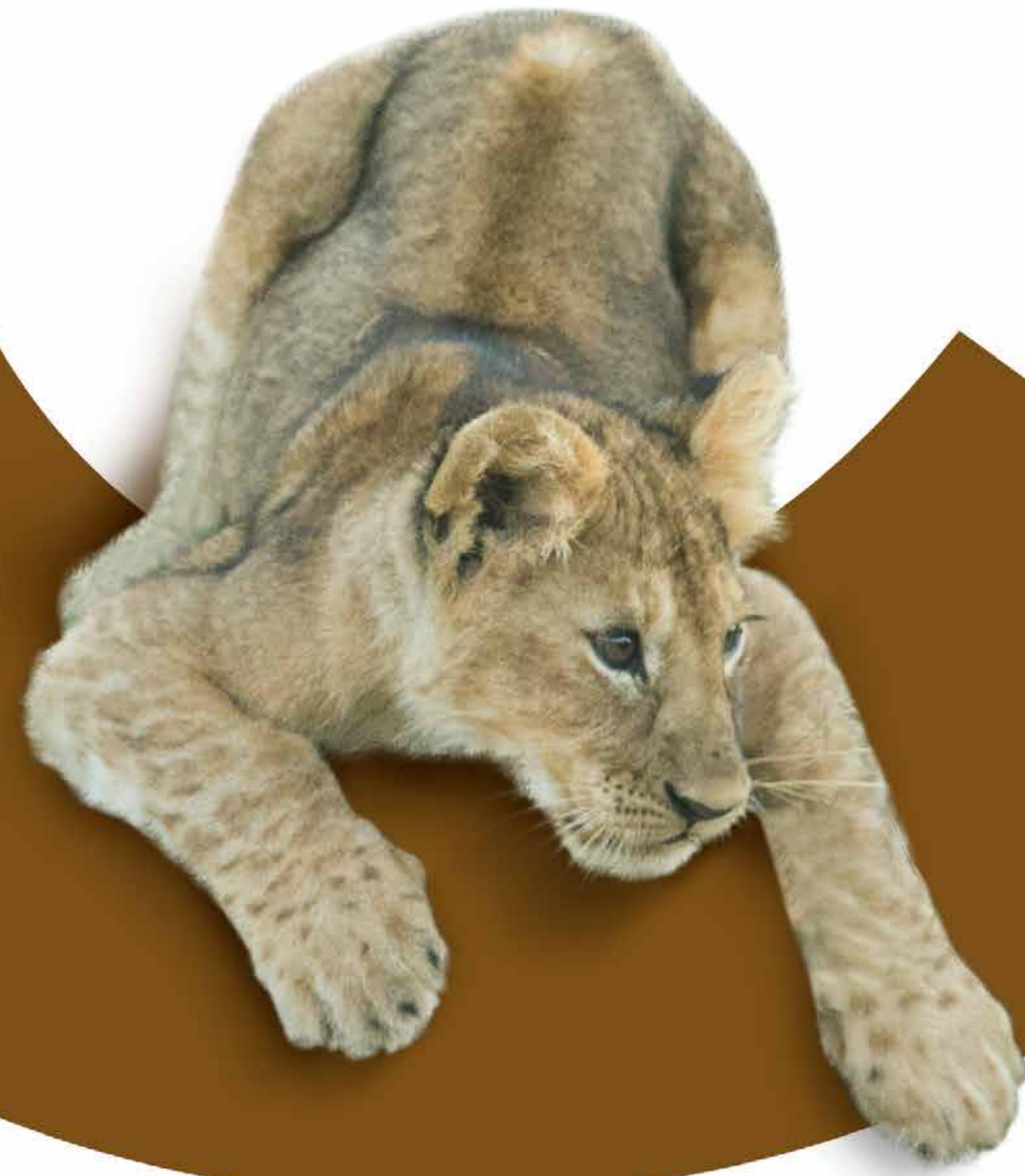


Red-billed Leiothrix (*Leiothrix lutea*)

© Reva Duraphe

CUB'S CORNER

CUB'S CORNER



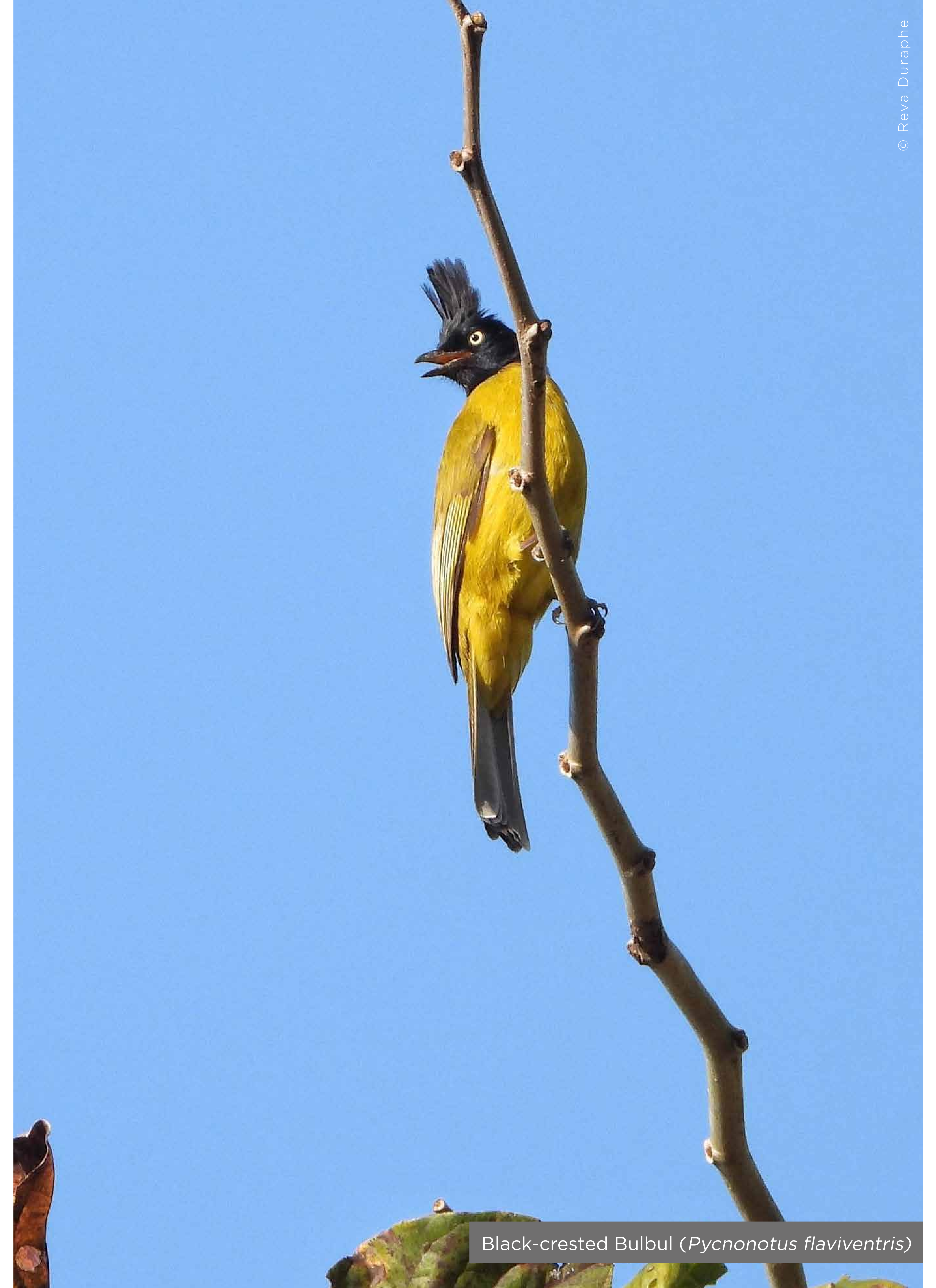
Reva Duraphe is 13 years old, studying in standard 8 in The Orchid School, Baner, Pune, Maharashtra.

sites.google.com/view/quild-times/home/

An avid traveller in the forests and national parks of India since she was seven, Reva is a passionate birder and wildlife enthusiast. She got interested in birding at the age of four and became a keen observer of nature. Her grandfather and then her father used to take her to various places around Kolhapur and Pune and show her birds. Later she got into serious birding under the guidance of Mr. Rahul Rao, who is a famous and gifted birder from Pune.

She is the youngest participant to have completed the certificate course in Ornithology by Ela Foundation (Dr. Satish Pande) which helped her understand other aspects of birding like nomenclature, mythology, parts and uses of their anatomy etc. and conservation. Owls incidentally have always been her most favourite birds!

She has seen 490 species of birds and 40 species of mammals in the wild in India.



Black-crested Bulbul (*Pycnonotus flaviventris*)





Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelanos*)

She is invited to schools to give talks on her trips where she tries to educate young children with regards to not only birds and animals, but conservation, ecology, and biodiversity too.

Her photographs have been selected to be displayed at various exhibitions. She takes young kids on short birding trails. Recently she conducted two week-long workshops titled “Colourful Wings of India” for kids aged eight to 14 which saw participants from Haryana, Delhi, and Chhattisgarh as well.

She has travelled to 18 National parks in India and has visited Kenya for its rich wildlife too. Her article written on the Red Panda and birding in Singalila National Park has been selected by Sanctuary Asia and has been published in the September 2021 Cub Kids issue.



Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)



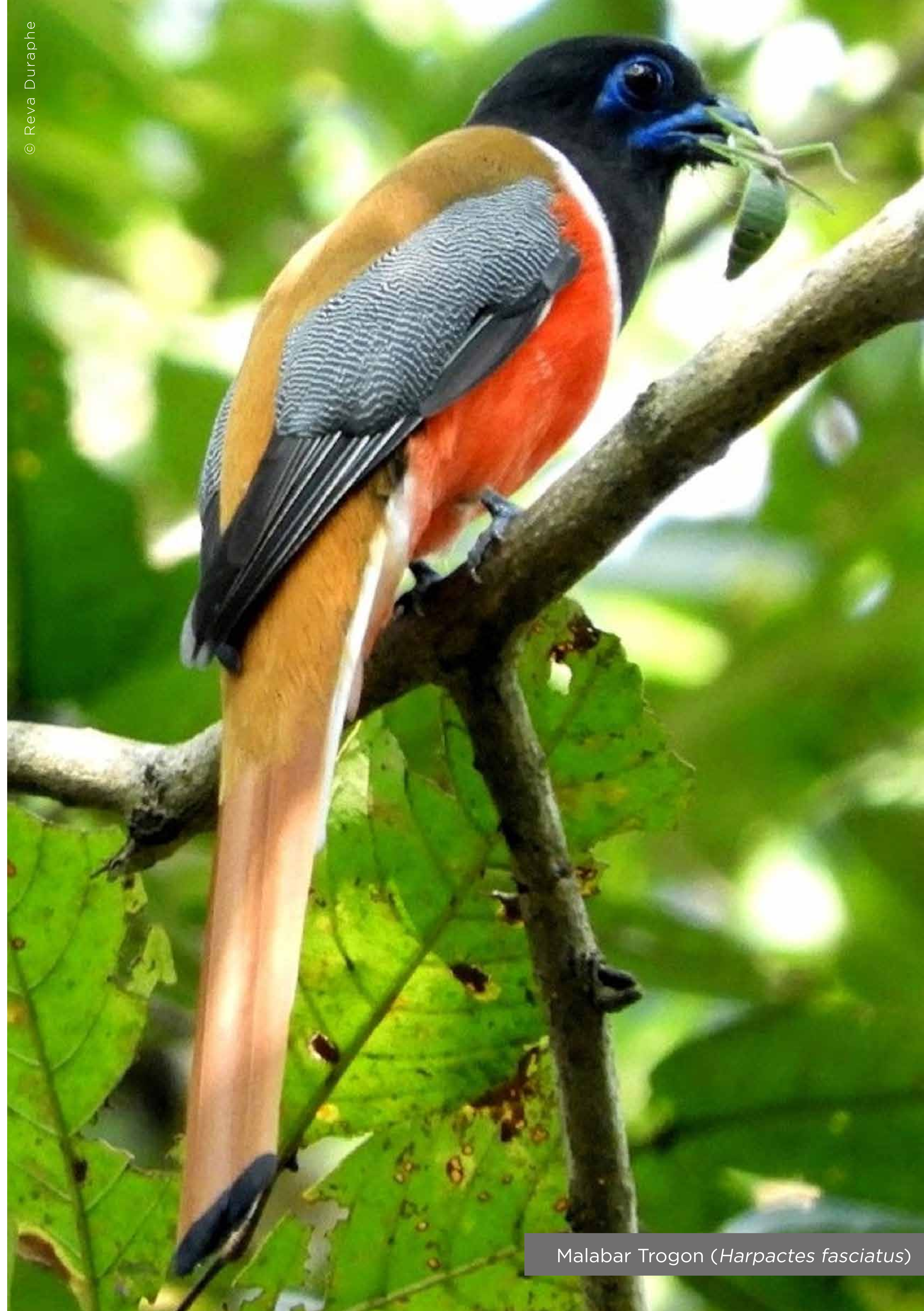
Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher (*Ceyx erithaca*)



Greater Yellowthroat (*Chrysophlegma flavinucha*)



Wreathed Hornbill (*Rhyticeros undulatus*)



Malabar Trogon (*Harpactes fasciatus*)





Her Views & Visuals

By Ana Robino

Solitary Cacique (*Cacicus solitarius*)

HER VIEWS & VISUALS



Ana has been dedicated to nature photography, especially bird photography, for about 10 years. She seeks a more aesthetic than documentary look at the world around us, and through this, she realized that she could use her images to raise awareness about caring for our natural world.

Her photographs were published in nature supplements of local newspapers, as well as in different books and bird guides.

She also participated with her work in both individual and collective competitions and exhibitions in Argentina and the US.

She is a member of the book: *Argentina Salvaje*. Her objective is to be able to capture everything that she appreciates through the lens so that people can see what, in our daily bustle, we do not stop to enjoy.

[instagram.com/anarobinofotografia](https://www.instagram.com/anarobinofotografia)
[facebook.com/anarobinofotografia](https://www.facebook.com/anarobinofotografia)

Her Views and Visuals



Common Potoo (*Nyctibius Griseus*)



Chilean Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*)

How did your interest for wildlife arise?

Since I was a child, I had an interest in nature. We live in a city that is very close to the mountains, and we always spent our family vacations there. From the end of November to the beginning of March, we lived in the mountains, very close to the river, and we spent all days interacting with nature.

On the other hand, my paternal grandfather, at that time, 40 years ago, had an aviary in his house that occupied the entire back part of the backyard. There he had more than 30 species of birds. It sounds cruel to think of it like that now, but I must admit that being there with him, feeding the birds and learning their names and characteristics that he taught me, was what marked me with respect and love for birds and generated interest later to photograph them.

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

I started with nature photography at about 40 years old. I did it with the sole interest of having a hobby. And since that is my personality, everything I undertake, I undertake with great passion.

Looking at an Argentine nature photography page, Fotonat.org, I marveled at the images of birds that those photographers achieved, and I decided that I wanted to achieve something similar.

I started with very basic equipment, which was not suitable for birds, but I tried to do what I could with it. After



Blue Dacnis (*Dacnis Cayana*)



Glittering-bellied Emerald (*Chlorostilbon aureoventris*)

several months of interacting on the page, receiving the suggestions of the members, I decided to buy a suitable lens. Thus, I began to meet people who were very generous with their knowledge and participated in workshops. I was able to progress little by little.

The day I realized that photography was my passion was when I did the floating hide workshop in a lagoon in La Pampa, with Mariano Fernández.

Currently, what I love the most is lagoon photography. Being in that environment, blending in, with the environment and feeling part of it, causes me a state of total happiness.

On this learning path, I met many people. Excellent people who helped me through it, to whom I am very grateful and with whom we are united by a beautiful friendship.

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

There is a song that says in its lyrics “I do not complain about your progress, civilization, But your steps go hand in hand with the unreason “ and I think that unfortunately it would seem, that there can be no progress without destruction. But if there is something that comforts me, it is to see so many children and young people truly committed to conservation and with a real interest in nature.

I don't see it as an imposed ideology, but

as something genuine that comes from them, and that gives me a very optimistic view of the issue.

I am currently seeing a lot of young photographers aged 15 or 16, with a real interest in the subject and a lot of children doing bird watching and reading about it. I think that is a sign that something, education on these issues, is leaving its mark and that is encouraging.

As nature photographers, I am convinced that we play a very important role, since as we know, no one can love and protect what they do not know, therefore, with our images, we are a fundamental link in this chain of protecting nature. I know everyday cases of people who through a photograph find out that this species lives in the backyard of their house, and that they had never observed it before. And it is from there that awareness begins to be created about everything that lives around us, and that we share our habitat with all these species, and we have the responsibility to take care of this space.

I have no doubt that the nature photographer is fundamental in the conservation of nature.

Can you give our readers the best wildlife photography tips? Do you have any recommendation on settings or gear for wildlife photography?

A fundamental advice and the most important in my opinion, is to be patient and not lose concentration. The situations that nature presents us, and from which our best photos can come out, are unpredictable on the one hand



@Ana Robino



Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*)





Masked Water Tyrant (*Lavadeira mascarada*)

and ephemeral on the other. Generally, these key moments last seconds and that is when we must act. That is why we must be patient, and sometimes wait many hours for the species that we are looking for to appear or wait for a certain action to take place in order to capture it. Without patience and concentration, there will be no good photos.

On the other hand, it is also very important to know the place, to know what species we can find there and to know the habits and behaviors of said species to optimize the search for that image.

Something I like to say is that you don't have to go on long trips to do nature photography. We only need to sharpen our sense of observation, since we can find the best images around us.

Regarding the equipment, the reality is that having a great equipment is not going to make us better photographers, but it is also true that the equipment must be consistent with the type of photography we want to do.

In my case, what I like to do the most is bird photography, and for that type of photography in particular there are two things that are important to take into account when purchasing equipment. A focal length of no less than 300mm and a camera with a good burst to capture action.

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

I would like to do many things, but these



Plumbeous Rail (*Pardirallus sanguinolentus*)

last times have taught us not to plan so much and to live more day by day.

There are many places where I would love to go to do photography. One of them is Africa. It is the place I dream of being able to go one day.

I would also love to be able to photograph pumas, it is an animal that fascinates me, and it is in my plans to be able to make that trip.

Regarding more specific plans, and that have to do with nature photography, I am venturing into the idea of tourism, in a place that I have in the mountains of Córdoba, where I would like to be able to take photographers. It is a place where we can find many interesting species to photograph and at the same time it can be shared with the family, since it is a very pleasant place to rest and do other activities. It is a project that is being put together and that I hope will come to light soon.

Tell us something about the gears you use?

The equipment I currently use is a Canon 1DX MII camera with a Canon 500mm F4 lens plus a 1.4 extender.

I also have a Canon 100 - 400 lens which is more versatile and lightweight for some occasions.



@Ana Robino

Least Grebe (*Tachybaptus dominicus*)



Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*)



TRAVELOGUE

The Search for lifetime experiences - Birding in Brazil

By Claudia Brasileiro

Edited By Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo

Wire-tailed Manakin (*Pipra filicauda*)

TRAVELOGUE



Cláudia Brasileiro is a wildlife photographer, passionate about animals. She has always had a passion for mammals, possibly influenced by the number of wildlife documentaries she watched as a child. However, after discovering bird watching, she specialized in the genre. Claudia is grateful for this discovery, which provided her with great learning, particularly in photography.

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

Because of my admiration for birds, I had the opportunity to meet fantastic people and places, which changed me as a person. The constant search for the observation of highly threatened species blessed me with knowledge. Furthermore, during these trips, I had the opportunity to be in contact with many cultures, protected areas, and many new species.

Bird watching/photography is one of

the fastest-growing nature activities on Earth. There are over 10,000 bird species known. Most of them are pursued by millions of birdwatchers around the world. Each of those people have their own way to birdwatching. For some, simply observing through binoculars is enough. On the other hand, people like me prefer to perpetuate the moment through photography. Each new species is called Lifer. Although the experience of meeting



Guianan Toucanet (*Selenidera piperivora*)

Guianan Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola rupicola*)





Orange-cheeked Parrot (*Pyrilia barrabandi*)

a new species is fantastic, I am always looking for something more, the so-called Lifetime Experience - enjoying the birds and other life forms, the landscape, and the local culture. I had incredible and unforgettable experiences, and today, I consider myself a wealthier person in adventures, emotions, and memories. Here, I will briefly describe some of these experiences.

Crossing Brazil: Biomes

Amazon rainforest

This is the largest hydrographic basin in the world, whose vegetation can be classified as *Terra firme*, *Várzea*, and *Igapó* forests. The Amazon Forest extends over nine countries in South America, with its largest portion located in Brazil, occupying about 60% of the territory and the states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima, and Tocantins. I made six trips to the state of Amazonas, visited Rondônia, Mato Grosso and Tocantins.

In Amazonas state, I visited several cities and had the pleasure to picture their birds. In Novo Airão, I sailed along the Negro River until I got to the Anavilhanas, the second-largest archipelago in the world (composed of 381 islands). Currently, the Anavilhanas National Park is considered a Natural Heritage Site of Humanity and a Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO). There, in addition to contemplating the local beauties, the purpose of the trip was to photograph the Wire-tailed Manakin (*Pipra filicauda*), which landed six meters from me, causing my legs to weaken briefly. In Manaus, I



witnessed the meeting between Solimões and Negro rivers (where the Amazon River begins). There, I got to know the Várzea and Igapó forests. I also visited the Amazon Museum Tower, where I took one of my favorite shots of the Guianan Toucanet (*Selenidera piperivora*). Finally, in Presidente Figueiredo, a municipality famous for its waterfalls and caves, I got a good shot of the Guianan Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola rupicola*), a bird found in humid forests close to rock formations that provide nesting areas.

In the city of Alta Floresta (Mato Grosso state), I sailed along the Teles Pires and Cristalino rivers, and it was through those places that I knew the large and exuberant Amazon rainforest as I had imagined. On this occasion, I stayed at Cristalino Jungle Lodge, where the birdwatching infrastructure is fantastic, with two towers and many other facilities.

My main target on this trip was the Orange-cheeked Parrot (*Pyrilia barrabandi*), a very skittish bird and hardly seen. Imagine my reaction when it landed less than ten meters from me!

Atlantic Forest

This Biome runs through much of the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in Brazil, reaching the interior. The Atlantic Forest has been resilient, even after 500 years of deforestation (more than 90% of its native vegetation has been devastated). It still harbors a large sample of the world's biodiversity. The largest remnants of the Atlantic Forest are amongst the wealthier regions of the country (e.g., the state of São Paulo), which favors the offering



Indigo Macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*)





Brazilian Merganser (*Mergus octosetaceus*)

of better structuring for birdwatching. I strongly recommend the Intervales State Park and Trilha dos Tucanos (both in Sao Paulo state).

The endemic and endangered Juçara palm tree (*Euterpe edulis*) is essential for large seed dispersers. Species like the Black-fronted Piping-Guan (*Pipile jacutinga*) are the true “gardeners of the forest”. It feeds on the fruits of Juçara and can be seen quite easily in the parks mentioned above.

The Red-spectacled Parrot (*Amazona pretrei*) is an endemic bird of Brazil, occurring in only two states of the southern region. The species breeds in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. However, during the maturation season (mainly between March and July) of Parana Pine seeds (*Araucaria angustifolia*), it is possible to observe more than 20 thousand individuals gathered in the city of Urupema (*state of Santa Catarina*).

The quest to observe this species is an experience that can indeed be called Lifer. A true feast for all the senses: for the vision, on account of the spectacle; hearing, for the racket caused by more than a thousand birds perched on a single tree; palate, for the possibility of tasting the same seed on which these birds feed.

I was photographing one of those large groups when a vehicle passed on the road and startled them. The movement of all those wings flying together made my body vibrate, and I was almost pushed back.

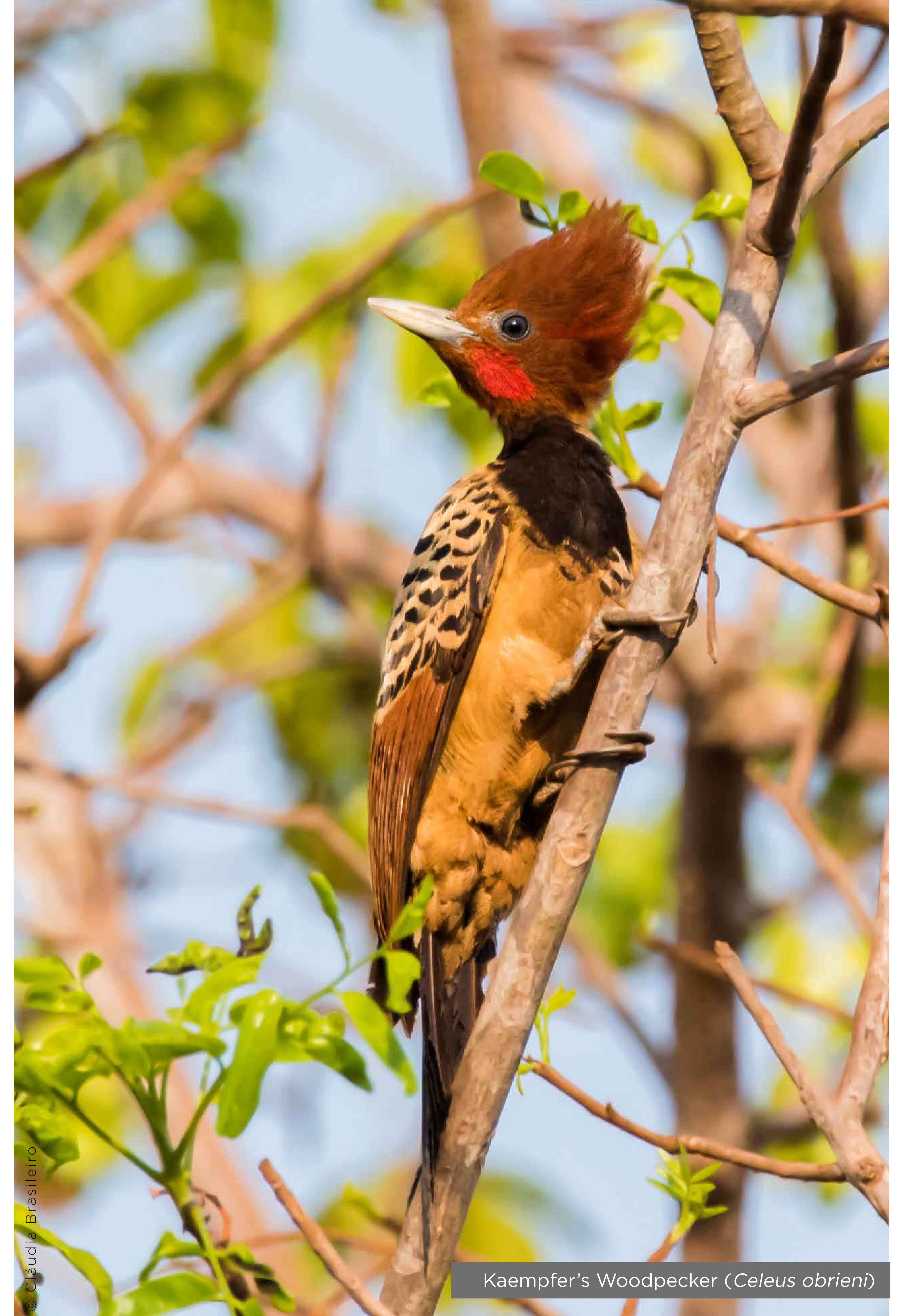
Caatinga

The name “Caatinga” has Tupi-Guarani origin and means “white forest” due to its vegetation whose leaves fall during the dry season. It is restricted to the northeast region of Brazil and presents many endemic and beautiful birds. Many of them are endangered, mainly due to habitat loss and hunting. The Spix Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) is a sad example of a bird native to the Caatinga that has gone extinct in the wild indeed.

I took a trip to meet and photograph “the bird of my life”, the Indigo Macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*). I have never been so moved by any other bird since I discovered its history (the species was considered extinct for over 100 years until it was rediscovered in 1978). From planning to the arrival, the trip to Canudos (state of Bahia) was not easy at all. We drove to the top of the sandstone walls where the macaws live, around four in the morning, and in the first rays of dawn, we heard many individuals calling, echoing loudly, and transforming hearing into feeling.

When this species was rediscovered, there were less than 250 individuals in the wild. Thanks to great efforts for its conservation (including by the Brazilian government), there are more than 1,500 individuals in the wild today. I highlight the work of Fundação Biodiversitas and Instituto Arara Azul.

The emotion of seeing the Indigo Macaws in the wild was so great that I returned to Canudos twice more. In these other visits, I was able to get to the place of



Kaempfer's Woodpecker (*Celeus obrieni*)

© Claudia Brasileiro

Hoatzin (*Opisthocomus hoazin*)





Hooded Visorbearer (*Augastes lumachella*)

its “rediscovery”, the Terra Branca farm (Jeremoabo municipality, state of Bahia), which is located just in the middle of the *Raso da Catarina* (another stunning scenario in Brazil).

Cerrado

Known as the Brazilian savannah, it covers a good part of the central-west region of the country and the so-called open diagonal (which also includes the Caatinga).

Searching for another bird of the Psittacidae family, I had the opportunity to visit one of the most beautiful places I’ve ever been, the Terra Ronca National Park, in Goiás, right in the heart of Brazil. In addition to the thrill of observing Pfrimer’s Parakeet (*Pyrrhura pfrimeri*), I could also see other parrots that live in the region, such as the Blue-and-yellow Macaw (*Ara ararauna*) and the Red-and-green Macaw (*Ara chloropterus*). The Pfrimer’s Parakeet is strongly associated with the dry forest habitat of Central Brazil. This type of environment has suffered extensive deforestation, threatening the species.

In Patrocínio (Mina Gerais state), I followed a couple of Brazilian Mergansers (*Mergus octosetaceus*) that had their nest monitored. This bird is very selective about water quality (which needs to be necessarily running) and is considered critically endangered, according to the International Union for Conservation (IUCN). The Zooparque Itatiba project has been successful in the captive breeding of the species.

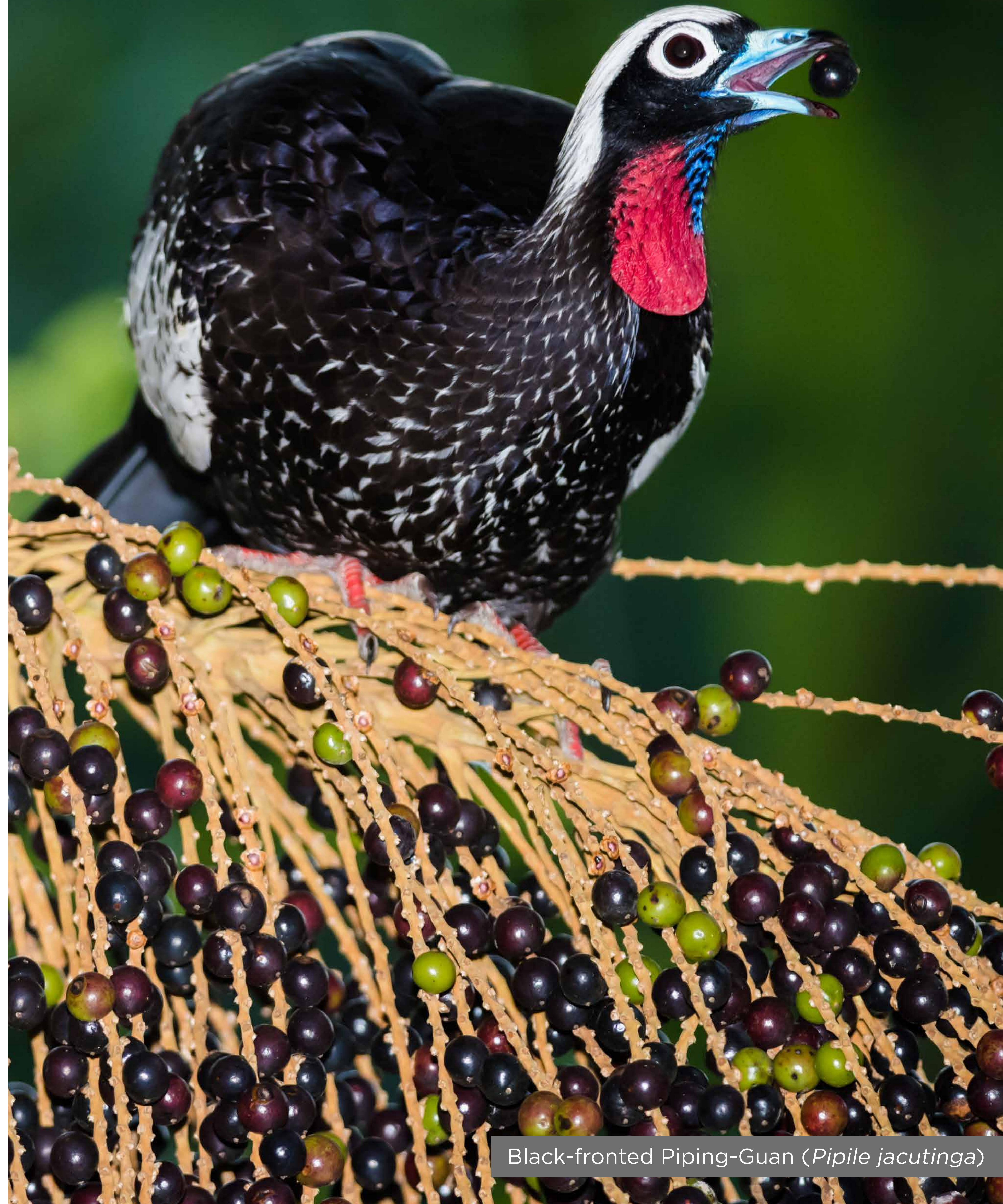


Agami Heron (*Agamia agami*)



© Cláudia Brasileiro

Red-spectacled Parrot (*Amazona pretrei*)



Black-fronted Piping-Guan (*Pipile jacutinga*)



Hyacinth Macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*)

In the state of Tocantins, I looked for the Kaempfer's Woodpecker (*Celeus obrieni*) near the Canguçu Natural Heritage Private Reserve, which is in an ecotone (transition zone) between three biomes: the Cerrado, the Atlantic Forest, and the Amazon rainforest. Nearby, I saw the dawn on Bananal Island, on the banks of the Javaés River, which gave me new and exciting encounters with the Hoatzin (*Opisthocomus hoazin*), Agami Heron (*Agamia agami*), and several others.

In Chapada Diamantina National Park, a postcard of the state of Bahia, the predominant biome is the Caatinga. However, there are also some Cerrado patches. In some of these fragments, you can see flowers and endemic birds interact, such as the magnificent Hooded Visorbearer (*Augastes lumachella*) and the Calliandra (*Calliandra mucugeana*), which yielded beautiful experiences and images.

Pantanal

This Biome is considered the largest flooded plain in the world. It comprises part of the states of Mato Grosso, and Mato Grosso do Sul. Although its diversity is relatively lower than in other biomes, such as the Atlantic Forest and the Amazon rainforest, the abundance of species favors observation of the fauna in the Pantanal.

Countless birds and mammals of different species, including the Hyacinth Macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*), Jaguar (*Panthera onca*), and the Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*).



Red-spectacled Parrot (*Amazona pretrei*)





Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*)

Pampa

Much of the southern region of Brazil is occupied by the Pampa biome, which enchants with its beautiful plains. This biome is not restricted to mere political borders, extending outside Brazil, towards Uruguay and Argentina.

The Espinilho State Park is located in Barra do Quaraí (state of Rio Grande do Sul), between Brazil and Uruguay. This is an astonishing place, with very distinctive and endemic vegetation. It is one of the few places in Brazil where we can see the Yellow Cardinal (*Gubernatrix cristata*), a bird which I photographed in Esteros de Iberá, Argentina. There, I also pictured the rare and endangered Strange-tailed Tyrant (*Alectrurus risora*) and several species of Seedeaters, among them, my favorite, Chestnut Seedeater (*Sporophila cinnamomea*).

Coastal marine region

It is a transition zone between continental and marine ecosystems. Mangroves and Restinga (vegetation type of the Atlantic Forest which covers part of coastal regions) are restricted to this region. Passionate about the sea, I made many trips searching for its birds.

One of the best places to photograph shorebirds in Brazil is Lagoa do Peixe, in Tavares (the Rio Grande do Sul state). There, lots of species stop to feed or migrate from the Northern Hemisphere to enjoy the heat provided by the tropics. I visited this place trying to get some shots of the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) in its nuptial plumage, which luckily, we

can see in Brazil from April onwards. The plumage changing happens just before the species migrate to Canadian Tundra for reproduction and spending the winter in Tierra Del Fuego after that. It finishes its migration in Patagonia (an archipelago located at the southern tip of South America, where the Pacific and Atlantic oceans meet).

There is a joke among birdwatchers that orders two kinds of people: those who have observed an albatross and those who have not. I am glad to be part of the first group after have pictured one of my favorite - the Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*).

Fernando de Noronha is a volcanic island with stunning beaches. There, you can easily observe dolphins, sharks, turtles, and of course, one of the largest colonies of seabirds in Brazil.

I planned to go to Noronha to see the beaches and a lot of birds, but one was very desired, the Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*), and it was very nice to arrive in one of the most beautiful beaches of the island, and see them diving. People entered the water to go snorkeling, and I saw that they didn't stop throwing themselves at water, close to them.

So I decided to enter the waters and stood with the water till my thigh, because of the small waves (and my photographic equipment, not waterproof, and it got a little wet, like me).

I got the experience of them diving very close to me, and because of the crystal-



Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

clear water, I could see them underwater and felt the splashes raised with each dive of these birds. While I was distracted by the Brown Booby's skimming, I was surprised by a small Lemon Shark (*Negaprion brevirostris*) of about 1 meter long, that passed through my leg. On the same island, I was able to watch two couples of Red-billed Tropicbird

(*Phaethon aethereus*) taking turns to look after their nests "from the cabin".

Having the opportunity to get to know my country and its biomes is a great privilege. I will always be grateful to the photography experiences for gifting me with many beautiful moments.



Strange-tailed Tyrant (*Alectrurus risora*)



© Cláudia Brasileiro

Yellow Cardinal (*Gubernatrix cristata*)



© Cláudia Brasileiro

Chestnut Seedeater (*Sporophila cinnamomea*)



Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*)



Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*)



THROUGH THE LENS

Photos From My Backyard

By Shalini Binu



Stingless Bee (*Meliponini*)

THROUGH THE LENS

© Shalini Binu



Shalini Binu is an entrepreneur in the tourism sector from Kerala, India. She is a passionate nature photographer and loves to shoot the tiny creatures of nature. Starting from butterflies, her journey went through dragonflies, bees, spiders, other insects and now focuses on herping as the field of interest.

facebook.com/shalinistillhere
instagram.com/_tinkerbells._

I also love birding, especially owls and other nocturnal avians. Gardening is my second love and I maintain a beautiful greenery with lots of inflorescence around my home. Obviously I was focusing more on backyard / garden photography for

around eight years of shooting. After photographing more than 100 species of various insects from my garden alone, I call it a small piece of earth by itself.

The challenging section in macro action

Lacewing (*Neuroptera*)



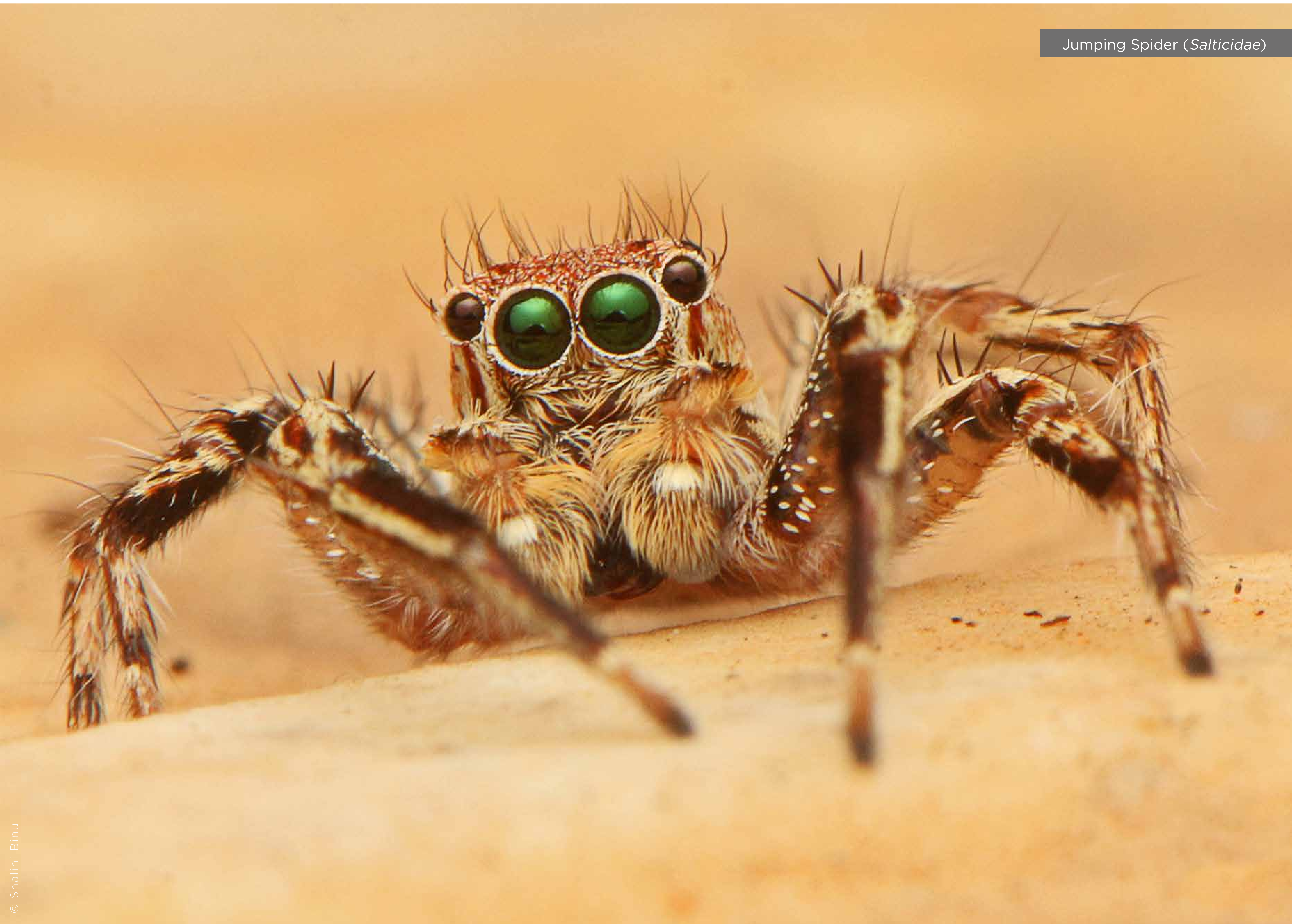


Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa*)



Crab Spiders (*Thomisidae*)

Jumping Spider (*Salticidae*)



photography was always bees. Bees, the prime agents of pollination were always my favorite subject. I wasn't introduced to flash and diffuser set ups till 2020. Till then I used natural lights to freeze the moments of these tiny beauties.

When my journey with bees started, I was not quite aware about the various species of bees around in my garden. The only two species I ever knew was big honey bee and a small sting-less bee. As days went by, my run started more exciting as I could see a lot of buzzing beauties with unique characters and features here. Among all the bees, my favorite one is neon cuckoo bee. I have spotted more than ten types of bees from my garden alone. Further my concentration was on taking few action moments of them along with the other winged beauties.

Leaf cutter bee is another beautiful bee, comes in two patterns here, which I was fond of clicking.eight years back. I have spotted one of them and followed their interesting act of nest making. Being a solitary bee, Leaf cutter bee makes a nest alone and lays eggs and seals it for the eggs to hatch. They make nests with leaf cuttings, leaves are cut in a perfect shape with their scissor like mandibles to make cones out of it. The cones are arranged one over the other to make the nest. The air tight holes where they arrange these leaves are further sealed after laying eggs. This is done by a single bee.

This bee fascinated me many times. I could see my rose plants with broken leave . not only roses, the leaves of any plant that would not dry faster, a bit thick



Blue Tiger Moth (*Dysphania percota*)



© Shalini Binu

Blue Bush Dart (*Coper vittata*)



© Shalini Binu

Owlfly (*Ascalaphidae*)



jumping spider (*Salticidae*)

yet soft . The ability of the bee to find the perfect leaves is really cool. When I started the search for finding its nest, I understood that it is made inside a hole, sometimes inside a PVC pipe, a small hole in the fencing joints, in the curled-up curtains, some dried wood in the garden etc.

Photographing leaf cutter bees was a big challenge- so fast, restless and energetic packet they are. The speed they maintain from cutting the leaves to entering the hole is very high. They make sure the leaves are brought fresh inside the hole. So I decided to be more patient and follow one bee who started cutting leaves from a plant in my garden. Another challenging factor was the time they start working. After spending early mornings and late evenings, when the lights were perfect, on nectaring, this bee starts working towards noon time. The light was too harsh all the time and I had to work with that light. seven days and almost 2,000 clicks!!! My favorite click came on the sixth day. When this bee cut the leaf and took a reverse gear and paused for few seconds and accelerated to fly forward to take the leaf to the nest site. I was watching the entire show through my eye piece. Hand held, and with natural lights available (light almost falling from straight above), I took this picture and that became a special one.

Not all action shots are lucky. Few are born with much planning, observation and patience. This leaf cutter bee image carrying the leaf is one such picture, which won some recognition for me as well.



© Shalini Binu

Leaf Cutter Bee (*Megachilidae*)

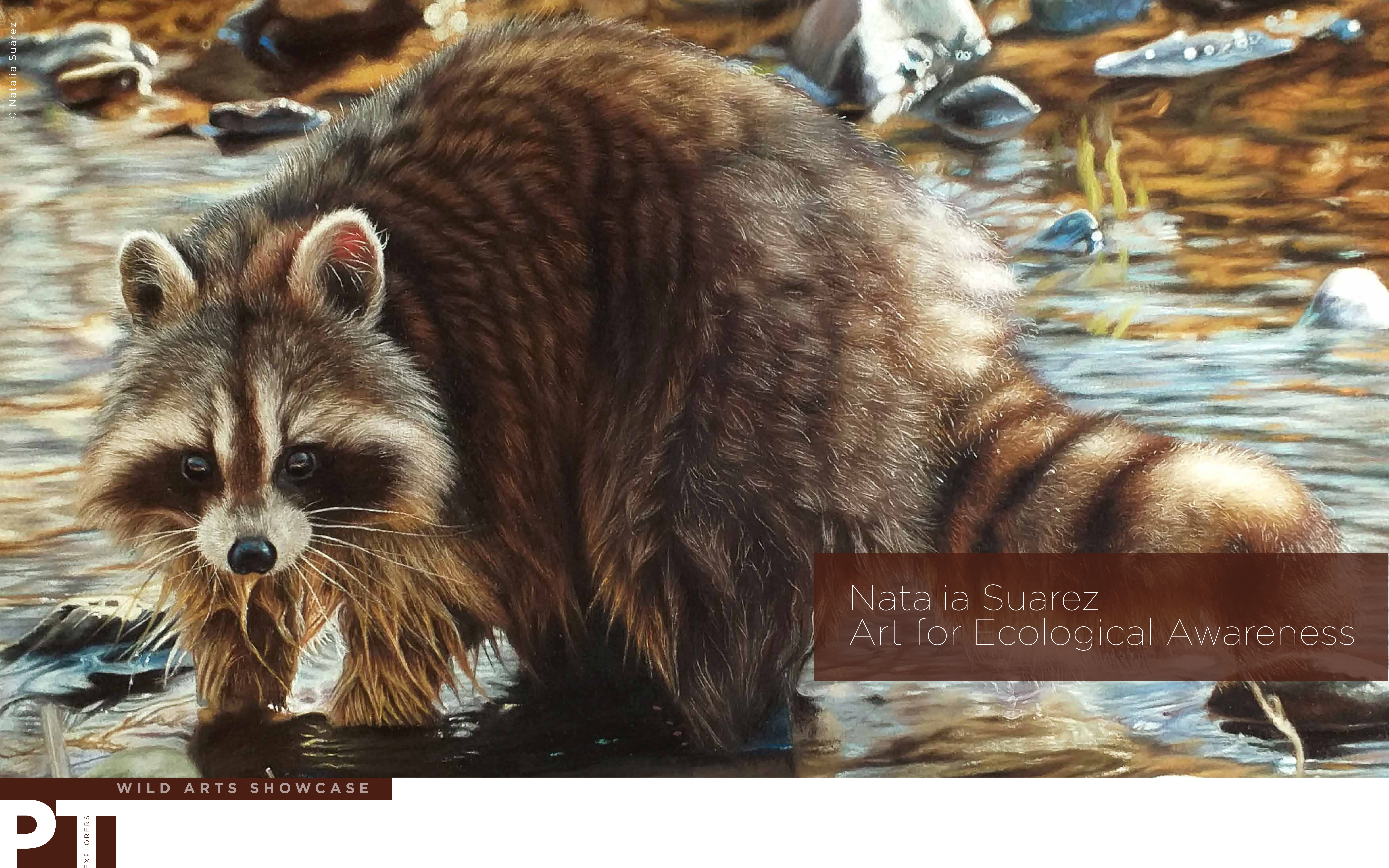


Leaf Cutter Bee (*Megachilidae*)



Jumping Spider (*Salticidae*)



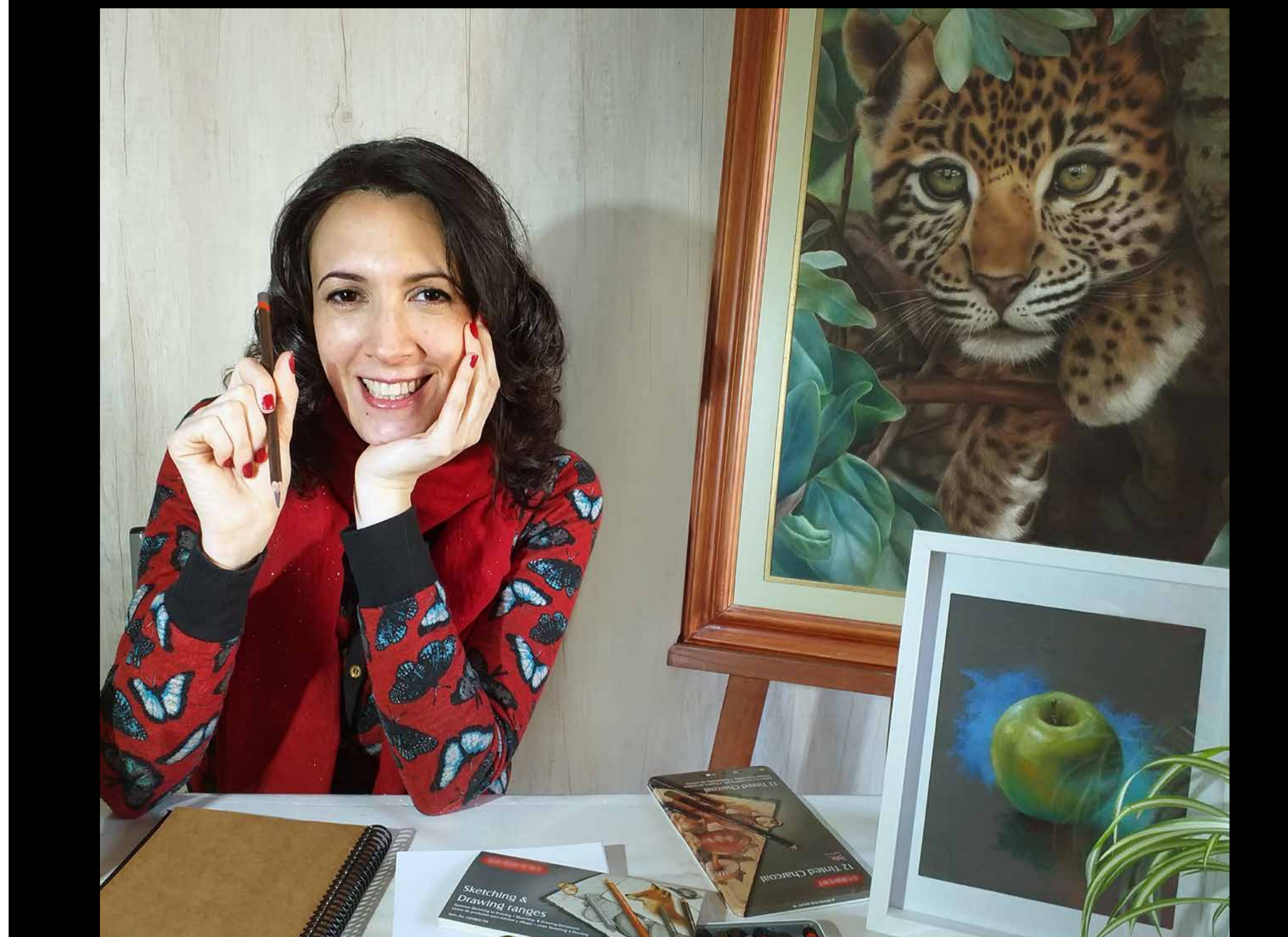


© Natalia Suárez

Natalia Suarez
Art for Ecological Awareness

WILD ARTS SHOWCASE





Natalia Suárez is an animal lover —consequently vegan— artist from Argentina. She was born in 1982 in Mar del Plata, a city located on the Atlantic Ocean coast about 250 miles southeast of Buenos Aires, where she currently lives. Her art grasps the beauty of nature by depicting vivid animal portraits intertwined with subtle fantasy elements.

**[youtube.com/c/NataliaSuarezarte](https://www.youtube.com/c/NataliaSuarezarte)
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[instagram.com/nataliasuarezarte/](https://www.instagram.com/nataliasuarezarte/)
www.nataliasuarez.com**

I have always loved animals, insects, and any life form, big or small, of this planet. Along with my love for nature came my passion for drawing and painting. When I was a child, I was shy and introverted, so I would spend most of my days drawing and painting in my room. My favorite

subjects were passing-by bugs, my dogs, or pictures of animals I would find in nature books.

I took drawing and painting lessons for most of my childhood. It was during that period that the love for pastels grew on



© Natalia Suárez

Red Fox // Soft Pastel // Paper

me. Pastels were one of the first materials I ever tried besides colored pencils and crayons. I also used to paint with gouache and then add details with pastels or colored pencils. The resulting painting was usually so velvety and natural that it looked almost real. My mom was proud of me and encouraged me to pursue a career as an artist, but I was not sure about it because I wanted to work with animals.

By the time I was a teenager, I had become more interested in environmental issues such as climate change and endangered biodiversity. Since I lived in a coastal city and loved being in contact with nature, I thought I could make a career as a marine biologist. So, when I finished high school, I enrolled in a Biology bachelor's program. To my disappointment, I soon realized I was not really into chemistry, physics, or mathematics. Although I was not interested in having a science-oriented career, I still wanted to have a nature-related job.

A year later, I began studying to become an English teacher, which somehow steered me towards becoming an artist. How did that happen? One day, one of the teachers suggested reading the work of J.R.R. Tolkien (*The Lord of the Rings*) to expand our vocabulary.

So I read the books, and the story just blew my mind! In that imaginary world called Middle Earth, all the species pulled together for a common purpose: to destroy evil. There were talking trees and animals with magical powers, and the smallest creatures saved the world with

courage and friendship. Wouldn't that be wonderful on our planet?

I understood that art does not need to portray reality to impact people's lives. As an art consumer, you can resonate with characters or creatures that have never existed because you recognize some truth in them. Art can trigger kindness, love, and tenderness in human hearts. That realization changed the direction of my life because I saw I could also be an environmentalist by being an artist. I realized I wanted to reach people on that spiritual level only art can. Having that in mind, the message I wanted to convey through art was —and still is— the love and respect for living beings: animals, trees, insects, and the planet itself.

I don't have a formal art education. Being a curious person, I consider myself a self-taught artist in many aspects. However, some years ago, I attended a few painting workshops and took up a course in art teaching. As I also had some experience as an English teacher, I gradually became an art instructor.

I started teaching art for children in Mar del Plata. My young students of English at that time were eager to take up drawing and painting lessons as well, so, for a while, I was a full-time teacher of English and Art. Then I was invited to teach realistic painting with pastels on an art TV show in Buenos Aires. My appearances on that show opened up many growth opportunities, such as sponsors and workshops all over Argentina. I hosted art workshops in many cities of the country, but mainly in Buenos Aires so, I moved there.



Squirrel on a branch // Soft Pastel // Paper

© Natalia Suárez



Bee Study // Graphite Color Pencil // Paper

© Natalia Suárez



Butterfly Study // Black Pencil // Paper

My classes aim at honing portraiture painting skills with dry media techniques such as pastels, colored pencils, and graphite. I specialize in pet and wildlife realistic portraiture. For me, teaching has become a tool to inspire people to connect with animals through art. I work on various topics, being wildlife and pets my favorite ones. I love cubs, birds, and little animals such as squirrels, raccoons, foxes, and bunnies. Capturing character is vital when working on animal portraits.

In that sense, the eyes are essential to add emotions to an animal expression. There is innocence and kindness in the eyes of small animals; they are pure like children. When I paint them, I want the viewer to feel tenderness and love. Detailing is also essential, for the impact of a realistic piece resides in the precise execution of every detail. The viewer should perceive the softness of fur, the coarseness of a piece of bark, or the brightness of grass; the painting must look “alive” in a way.

I am a drawing enthusiast, too. I have plenty of sketchbooks filled with studies of animal anatomy, insects, and botanical drawings. Plein Air sketching is one of my favorite outdoor activities. Drawing from nature is not only relaxing but also educational.

When I am outdoors in nature, I feel at peace, which leads me to be more focused on drawing. In turn, the information provided by a 3D natural live model is more accurate for drawing than photography in terms of shape, lighting, and atmosphere.

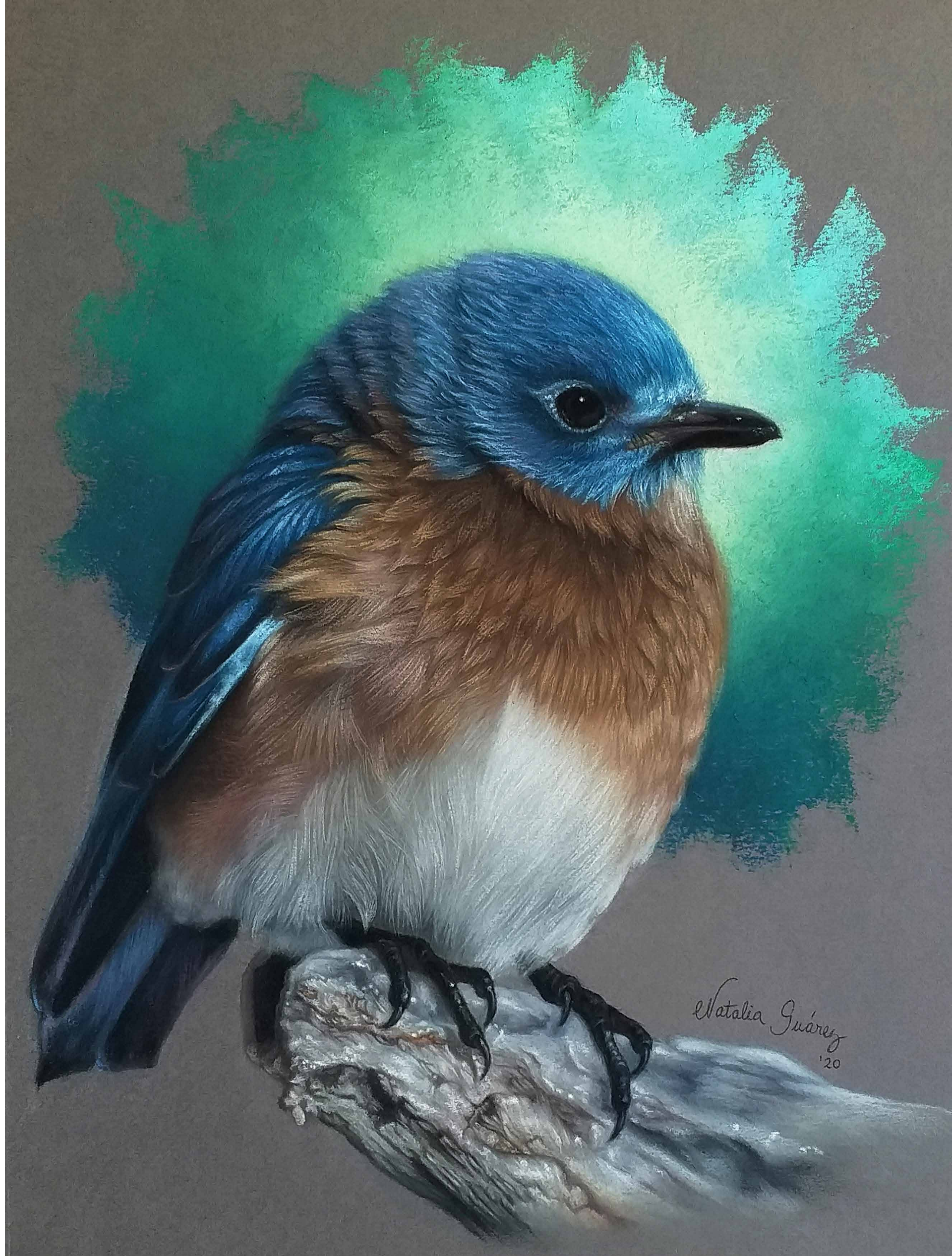
© Natalia Suárez



Guacamayo Study // Tinted Charcoal // Paper



Owl // Soft Pastel // Paper



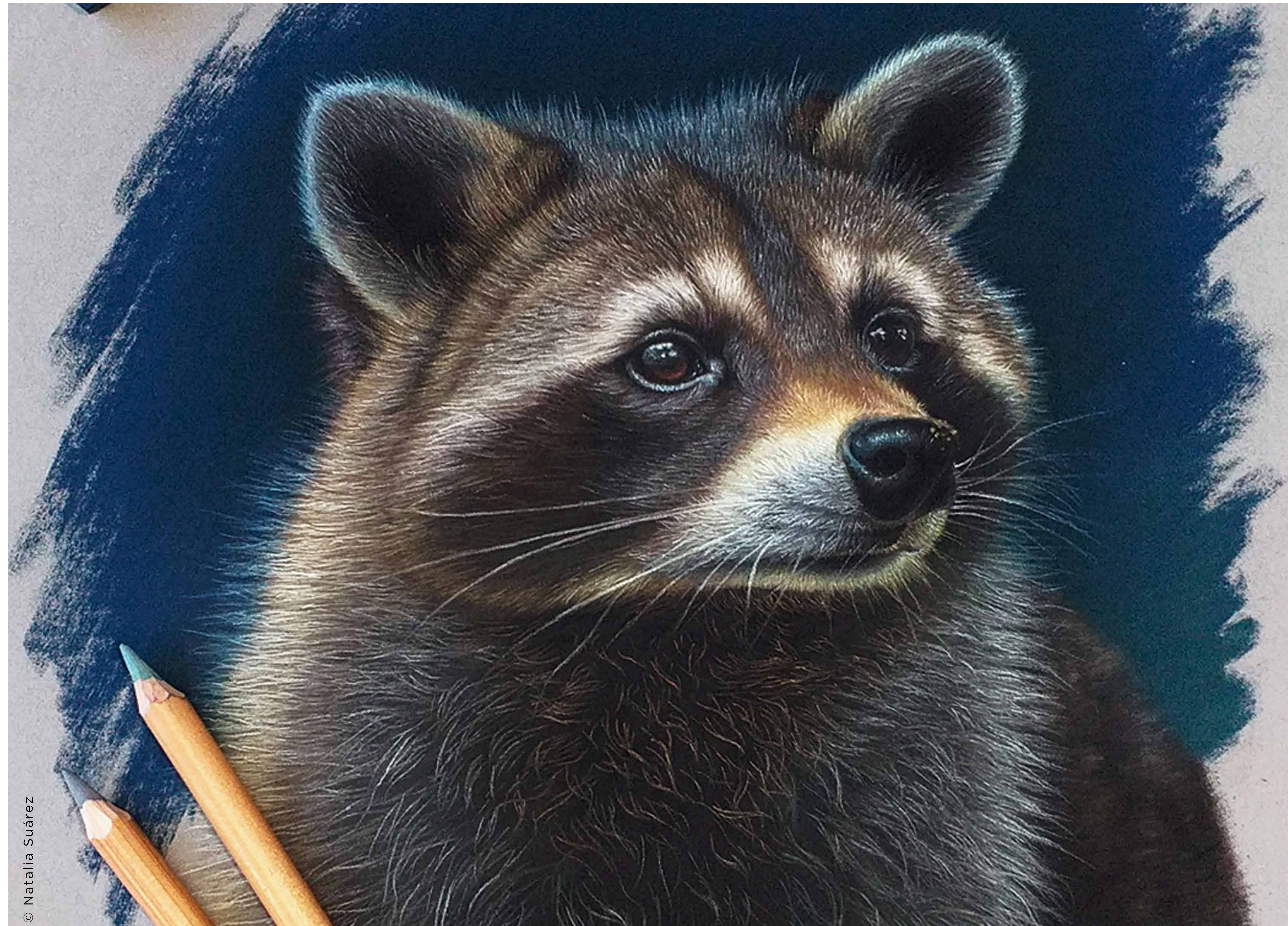
Natalia Guarez
'20

Eastern Blue Bird // Soft Pastel // Paper

As regards my favorite materials, I still prefer dry mediums such as pastels and colored pencils. I occasionally use charcoal or graphite as well. I am now trying out wet mediums to speed up my painting process, so I will probably include gouache, watercolor, and ink in my future works. I paint mainly on paper mounted on board. I also enjoy working on sketchbooks because they are easy to carry everywhere, along with my pencils and pastels. I have recently included water brush pens and watercolor pencils in my outdoor-study pencil case. I find them practical for spontaneous and colorful paintings outdoors.

I have not accomplished my artistic goals yet, but I am constantly working on them. I see most of the work I have done as artistic training. Nowadays, after two years of Covid, I only teach online, which gives me time to work on personal projects. This new reality has been both a challenge and an opportunity that pushes me out of my comfort zone. I am gradually switching from painting with an instructor mindset to creating art that conveys a message.

My greatest aspiration is to merge my love for animals with fantasy art and spirituality. Fantasy artists depict imaginary worlds or characters with the utmost possible credibility. Their mastery resides in combining creativity with aspects of the world to recreate a new one. That is extremely difficult when you do not have training in realist painting. You may be creative enough, but you also need to master the technique. I think I am right there, ready to take the next step. I want my art to invite people to see animals and nature with love. I



© Natalia Suárez

Tenderness // Soft Pastel // Paper



feel as if humanity has completely disconnected animals from the living and sentient beings they are. Most people in cities see animals as products, nothing more. They go to a supermarket, grab a piece of meat like it was nothing. Now, more than ever, humanity needs to wake up and open its heart to animals and nature; our planet needs it. The environmental problem is becoming increasingly urgent to resolve, and different ways of reaching people are valid and necessary. Art is one of those means. I would love my paintings to show a loving and caring relationship between humans and animals, and I am very excited by the challenge that task represents.

As for my art instructor role, I have several dry media painting courses available at my online school. I also teach how to draw animals, insects, and plants for free on my YouTube channel.

Conspiracy Of Life



© Natalia Suárez





YOUR GALLERY



Preeti Sonje

Amur Falcon (*Falco amurensis*)

Lonavala, India



ADITI CHITALE
PHOTOGRAPHY

YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Aditi Chitale

African Hawk Eagle (*Aquila spilogaster*)
Kenya.



YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Aishwarya Thakur
Indian Leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*)
Satpura, India



YOUR GALLERY



Namita Keskar

Striated Laughingthrush (*Grammatoptila striatus*)
Sattal, India



YOUR GALLERY



Samruddhi Pansare

Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker (*Dinopium benghalense*)
Thattekad, India



AKSHADA RISBUD

YOUR GALLERY



Akshada Risbud
Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*)
Lonavala, India



YOUR GALLERY



Ashwini Kad

Crested Hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*)

Nagzira, India



Gauri Karlekar

YOUR GALLERY



Gauri Karlekar

Indian Eagle-owl (*Bubo bengalensis*)

Pune, India



YOUR GALLERY



Geeta Godbole

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

LRK, India



YOUR GALLERY



Madhura Shrotri
Grey Francolin (*Ortygornis pondicerianus*)
Hampi, India



ManjiriK

YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Manjiri Kulkarni

Great Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*)

Mangoan, India



YOUR GALLERY



Manjusha Sawant
Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*)
Nal Sarovar, India



YOUR GALLERY



Medha Chandorkar
Indian Elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*)
Manas, India



YOUR GALLERY



Mrunal Bagwade
Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)
Bhigwan, India



YOUR GALLERY



Nidhi Singh
Lion (*Panthera leo*)
Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Noopur Sahasrabuddhe

Germain's Peacock-pheasant (*Polyplectron germaini*)

Vietnam



FOTOT
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YOUR GALLERY



Padma Lohiya

Flame-throated Bulbul (*Rubigula gularis*)

Dandeli, India



YOUR GALLERY



Pallavi Shivalkar
Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps indica*)
Sattal, India



YOUR GALLERY



Sadhana Deshmukh
Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)
Bhigwan, India



Shaefali Jain's
ENCOUNTERS WITH NATURE

YOUR GALLERY



Shaefali Jain
Lesser Adjutant Stork (*Leptoptilos javanicus*)
Bhigwan, India



YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Shilpa Deshpande
Snow Partridge (*Lerwa lerwa*)
Tungnath, India



YOUR GALLERY



Shivaae Chavan
Indian Elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*)
Corbett, India



Shweta Kulkarni

YOUR GALLERY



Shweta Kulkarni

Puff-throated Babbler (*Pellorneum ruficeps*)

Tamhini, India



YOUR GALLERY



Shweta Patil

Red-necked Falcons (*Falco chicquera*)

Bhigwan, India



YOUR GALLERY



Sujata Joshi

Yellow-browed Bulbul (*Acritillas indica*)

Tamhini, India



YOUR GALLERY



Swapna Lotankar
Red-naped Ibis (*Seudibis papillosa*)
Kavdipat, India



YOUR GALLERY



Chelsea Marcantonio
Northern Map Turtle - juvenile (*Graptemys geographica*)
Canada



YOUR GALLERY



Swapna Marathe
Rufous-bellied Niltava (*Niltava sundara*)
Sattal, India



YOUR GALLERY



EXPLORERS

Vaijayanti Gadgil
Keel-billed Toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*)
Costa Rica

Vaijayanti Gadgil



YOUR GALLERY



Adriana Claudia Sanz
Hooded grebe (*Podiceps gallardoi*)
Argentina



YOUR GALLERY



Seema Suresh

Indian Elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*)

Kaziranga, India



YOUR GALLERY



Vaishali Harip

Himalayan Monal (*Lophophorus impejanus*)

Chopta, India



YOUR GALLERY



Vandana Lokhande
Black-naped Monarch(*Hypothymis azurea*)
Pune, India



YOUR GALLERY



Veena Karandikar
Short-toed Snake Eagle (*Hypothymis azurea*)
Bhigwan, India

PR

EXPLORERS

UPCOMING
FEATURES



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INTO THE OCEAN

with Ryan Sault



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WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY AT NIGHT

By Emmanuel Commiso



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WILDLIFE ARTIST

By Mrinmay