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EXPLORERS

JUN / JULY 2023

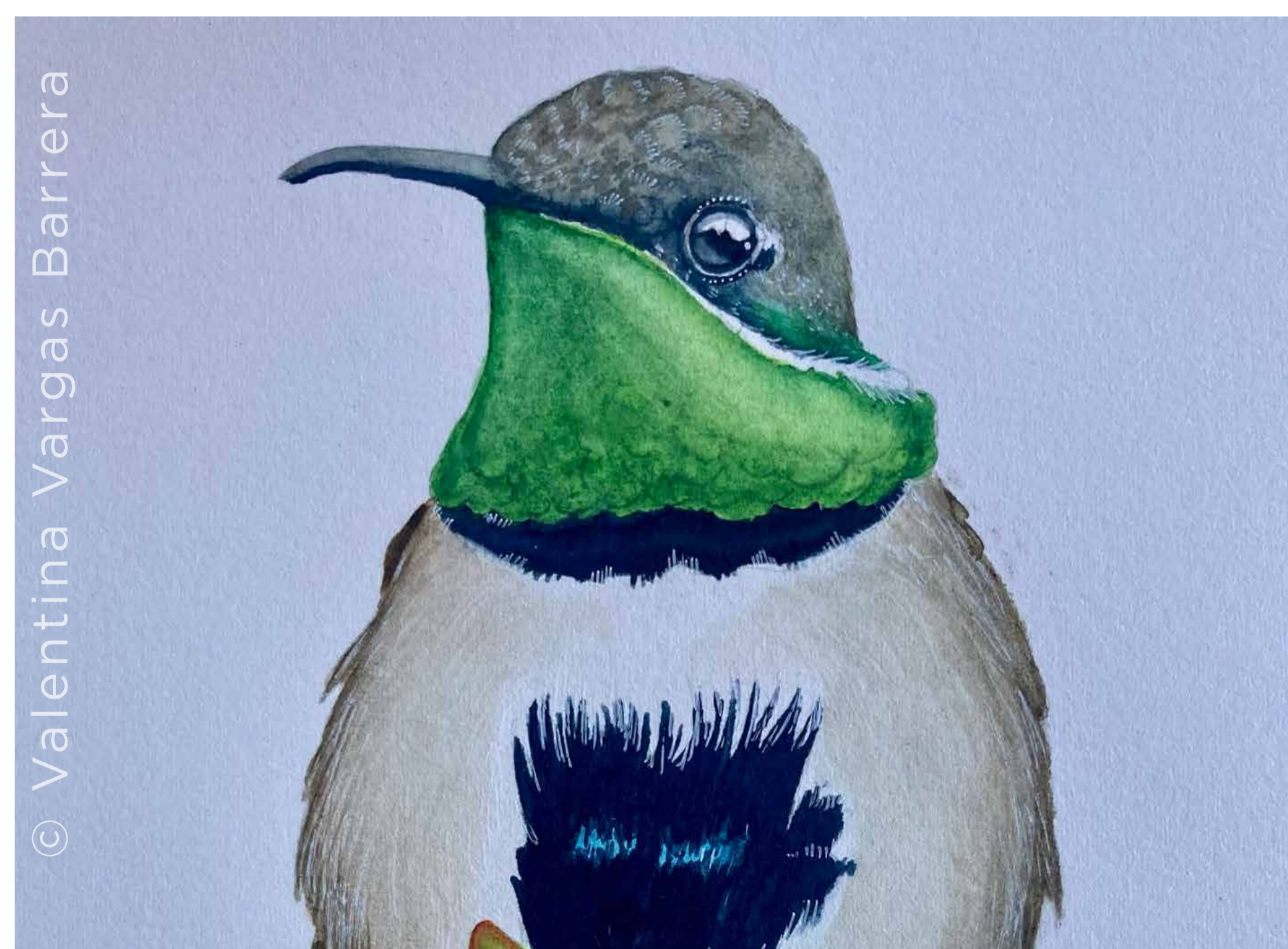
INTO THE WILD

WITH Harman Singh Heer

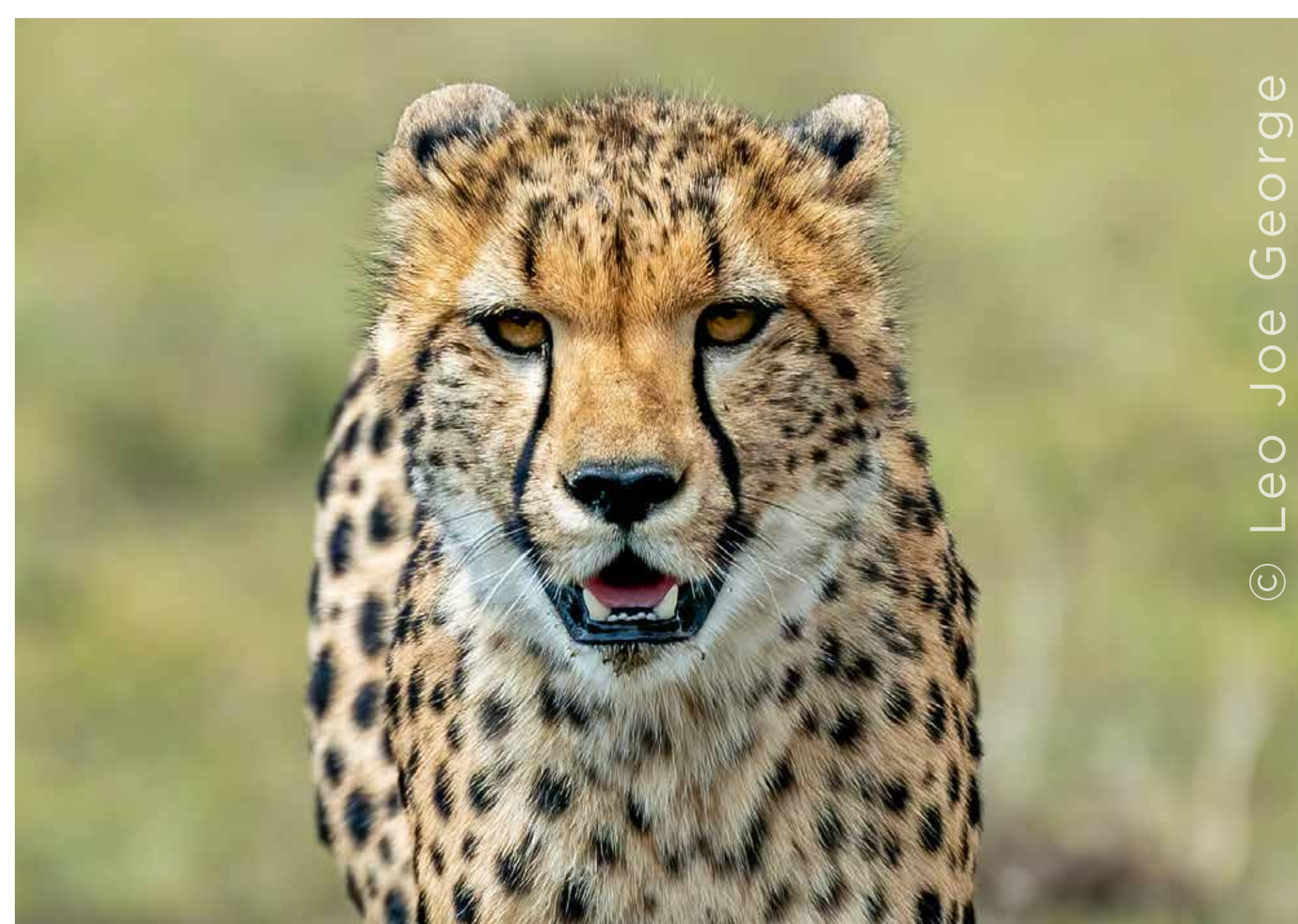
SCOTLAND'S PARKLANDS -
ACADIA NATIONAL PARK, MAINE
CONSERVATION EXCHANGE

By Ronald Beard

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© Valentina Vargas Barrera



© Leo Joe George

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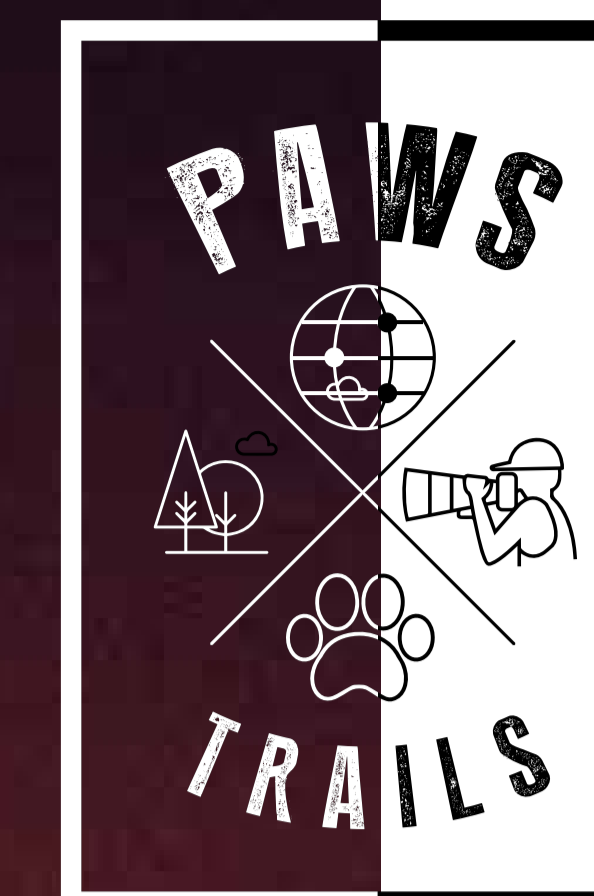
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© Harman Singh Heer



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008

Cover Story
HARMAN SINGH HEER





Hank Tyler
Editor

PT Explorers is pleased to bring you an amazing collection of spectacular wildlife photos from around the world.

In our Cover Story, Harman Singh Heer highlights many of the magnificent animals living in Kenya's world famous Masai Mara Reserve.

In our Conservation section, Ron Beard tells the value of international exchanges through the lens of over 30 years of experience. I was part of this exchange, and I am pleased to reflect on its success.

Ajith Jose has captured spectacular images of the colorful and iconic European Hoopoe.

In our Cubs Corner section, Leo Joe Georga, showcases amazing collection of wildlife photos from Masai Mara captured by an eleven-year-old. We are looking forward to seeing how his wildlife photography developed over the next fifty years.

In, Her View, Pratima Singh, Indian Wildlife photographer presents her "Eye-catching" photos of India's amazing biodiversity.

Cynthua Bandurek, shares her vision of insects seen through her macro lens - an amazingly rich diversity. Macro photography adds a new dimension to wildlife images and opens a whole new world of tiny animals.

Hermis Haridas presents outstanding photos of Pallas's Cat taken during a recent trip to Mongolia. We look forward to seeing more images from Hermis' Mongolian adventure.

In our Wild Arts section, Chilean artist Valenina Vargas Barrera displays her stunning watercolor of a Quetzal, Hummingbird, Inca Tern as well as views of her paint brushes and colors alongside her paintings.

PT Explorers is always looking for new photographers to feature. If you have outstanding wildlife photos, please contact us.



PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Ananth Satheesh
Leopard
(*Panthera pardus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

EDITOR'S DEN

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EXPLORERS

FOUNDERS' NOTE

Welcome to PT Explorers.

An elephant is cornering more news minutes than it should be and for the wrong reasons.

The story is from the states of Kerala and Tamilnadu in South India.

Right from the first decade of 2000, a tusker named Arikomban has been terrorizing residents and shopkeepers of the Chinnakanal region of Munnar.

Its penchant for raiding shops for rice gave it the name "Ari" (rice) - "Komban" (tusker).

The destruction of around 75 buildings and 11 human deaths are attributed to the tusker.

Why are we here? If you have followed PT Explorers, we have done countless articles on the impacts of the growing human population and of settlements growing into and closer to wildlife areas.

We need forests, we need wildlife for our very own survival. As the dominant species of this age, the onus is on humans to define robust ways for peaceful co-existence.

Follow PT explorers, and look for meaningful ways in which you, your community, and your country can contribute to a better earth.

Let us take the pledge for a greener future!

Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman

Founders - PT Explorers



COVER STORY

Into The WILD

with Harman Singh Heer



Harman Singh Heer is a wildlife, landscape and travel photographer based in Perth, Western Australia. Growing up in Kenya, he developed an immense love for photographing African wildlife in their natural habitats. However, moving to Australia pushed Harman out of his comfort zone, allowing him to explore the depths of landscape, aerial and marine-wildlife photography.

Harman hopes that his photographs make the audience realise the importance of our natural world, as well as have an insight into the often-unnoticed beauty and fragility of Mother Nature.

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

harmansinghheer.com







How did you start photography? What motivated you?

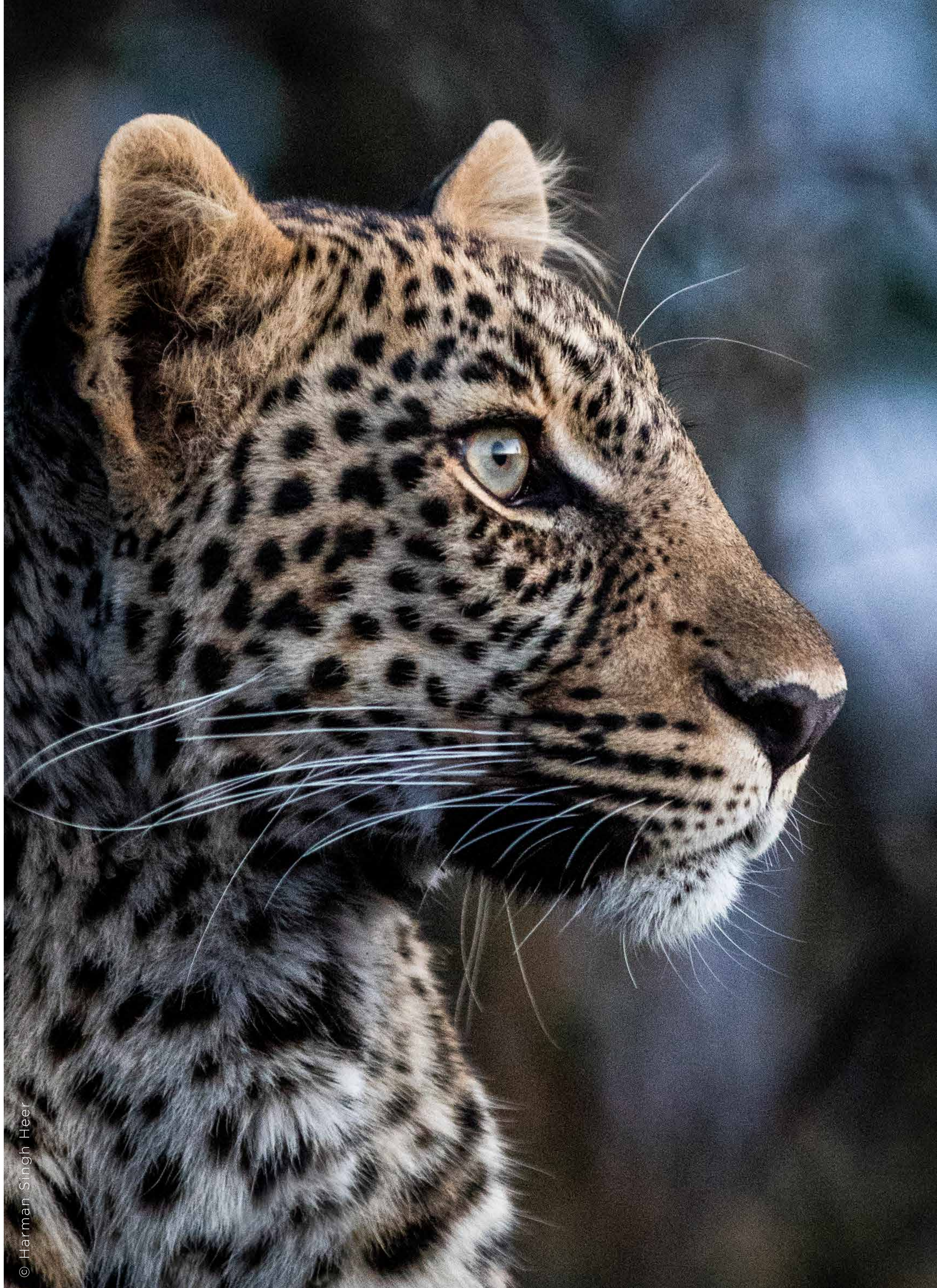
It all began 11 years ago in Kenya's Maasai Mara National Reserve. I picked up my mum's Canon 450D and decided I would be the "photographer" of the safari. Little did I know that this was the beginning of something very special - a journey that has connected me immensely with Mother Nature, taught me more than I could have ever imagined, and has always given me light and hope in the darkest times.

Mother Nature is my greatest motivation. Seeing the death and destruction of the last remaining wild places first-hand has made me realise that it is more important now than ever that we collectively come together and make change. I want my imagery to make people feel and understand the importance of protecting these wild places that are being eroded by human civilisation.

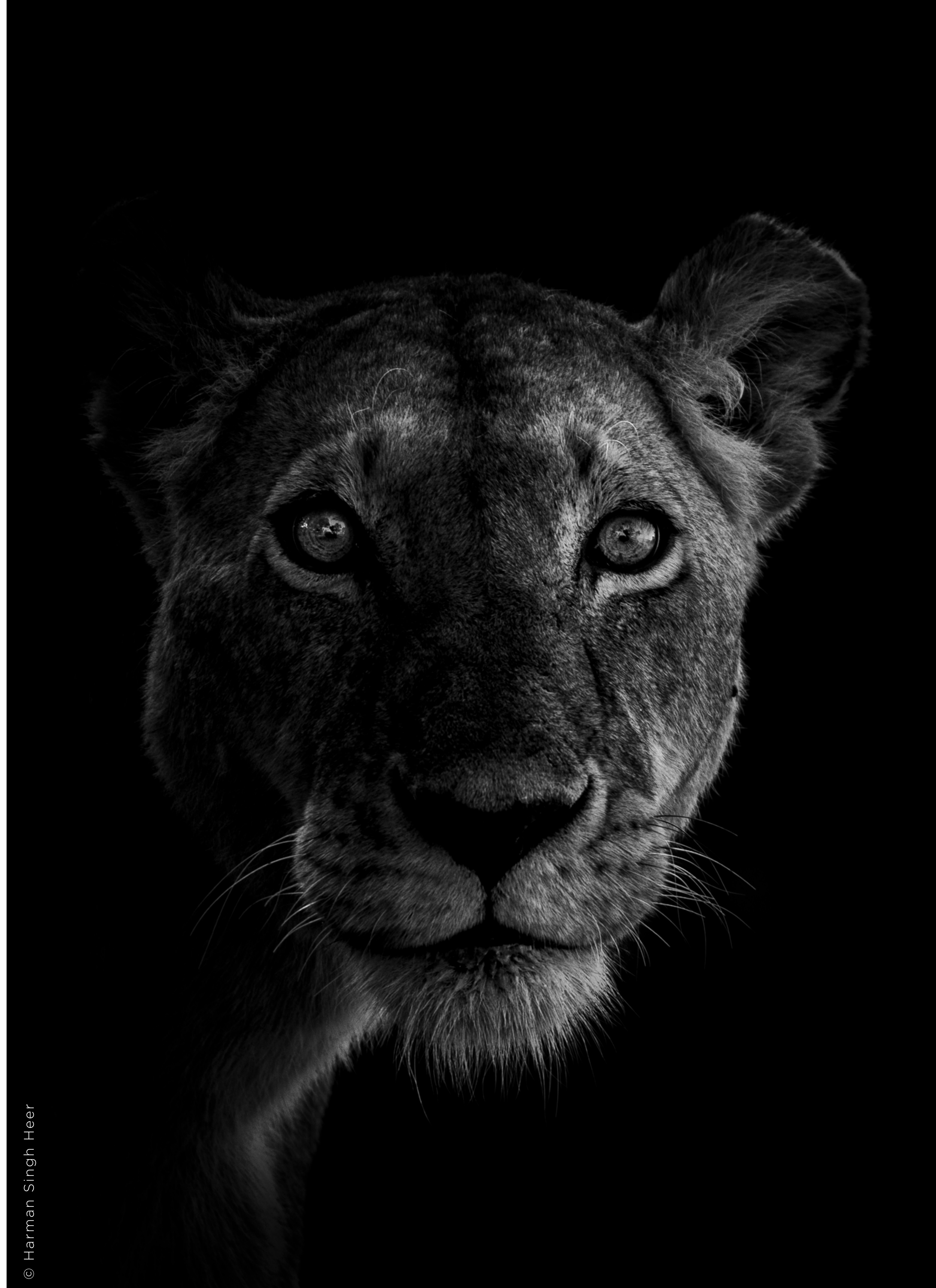
You are quite young. How has photography influenced you over the years in your life and your views?

Photography has taught me more life lessons than anything else. I have met many people in the field that have changed my life in so many ways. I have grown increasingly connected with Mother Nature and formed a deep appreciation for the wildlife that I photograph. I have also gained a unique outlook on life and been able to travel to a variety of places to do what I love. I have been given opportunities I would have never been given if it was not for photography. I am eternally grateful for what the camera has given me - undying





© Harman Singh Heer



© Harman Singh Heer

moments and eternal memories.

How do you balance your life as a wildlife photographer and as a student?

Balance is extremely important, but it is also easier said than done. While I am at university studying full time, I do not have much time to go out and shoot. Instead, I spend most of my free time editing old photographs - experimenting with new compositions, colours and contrasts. As well as this, I try and capture photographs on my trusty iPhone every time I am outdoors which I think keeps my creativity alive.

That said, I do often try and do road trips in Australia's South West to photograph marine wildlife which has become a field of growing appreciation for me.

The inability to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic forced me to discover places close to home and inevitably saw me diversifying my portfolio and exploring new arenas of photography.

What are the difficulties faced by a wildlife photographer on a regular basis?

I think the main difficulty is often the inability to be out in the field every day. My niche is African wildlife, and living in Australia means I must plan my expeditions well in advance and I only have limited time out in the field.

What is it that you think is the most beneficial part of being a wildlife photographer?



© Harman Singh Heer

© Harman Singh Heer



© Harman Singh Heer







Learning the importance of Mother Nature. Being able to be immersed in nature.

How important is winning awards in photography? How do you choose the right image to send for contests?

I have not actually undertaken any studies on the habitat or behavior of species, however the time I have spent out in the field has taught me an immense amount of knowledge about animal behaviour. The more time you spend out in the wilderness surrounded by wildlife, the more you will learn.

Knowledge of the subjects you are photographing is extremely important in wildlife photography. For instance, it is so important to know when a lion or leopard is about to get up and walk.

It is also so important to always watch the behavior of herbivores, because more often than not they will lead you to a big cat.

It is difficult to avoid taking the same type of photograph especially when the subject is the same. But you have some unique images. What's your approach to creative frame-making?

Try different compositions. Try different angles. Use different focal lengths. Shoot in different light. Spend more time with your subject and learn its behavior.

I have seen some wildlife photographs in black and white in your work. What inspires you to make images in black and white?

I feel that black and white photographs

© Harman Singh Heer



© Harman Singh Heer



© Harman Singh Heer

accentuate the emotions of the subject. In many ways black and white photographs also create an aura of romanticism and reminiscence that renders them timeless.

Among aerial, eye level, and low angle photography, what's more challenging? what's your favorite? And why?

I would argue that low angle photography is the most difficult and challenging. Being on the ground near wild animals can be dangerous if done unethically and irresponsibly, and leaving the camera on the ground while using a remote shutter can mean the camera gets destroyed or you miss the photograph because of poor positioning of the camera or the unpredictability of your subject.

How often do you try to create out of the box experiments, and can you share some of your favorites?

I am always trying to create out of the box images. Some of the areas I have experimented with are silhouettes, ground level photographs at 16mm, and aerial photographs.

Creating unique and unseen work will make you stand out which is most important in a



© Harman Singh Heer



community that at times tends to create a lot of the same, standard imagery.

What kind of gears do you use now, and what did you start with?

I started shooting with a small point and shoot camera before picking up my mum's Canon 450D with a 100-400mm.

My current gear consists of a Canon 1DX M2, 5D M4, 100-400mm, 70-200mm, 16-35mm and a DJI Phantom 4 Pro Drone.

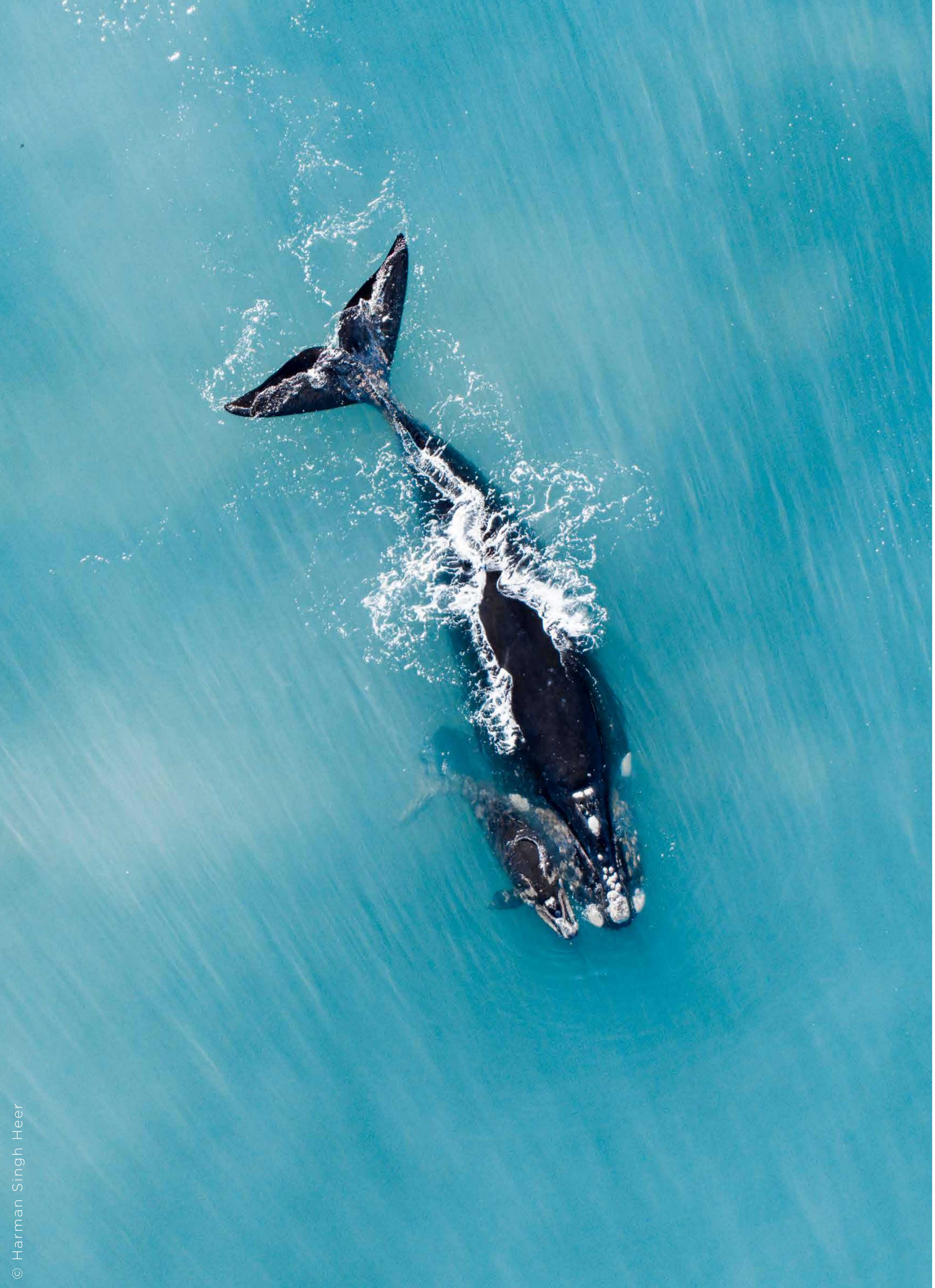
As a young wildlife photographer, what's your advice to youngsters who love to get into wildlife photography?

Stand out. Do not be afraid to do things differently than the mainstream, edit your work the way you want your viewers to see the world. At the end of the day you are creating art, so focus more on the artistic side of photography over the technical side.



© Harman Singh Heer

© Harman Singh Heer



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CONSERVATION

Scotland's Parklands – Acadia National Park, Maine Conservation Exchange

By Ronald Beard

Glen Nevis, Scotland

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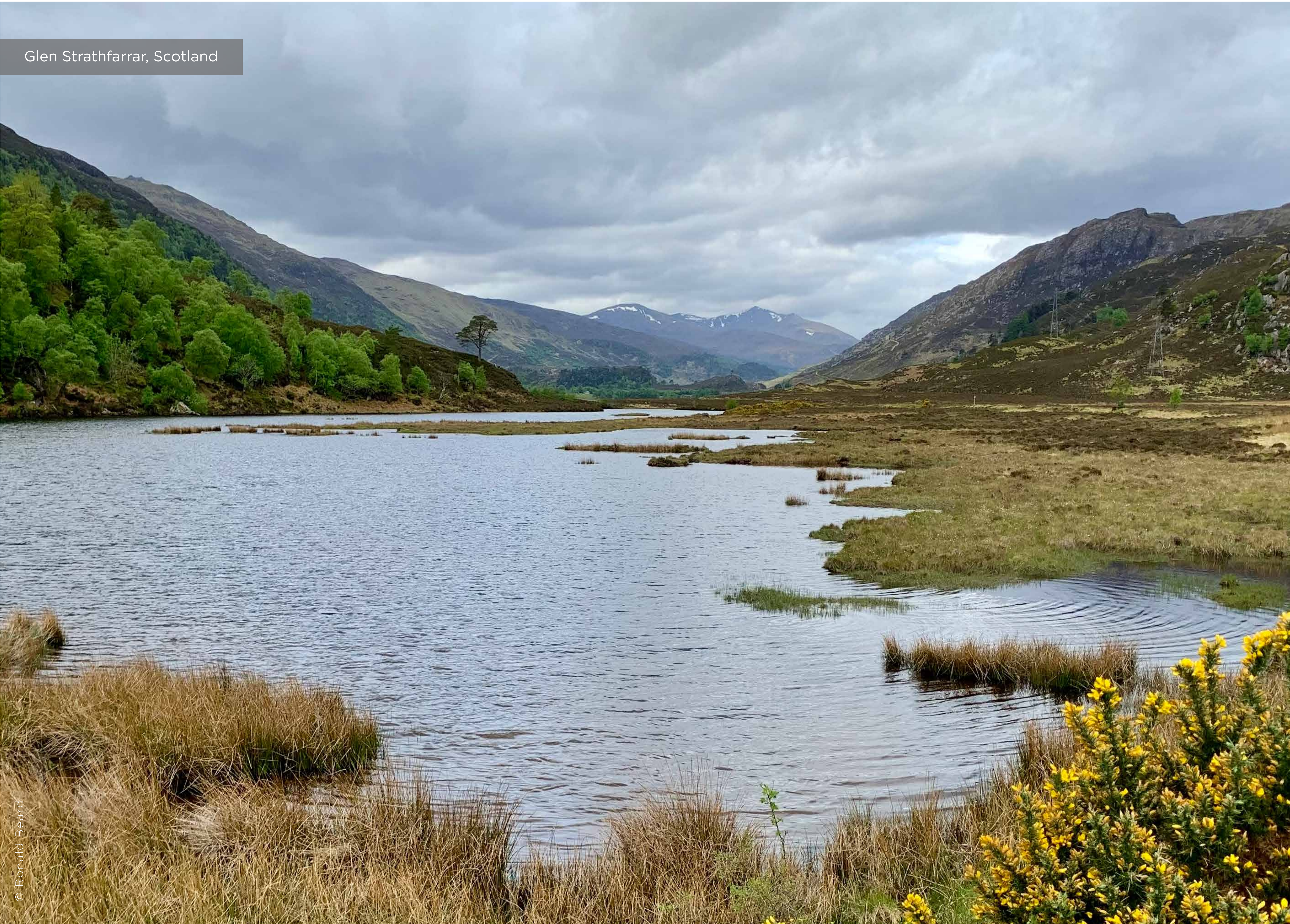
Ronald Beard lives in Bar Harbor, Maine and since his participation in the 1989 exchange has developed life-long friendships in Scotland, fostered through two sabbaticals from the University of Maine and many other visits. He is grateful for Kenny Taylor's careful review of this article and for his photos of red deer which accompany it.



Red deer hinds in snow, Scottish glen, winter. NB these are on a deer farm, so are ear tagged.

© Kenny Taylor

Glen Strathfarrar, Scotland



In 1989, a remarkable collaboration between the US National Park Service and the UK Countryside Commission brought together small teams of conservation professionals from both countries to study problems and opportunities in five regions of the United Kingdom. One of those teams developed a case study from the Ben Nevis area of Scotland, looking to safeguard and enhance outstanding environmental and recreation qualities while developing tourism and recreation opportunities.

Since the Victorian age, Scotland had developed summer tourism for the wealthier classes. Now, it was at the cusp of waves of more visitors of moderate income from both the UK and Europe, interested in hill walking, mountain biking, and other outdoor recreation. At the time, Scotland had set the boundaries of its first national park in the area around Loch Lomond and the Trossachs. Would Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain, and its surrounding region of fresh and saltwater lochs and picturesque glens be worthy of a second national park designation? Could a ski area at Aonach Mor, in the shadow of Ben Nevis, attract new visitors to bolster the winter economy of Fort William?

In the thirty plus years since that visit by members of the US-UK Countryside Stewardship Exchange, the Highlands and Islands region of Scotland have continued to wrestle to balance economic benefits of tourism with protection of natural resources and local community values. The coastal region surrounding Acadia National Park in Maine, has grappled with similar issues.

In Scotland, long-standing issues serve as a backdrop for seeking a balance between tourism on the one hand and resource and community enhancement on the other. The first issue concerns the pattern of land ownership in areas outside of the country's central belt, between Edinburgh and Glasgow, where the majority of the Scotland's five million plus inhabitants reside.

After Scotland and England were brought together in the Act of Union in 1707, leaders of longstanding familial and territorial groupings called clans were drawn into the circles of power around the monarchy, in London. Rewarded for loyalty by royal grants of land, these clan chiefs increasingly monetized ownership of land and clan members who tenanted that land. Rents were an important source of landowner wealth, and when rents proved not enough to support their lifestyles, sheep and shepherds were brought to their lands. The tenants were removed, either to small tenancies on marginal coastal land, called crofts, or forced to emigrate to North America. Scotland's "clearances" of people from the lands they had tenanted for centuries reached their peak during the 1750s to 1840s.

Queen Victoria made it fashionable to spend a portion of the summer in the highlands of Scotland, with lavish country homes becoming the popular for landowners made wealthy from profits of the burgeoning industrial revolution. Recreation included shooting both grouse and deer, and land was managed to yield wildlife crops to meet demand. Ownership of land continued to be

consolidated for many reasons. A 2014 report by the Land Reform Review Group noted that in 1872, 90% of Scotland was owned by 1380 individuals and at the time of its publication, 50% of the land in Scotland was held by 432 individuals.

One of the striking visual characteristics of the highland landscape today is its openness, close cropped heather on the lower slopes of mountains, giving way to scree tops. Much of native woodlands had been cut in earlier eras, starting with the Iron Age demand for fuel and later industry requiring wood for ship building and other pursuits. Managing for deer, who graze every green shoot, and grouse, who thrive in the low vegetation of moorland, kept the woodland from growing back.

In fact, the climate and soil conditions in most of Scotland are ideal for growing trees. And after national policy following World War I sought greater self-sufficiency for UK timber resources for industrial use and papermaking, vast tracts of land were planted with non-native spruce, larch and fir. Subsequent rotational clear cutting and replanting, both on crown land and through subsidies to landowners brought economic benefits, but the resulting landscapes did not always favor recreational use and biodiversity.

Two responses to historic land ownership and management are significant: "community buy-outs", in which residents of a village and surrounding land purchase the land and manage it for community benefit; and, very recently, efforts toward "re-wilding" are creating



Red deer stag, Scottish Highlands

©Kenny Taylor



© Ronald Beard

opportunities for native species and biodiversity to recover from centuries of management for deer stalking and grouse shooting or long decades of non-native forestry plantations.

The crofters of Assynt and the island community of Eigg provide examples of local campaigns to purchase adjoining land. In the first case, the land went up for sale when Swedish investors liquidated their holdings in 1993 and the Assynt Crofter's Trust coordinated a variety of sources to produce the winning bid. On Eigg, community members long resenting lack of control of island resources formed Eigg Heritage Trust and teamed up the Highland Council and Scottish Wildlife Trust to secure the island in 1997. Those purchases have allowed for further investments for forestry, recreational fishing, heritage tourism, year-round resident housing and other pursuits that support both the economy and culture of their communities.

The current movement toward re-wilding stems from the recognition that biodiversity is a critical element in landscapes and communities adapting to climate change. While supported by many individuals on residential properties, significant landscape level examples stem from owners who are choosing to regenerate native species on vast holdings.

In 1993, Alan Watson Featherstone founded Trees for Life, with a vision to restore the Caledonia Forest across wide areas. He did this by growing birch, aspen and pine from locally harvested seed and transplanting them. Starting in

Glen Affric, on state land owned by the Forestry Commission and more recently on the Dundreggan Estate, near Loch Ness, Trees for Life is giving the Caledonian forest a chance to regenerate. In Glen Feshie, in the Cairngorm Mountains, Danish businessman Anders Povlsen has reduced the deer population to levels that the landscape can sustain. The resulting biodiversity is rebuilding soils, wildlife and ecosystem resilience, while planting of native trees may provide income through carbon sequestration schemes.

“With the twin crises of climate breakdown and biodiversity loss upon us, it's no longer enough to regard ecosystem restoration as a side-line activity aimed at conserving small “reserves”, mainly as an entertaining draw for visitors. Landscape scale rewilding is of crucial importance to mitigate some of the impacts of climate change and to help create more resilient rural communities,” says Douglas Gilbert, Dundreggan Conservation Manager, at Trees for Life.

Gilbert also notes that small rural communities lack agency and capacity to tackle these issues. “Land ownership and decisions about land management is in the hands of a tiny proportion of the population. The continuing impact of high numbers of deer on carbon-rich uplands is a case in point. Without major change in deer management, restoration efforts will be restricted and forest expansion, and carbon sequestration, will be much more difficult,” says Gilbert.

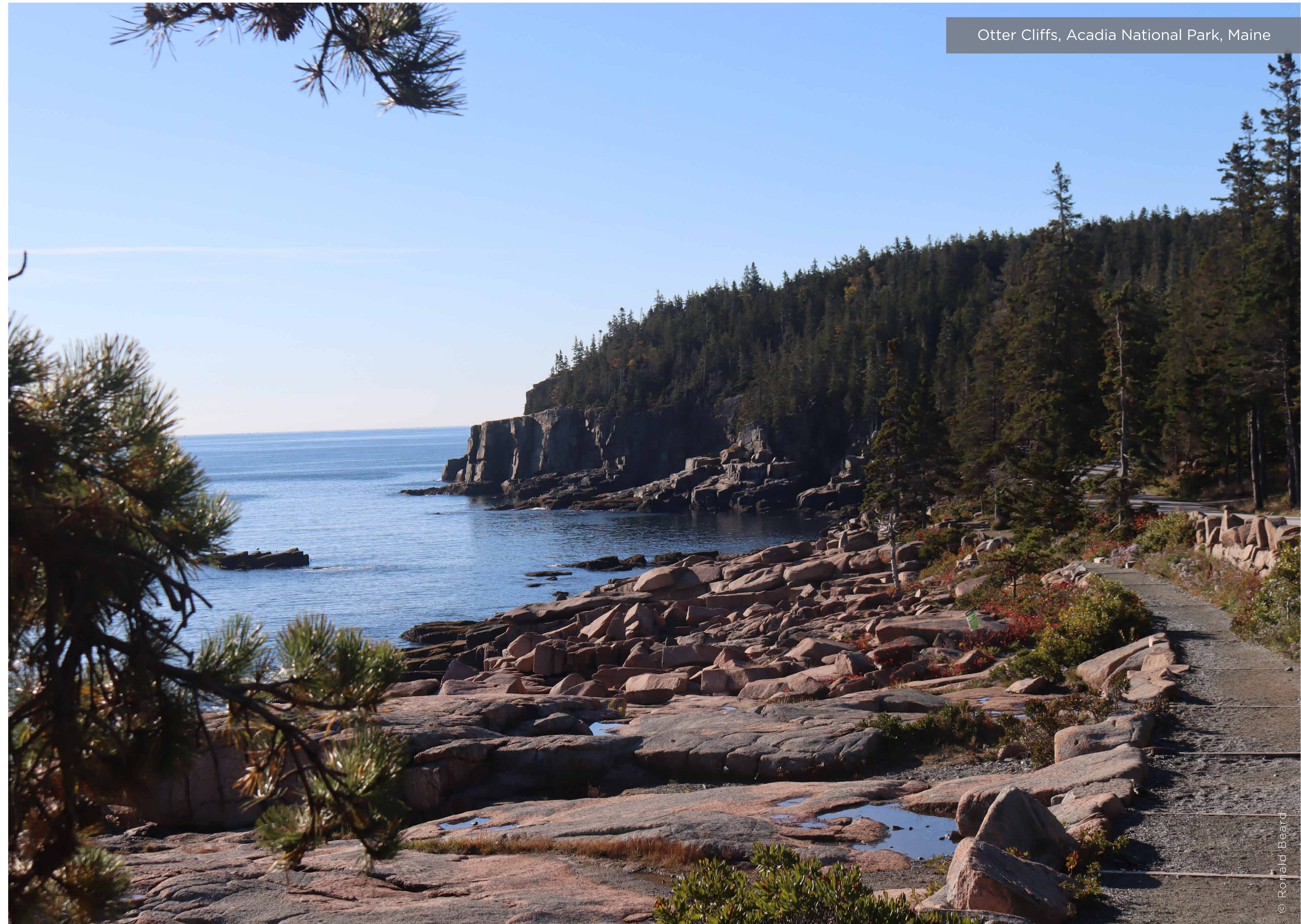
While “rewilding” has become a major focus in the region, tourism has become a

dominant driver for the Highland economy and employment. As in every other locale attractive to visitors and investors there are attendant problems. Promotion of North Coast 500 (coincidentally Anders Povlsen is a director), referring to a road loop of that many miles from Fort William up through Northwest Scotland and around to Inverness, offers an example. The popularity of the route has resulted in bumper-to-bumper traffic on single-track roads, communities and lodging overwhelmed by the number of visitors seeking accommodations, replacement of home-owner beds and breakfasts by investor-owned Air B&Bs, and severe shortages of housing affordable to workers and their families.

There are parallels in Maine. About the same geographic size of Scotland, but with only about a fifth of the population, tourism, especially along its Atlantic coastline is often the most visible economic activity. After all, automobile plates tout the state as “Vacationland” and millions of East Coast visitors come each year, seeking clean air, access to nature and beauty of the landscape, as they have since the late 1800s. And with marketing that extends world-wide, visitors from other shores make their way in increasing numbers, by automobile, tour bus and cruise ships.

In Maine, as in Scotland, some trends have recognized where local communities need to disrupt market forces to benefit both year-round community members and visitors. Maine’s land historic ownership patterns meant that coastal areas were settled first, with individual farmers and

Otter Cliffs, Acadia National Park, Maine







Eagle Lake, Acadia National Park

© Ronald Beard

fishermen purchasing land from speculators who had been granted large tracts during colonial times. Of course, Maine’s “clearances” were of Native Americans by English colonists in the 17th century, affected by introduced disease, armed conquest and devastating treaties.

So, anticipating that local communities would see more and more home and land purchase by visitors from away who would develop and privatize the coast, some visionaries began to experiment with local “land trusts” that could hold land or easements on land to protect the natural and cultural features of that land in perpetuity. Acadia National Park, on Mount Desert Island, resulted from gifts by such a land trust, the Hancock County Trustees for Public Reservation, established in 1908.

“Environmental degradation and pollution led to the first Earth Day in 1970, before there was an EPA or Clean Air and Water regulations. Maine Coast Heritage Trust was also founded that year to work voluntarily and respectfully with private landowners to conserve and protect the special features of the coast that would otherwise be degraded or lost over time,” notes Caroline Pryor, who served as the Trust’s vice president in the 1980s-90s (and was also a US-UK Exchange member in Cornwall).

“Intense development pressure across the state threatened not only scenic and natural lands but recreational, agricultural, and working forest lands,” continues Pryor. “Land was being subdivided, new roads with locked gates went in, and big houses sprouted up in formerly wild places.”

Changes in the landscape, combined with the success of voluntary land conservation techniques, led to rapid expansion of the land trust model in Maine and other states around the country.”

Local voters and residents recognized threats to locally valued scenic and habitat treasures and took steps to protect them, now with more than 80 land trusts protecting 12% of Maine’s land area. In 1987, the State of Maine issued its first \$35 million bond to invest in “Land For Maine’s Future”, making grants to local groups and state agencies to help purchase land significant for its ecological, cultural, agricultural, forest, and/or recreational values.

Private investment by philanthropists has rounded out Maine’s response to land protection, with one prominent example being Gilbert Butler investing in park land along the Bold Coast of Washington County and in the highlands region of Maine near Baxter State Park. That park, including Mount Katahdin, the terminus of the Appalachian Trail, was a gift to the people of the state by Percival Baxter in 1931. And in 2016, lands accumulated by philanthropist Roxanne Quimby were donated, along with a \$40M stewardship endowment (\$20M then, \$20M to raise) to form Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, part of the national park system.

What might Maine learn from Scotland, what might Scotland learn from Maine’s examples and what can international visitors to both these special landscapes and so many others both prized for their



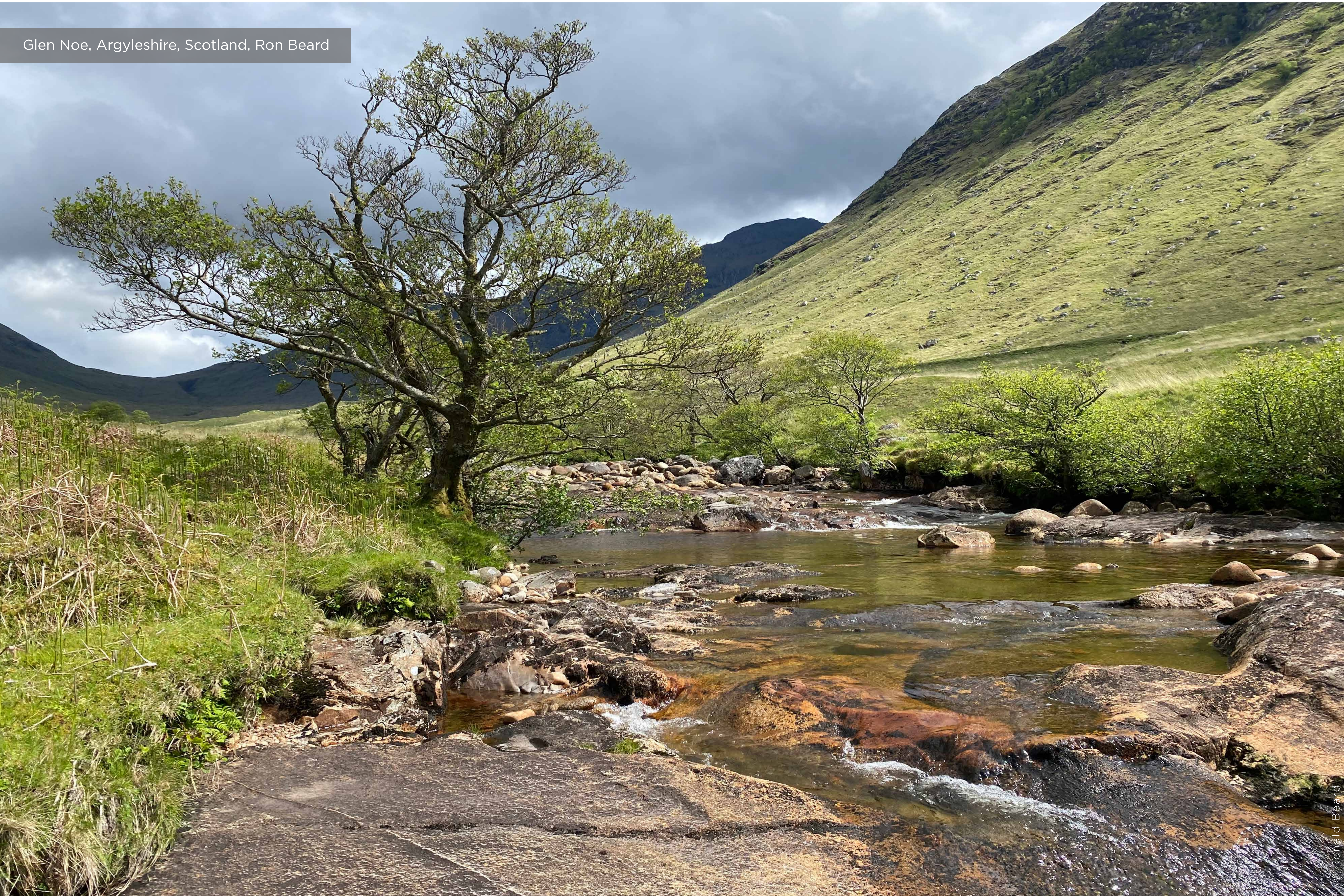
Eagle Lake, Acadia National Park

Tarn, Acadia National Park, Maine

© Ronald Beard



Glen Noe, Argyleshire, Scotland, Ron Beard



natural beauty and under threat from overuse?

It is evident that protecting natural areas and surrounding communities is most successful through the combined efforts of land-owners, both large and small, and of partners in local, state and national government. These individuals and partners hold a common value of taking the long view. They seem to recognize the positive and negative trends from history and act now to bend policy and practice toward sustainability, towards the notion of building healthy ecosystems and communities today so that future generations will enjoy a good quality of life.

When we travel, we can take time to better understand the local responses to threats to environmental quality and community resilience. We can seek out and support the businesses and organizations who align with those values. And we can support the local voluntary efforts and charitable work that is making a difference today and in the long term.



Bee Hive, Acadia National Park, Maine



SPECIES

Hoopoe: The Crowned Beauty

(Upupa epops)

By Ajith K Jose



Ajith's early exposure to the abundant wildlife of Kerala fostered in him a lifelong love of the outdoors, which influenced his decision to become a wildlife photographer. When he moved to Dubai, his interest in photography rekindled a boyhood obsession with nature and quickly became a significant part of his life.

A buddy had given him a DSLR camera, but he hadn't used it until he happened upon a wildlife photography video on YouTube. The experience awoke a dormant interest in photography within him, and he went on a fervent learning binge to perfect his craft

As the adage goes, "photography is a game of disappointment," and Ajith's journey certainly had its share of setbacks. But his passion for animals kept him going, and each failure only made him more determined and improved his abilities.

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

The Hoopoe, scientifically known as (*Upupa epops*), is one of the most unusual and endearing bird species found in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Hoopoe is a sight to behold in the UAE's various landscapes, with its unmistakable colorful plumage, long curved beak, and fan-shaped crest on its head.



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

The hoopoe has a wide distribution from Europe to the Asian Pacific coast and throughout Africa. Scientists have delineated three species of hoopoes on the basis of their distribution.

This bird, known as 'Hudhud' in Arabic, is firmly ingrained in Middle Eastern culture, having been described in religious writings and old folk stories. As a result, the Hoopoe is not just a fascinating subject for birdwatchers and photographers, but also a symbol of regional cultural history.

The remarkable appearance of the Hoopoe is simply one aspect of its attractiveness. Its broad rounded wings contrast sharply in flight with black and white patterns, while its body is a deep cinnamon color that stands out amid the UAE's primarily desert terrain. It has a long, thin probing bill that it uses to delve into the earth in search of its favorite prey, insects, and grubs.

The Hoopoe's crest is equally appealing, a stunning arrangement of feathers that it can raise and lower at leisure, displaying a strong black and white pattern. The crest is generally held flat, but it is elevated when the bird is alarmed or excited, adding to the bird's dramatic appearance.

Hoopoes are not restricted to any habitat in the UAE and can be found in a wide range of settings, from urban areas with parks and gardens to rural areas with little vegetation. These birds are normally alone and are more likely to be found on the ground, where they forage for food by probing the earth with their long beaks.



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

The call of the Hoopoe is as distinct as its appearance, a gentle, low 'hoo-hoo-hoo' that may be heard from a considerable distance. During the breeding season, the males make an identifiable series of 'hoop-hoop-hoop' sounds, which give rise to the bird's name.

The Hoopoe's nesting behaviors are another distinguishing feature. The birds are cavity nesters, and they frequently nest in holes in trees, buildings, or even the ground. To prevent predators, they are known to purposefully contaminate their nests with a powerful, fragrant secretion.

Hoopoes are frequently mentioned in literature and mythology. They were regarded sacred in ancient Egypt, and their image was employed in a variety of art genres. The Quran mentions the bird as part of the story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The Hoopoe was thought to be a messenger between the two, displaying wisdom and intelligence. The bird has cultural significance in other cultures as well; it is the national bird of Israel, and the Hoopoe appears as a wise figure in Indian literature.

The Hoopoe is an important part of the country's biodiversity for both local Emiratis and expats in the UAE. The government is working to protect this biodiversity by establishing bird-friendly habitats such as green areas and wetlands.

As climate change and urbanization continue to have an influence on bird populations around the world, the



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)



Hoopoe's existence in the UAE serves as a reminder of the significance of environmental conservation. Every glimpse of this magnificent bird emphasizes the importance of protecting and cherishing the natural world that we share with these amazing creatures.

Finally, the Hoopoe epitomizes the enchantment and diversity of the UAE's birds. It is a cultural landmark, a compelling sight for bird watchers, and a testament of the country's commitment to maintaining its diverse wildlife. Keep a look out for this fascinating bird the next time you're in the UAE. Its allure and beauty will take your breath away.

About the bird

The Eurasian hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) is a distinctive and colorful bird known for its unique appearance and melodious call.

Physical Characteristics:

- **Size:** The hoopoe measures approximately 25-29 centimeters (9.8-11.4 inches) in length.
- **Plumage:** The bird has a sandy-brown body with black and white stripes on its wings and tail. Its most notable feature is the large crest on its head, which can be raised or lowered.
- **Bill:** The hoopoe has a long, slender, and slightly curved bill, adapted for probing the ground in search of food.
- **Crest:** When excited or displaying, the hoopoe raises its crest, revealing a striking pattern of black and white feathers.



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

Distribution and Habitat:

- Range: The Eurasian hoopoe has a vast distribution, found across Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa.
- Habitat: It inhabits a variety of environments, including open woodlands, savannas, grasslands, and agricultural areas. It is particularly associated with areas that offer suitable foraging opportunities, such as meadows, fields, and parks.

Behavior and Diet:

- Foraging: Hoopoes are primarily insectivorous, feeding on a wide variety of invertebrates, including beetles, ants, caterpillars, and earthworms. They use their long bills to probe the soil or probe tree bark in search of prey.
- Nesting: Hoopoes nest in cavities, such as holes in trees, cliffs, or walls. The female lays a clutch of 4-7 eggs, which are incubated by both parents.
- Crest Display: During courtship and territorial displays, the hoopoe raises its crest while emitting a soft, rolling call. This behavior is often accompanied by wing spreading and bowing movements.

Years behind the images

In the vast desert landscape of Dubai, there exists an oasis of natural beauty known as Al Qudra Lakes. This remarkable location has become a sanctuary for wildlife enthusiasts and photographers like myself, offering a mesmerizing backdrop for capturing the wonders of nature. Ever

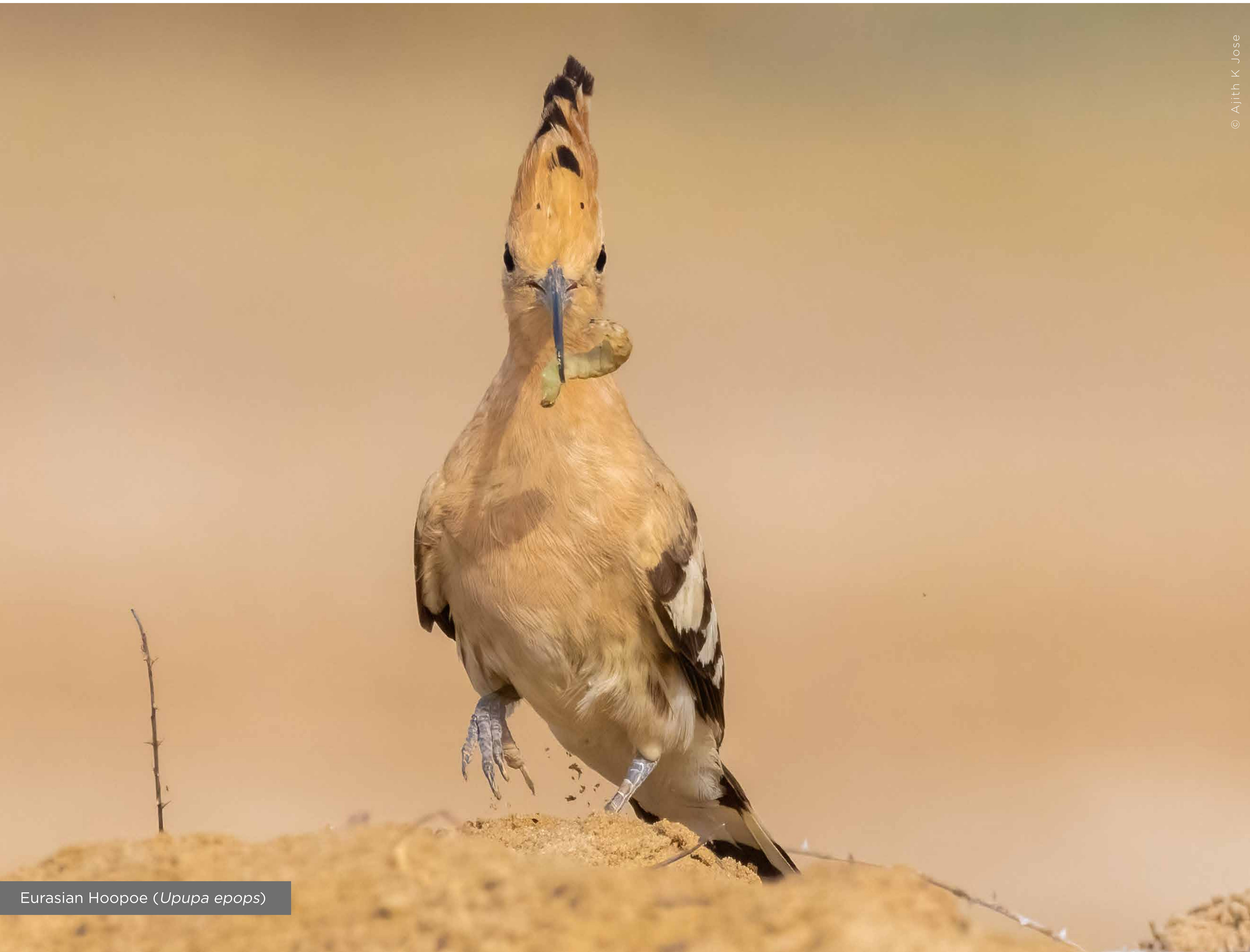


© Ajith K Jose

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)



© Ajith K Jose

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

since my journey into wildlife photography began, Al Qudra Lakes became my second home. It was during one of our regular weekend photography hunts that my fellow photographer and I stumbled upon a hidden gem—a nest belonging to the majestic Eurasian hoopoe.

As luck would have it, when we discovered the nest, the chicks were on the brink of taking flight. Realizing the rarity of the opportunity before us, we dedicated ourselves to capturing the essence of this beautiful bird and its two precious chicks. With limited time at hand, we eagerly set up our equipment and patiently waited for the perfect moment to freeze in time.

Recognizing the significance of this find, I enlisted the help of a few like-minded photographers who shared my passion for preserving these extraordinary moments. Together, we spent days, side by side, immersed in the captivating world of the Eurasian hoopoe. Our shared enthusiasm and collective expertise formed an unbreakable bond, as we strived to encapsulate the beauty and grace of these magnificent birds.

The days we spent photographing the Eurasian hoopoe nest were filled with a symphony of camera clicks. With each passing moment, we marveled at the intricate details of their feathers, the tender interactions between the parent and chicks, and the fleeting expressions that revealed their individual personalities. Our lenses became extensions of our souls, capturing the raw emotions and extraordinary moments shared between the hoopoes.

As I immersed myself in the world of the Eurasian hoopoe, I realized the importance of preserving and protecting these precious creatures and their habitats. Through my photographs, I sought to inspire others to appreciate the delicate balance of nature



© Ajith K Jose

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

CUB'S CORNER

NATURE
THROUGH
MY EYES

LEO JOE GEORGE



©Leo Joe George

CUB'S CORNER

CUB'S CORNER



Leo Joe George, who is now 12 is a 7th grade student, lives in Dubai with his parents and uses a Sony A9ii camera with 100-400 lens for his photography. In addition to photography, he also loves playing guitar and traveling and has already travelled to more than a dozen countries.

Leo started photography in late 2021. Born and raised in Dubai, Leo used to accompany his Dad to Al Qudra Dubai for his photography outings. After few trips, he found inspiration from his dad and started photographing birds.

Leo's turning point was visiting Masai Mara in 2022 when he was 11 years old. He immediately became interested in wildlife and captured fantastic images. He is particularly interested in wildlife photography and his dream is to photograph wolves, bears and snow leopards!

Recently Leo participated in an exhibition organised by Paws Trails and was the youngest exhibitor and his work was praised by many visitors. A few of his works from Masai Mara has been featured in RAW Africa pages. Leo is able to capture the essence of his subjects in a way that is both captivating and honest.

In his own words

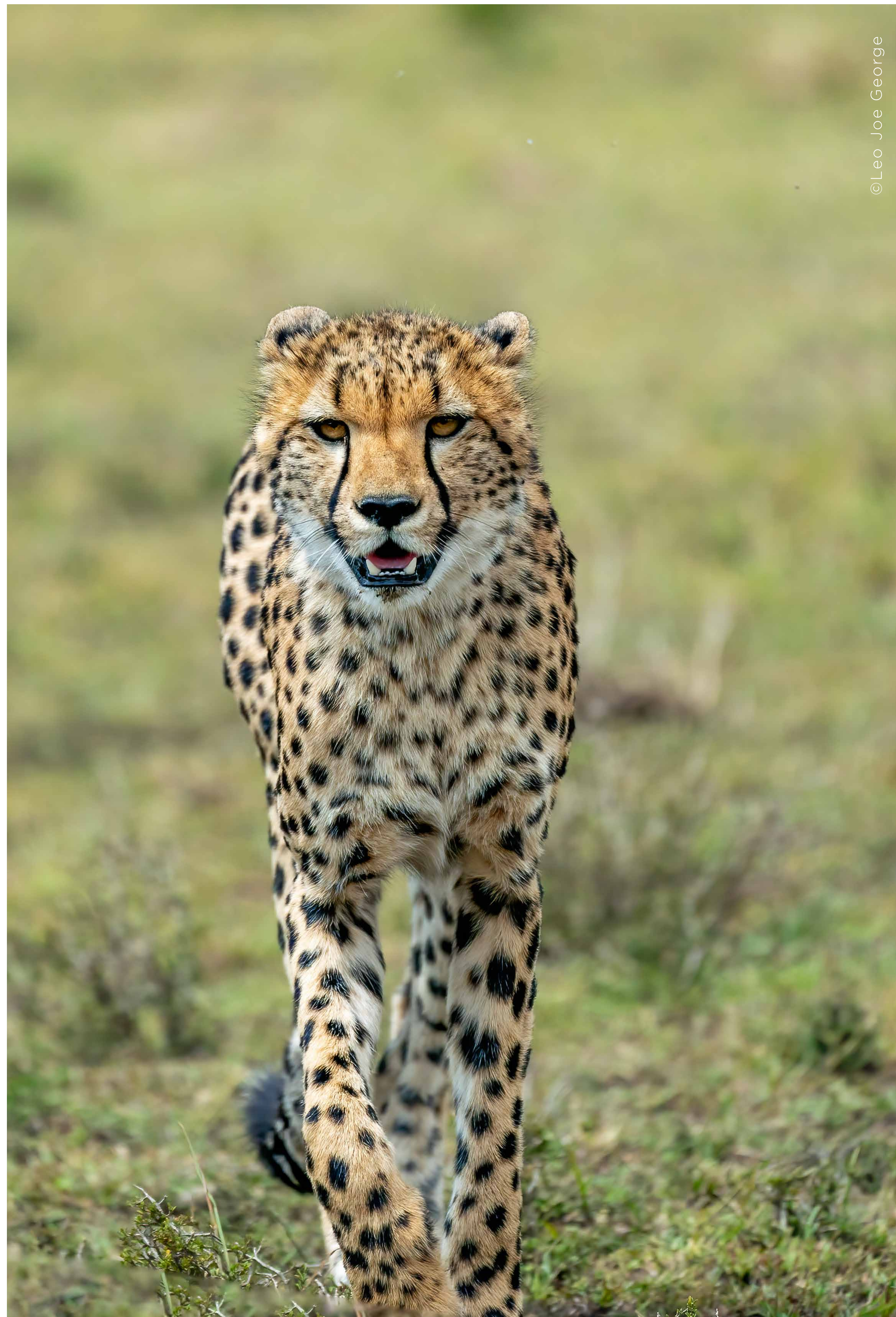
"I am passionate about capturing the everyday moments in the wild which not many people get to see. I want to show the world the beauty of nature and give the people who are less fortunate a chance to experience these rare moments in wildlife."

©Leo Joe George



Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)







Dik-dik (*Madoqua kirkii*)









©Leo Joe George



Arabian Oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*)

©Leo Joe George

Purple Swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)



Pharaoh eagle-owl (*Bubo ascalaphus*)



Her Views & VISUALS

By Pratima Singh



Axis Deer (*Axis axis*)



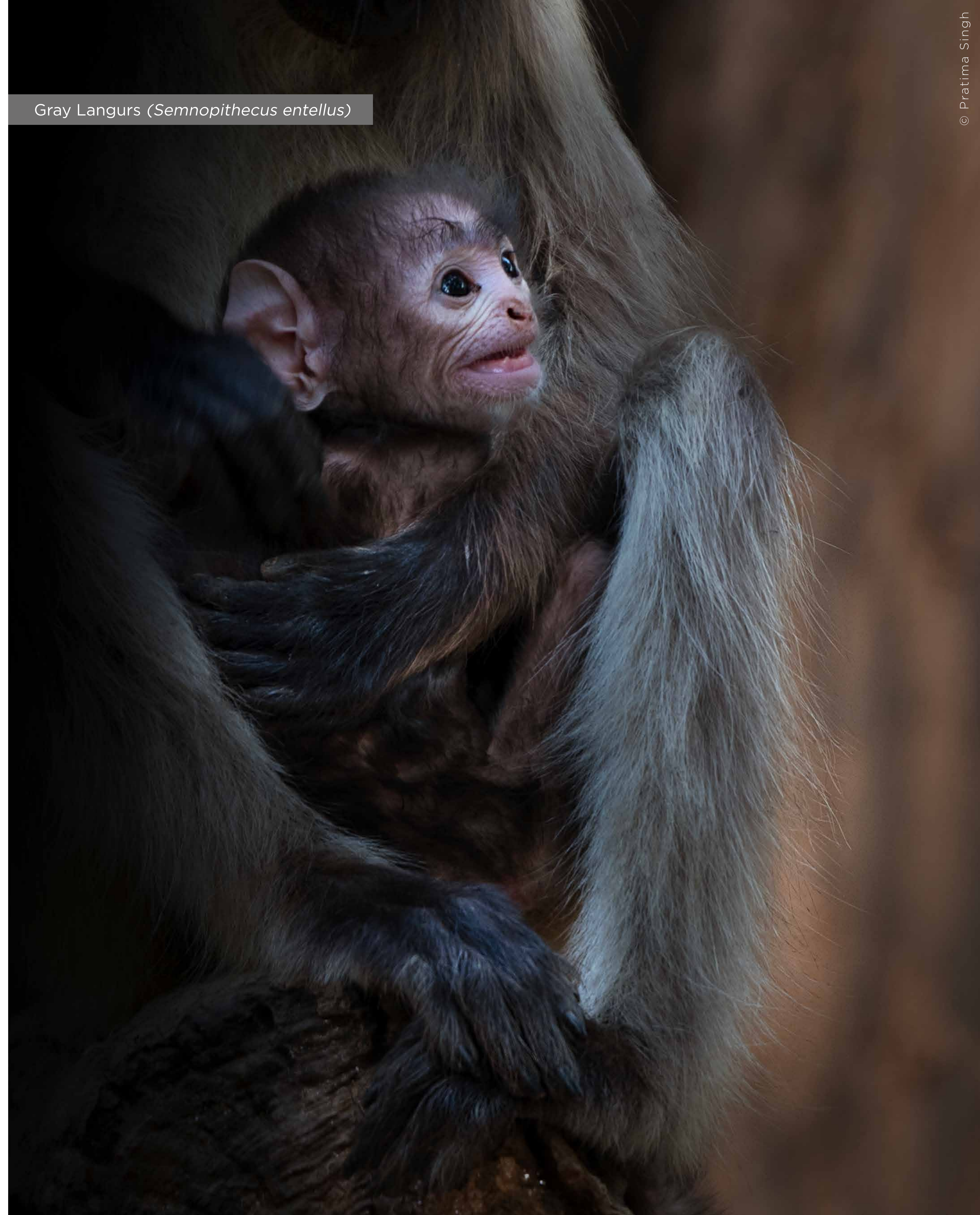
Pratima Singh is a wildlife photographer, admirer of nature and a proud mother. She hails from the northern part of India and is settled in Bangalore. At the beginning of her career, she did Master of Business Administration in Human Resource Management and post that worked in the corporate world. She then realised that her true passion lay in wildlife and nature, her love for nature and wildlife photography was extremely strong to ignore. She quit her job and began to devote more and more time in exploring the natural world, taking photographs, and learning. Her goal is to use my photography to raise awareness about wildlife and nature, and perhaps even inspire people to take action to protect our planet.

**[instagram.com/pratimasingh.wildlife](https://www.instagram.com/pratimasingh.wildlife)
twitter.com/PratimaWildlife**

Her Views and Visuals



Gray Langurs (*Semnopithecus entellus*)





Sloth Bear (*Melursus ursinus*)

How did your interest in wildlife arise?

I am a person who grew up watching National Geographic and Discovery channel,, always wishing to explore those beautiful places. Prior to the pandemic, photography was just a hobby for me. My husband gifted me a DSLR camera, and I was the one in my family who used to take pictures all the time, mainly when traveling or at special events. However, as the pandemic forced us to stay indoors, I found myself turning to my camera more and more. I started experimenting with different styles and techniques, most of the time backyard photography, such as birds, pigeons, chameleons in the garden.

I discovered that I truly enjoyed it, as I love photography, nature, animals, and travel – what a perfect combination! As time went by, I found myself spending more and more time taking pictures. I used to go to the outskirts of the city with my husband to click pictures of birds and other species and share them online. I was excited to try new things and challenge myself to improve my skills. I even received positive feedback from friends and family who enjoyed my pictures. That was when I realised that my hobby had become my passion. Photography was no longer just something I did for fun; it was something I loved, and it brought me a sense of fulfilment and joy.

I found myself constantly thinking about where to go next for photography. My first visit to Jim Corbett National Park as a wildlife photographer was a thrilling experience. I enjoyed witnessing the beauty of the forest and animals in their

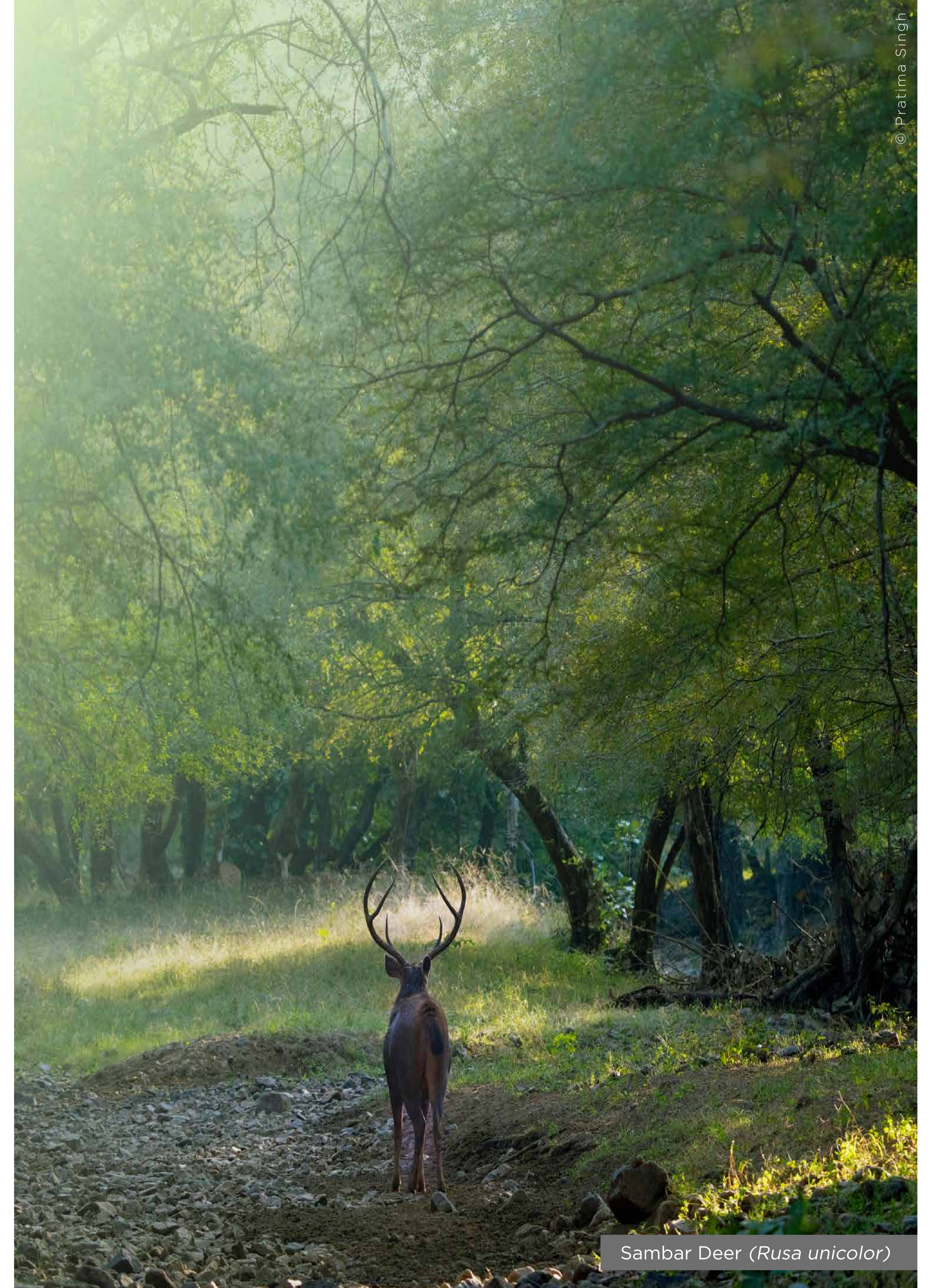
natural habitat. There is no going back now; this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.”

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

As a female wildlife photographer and a mother, I had to face major challenges in leaving my kids back home while I traveled and going alone into the forest. Earlier I had never left kids behind while I traveled. It was difficult for me, like for every mother but with the help of my supportive husband, who took time off and shouldered all the responsibilities, and my parents, who stayed with the kids, everything worked out well. Now, my son feels proud that his mom is a wildlife photographer, and things are going great.

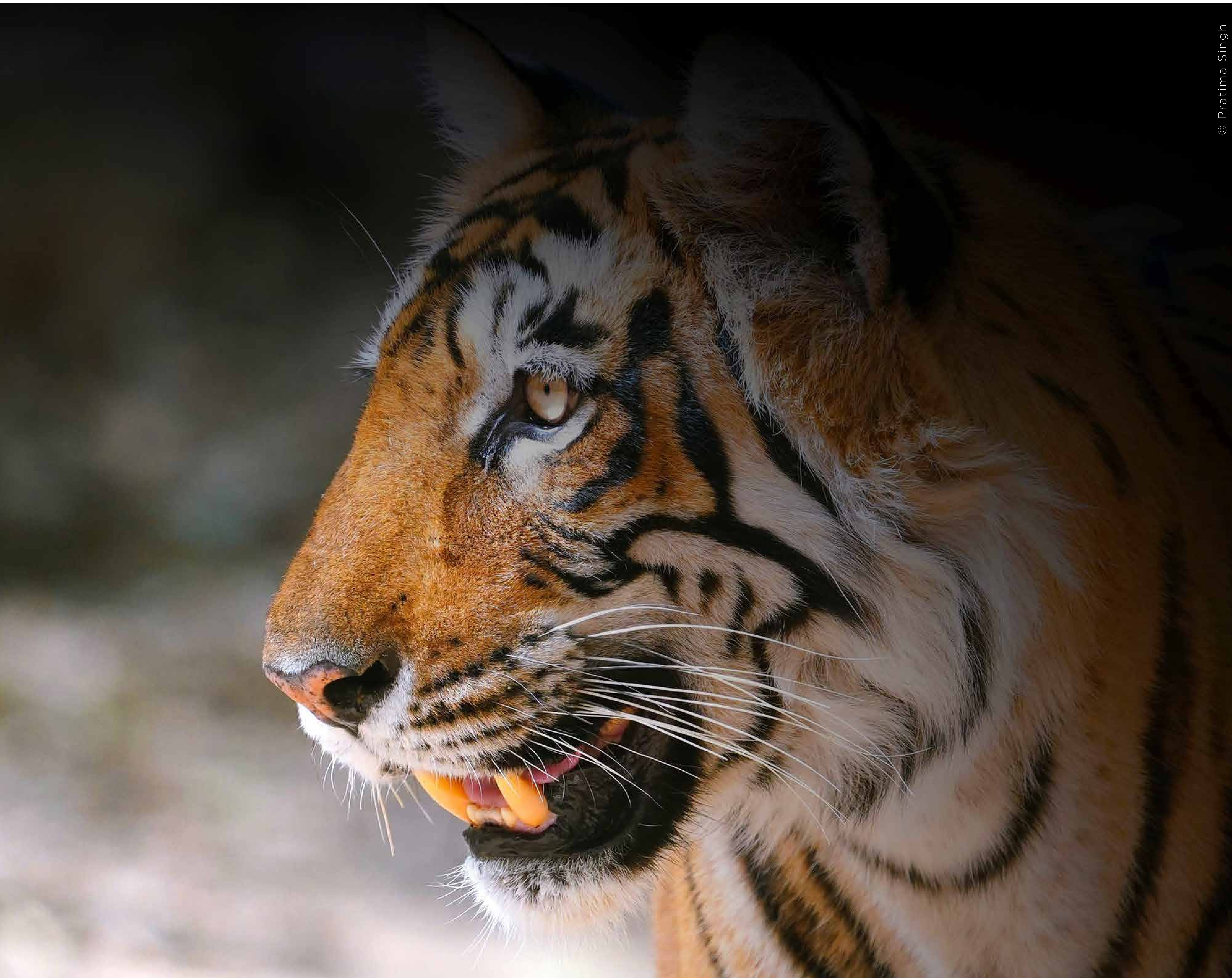
Secondly, I live in India and for female wildlife photographers going alone into the forest can be a daunting and challenging experience. Initially I was also scared to go alone, was concerned about safety and other practical limitations, my parents and my husband have always been very supportive of me, and have always motivated me a lot, seeing the support and faith of the family, I also used to get confidence. However, I found all forests are safe and people are so helpful.

I would like to encourage all the women and girls who are hesitant to pursue wildlife photography as a hobby, passion, or career, don't be hesitant, follow your dreams, rest will come your way, while it may seem daunting at first, but trust me it is not. Don't let anyone discourage you or tell you that it's too difficult or not for you. You have the talent and potential to



Sambar Deer (*Rusa unicolor*)





© Pratima Singh

achieve great things in this field.

In addition to my journey, it is beautiful and magical, waking up early in the morning and heading out to capture images during the blue hour and golden hour is a wonderful experience. The magical light of the woods and the beauty of the natural environment is truly inspiring; however, Nature and animal behaviour are unpredictable, and it is challenging to capture the perfect shot. Often, I have to wait for a long hour, to get the perfect shot, patience is the key. so, it's important to be patient and wait for the perfect shot. but it's all worth it when you finally get that amazing shot.

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

The world we live in is full of wonders, and every creature and species has its unique beauty. I have always been drawn to the beauty of the incredible diversity of wildlife that exists on our planet. Whether it's the majesty of a roaring tigers, the colourful feathers of a bird or the intricate patterns on a butterfly's wings, I am saddened each time I hear about poaching, senseless killing of animals for their tusks, horns, or other body parts and the impact of human carelessness, and when i see chopping of trees for building, bridge construction. Deforestation is not good for ecosystem, human activities, such as pollution, , and climate change, can disrupt the balance of ecosystems, leading to their degradation and loss. Wildlife conservation is essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance. As wildlife photographers, we can not only think just as a photographer, but also as a conversationalist, a storyteller, researchers and as a journalist, We can use our photography power to communicate specific messages or emotions, share awareness on threats to the ecosystem and highlight the importance of protecting our mother Earth. Research published on Science Direct has shown that people are more likely



to remember pictures in more detail than they are words. This makes photography an incredibly powerful tool for raising awareness and inspiring an emotional response among your audience.

Wildlife photographers can play a significant role in wildlife conservation by using their skills and passion to raise awareness and inspire action. Here are some ways in which wildlife photographers can help protect our mother nature. Educate people about wildlife and conservation: Wildlife photographers can use their photos to tell stories about wildlife and the importance of conservation. They can share their photos on social media, create educational materials, and give presentations to schools, universities, and other organizations. Support conservation organizations: Photographers can support conservation organizations by donating their photos or volunteering their time and expertise.

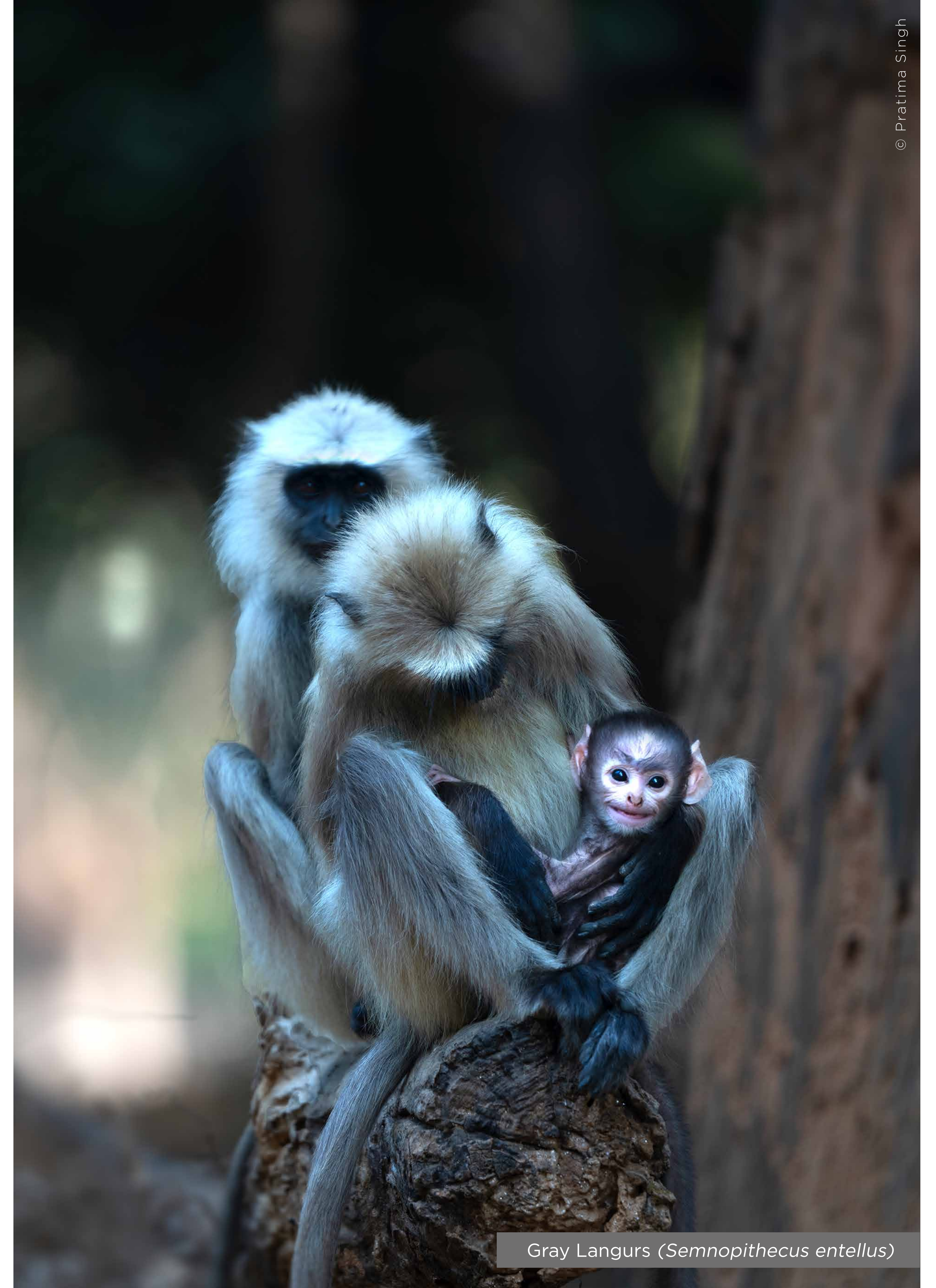
They can also participate in fundraising events to support wildlife conservation. Ethical photography: Tourists and photographers should follow ethical photography practices, such as not disturbing or harassing animals, respecting their natural behaviour, follow all the rules and regulations. Future generations deserve a world with wild places to explore and wildlife to discover. It is our responsibility to protect these resources and ensure that they are available for generations to come.

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

recommendations on settings or gear for wildlife photography?

Light and composition are the key for me in wildlife Photography whether it is rim light, spotlight, side lit, back lit, early morning and late afternoon which is also called golden hours, blue hour. It can greatly affect the quality of your images. Good lighting can help bring out the colors and details of your subject. Different types of lighting can create different moods and emotions in your images, and it's essential to know how to work with different types of lighting conditions to create impactful images. Golden hour is a magical time for wildlife Photography and this light is warmer, with lots of yellows, oranges and reds. Arrive early at your location, adjust your white balance to capture the warm colours of the light. Golden hour is a great time to experiment with different compositions and angles. Try out different perspectives to add interest to your shots, and again you have to be patient. The light can change quickly during this hour so be patient and wait for the perfect moment to capture your shot. Take your time and be prepared to wait for the right light and composition to come together.

Composition is also crucial in wildlife photography, The way you frame and compose your shot can greatly affect the impact and visual appeal of your image. Avoid cluttering the background to draw attention to you subject, use rule of third (three sections vertically, and three sections horizontally) place the main subject or point of interest on one of the four points where the lines intersect, rather than in the centre of the



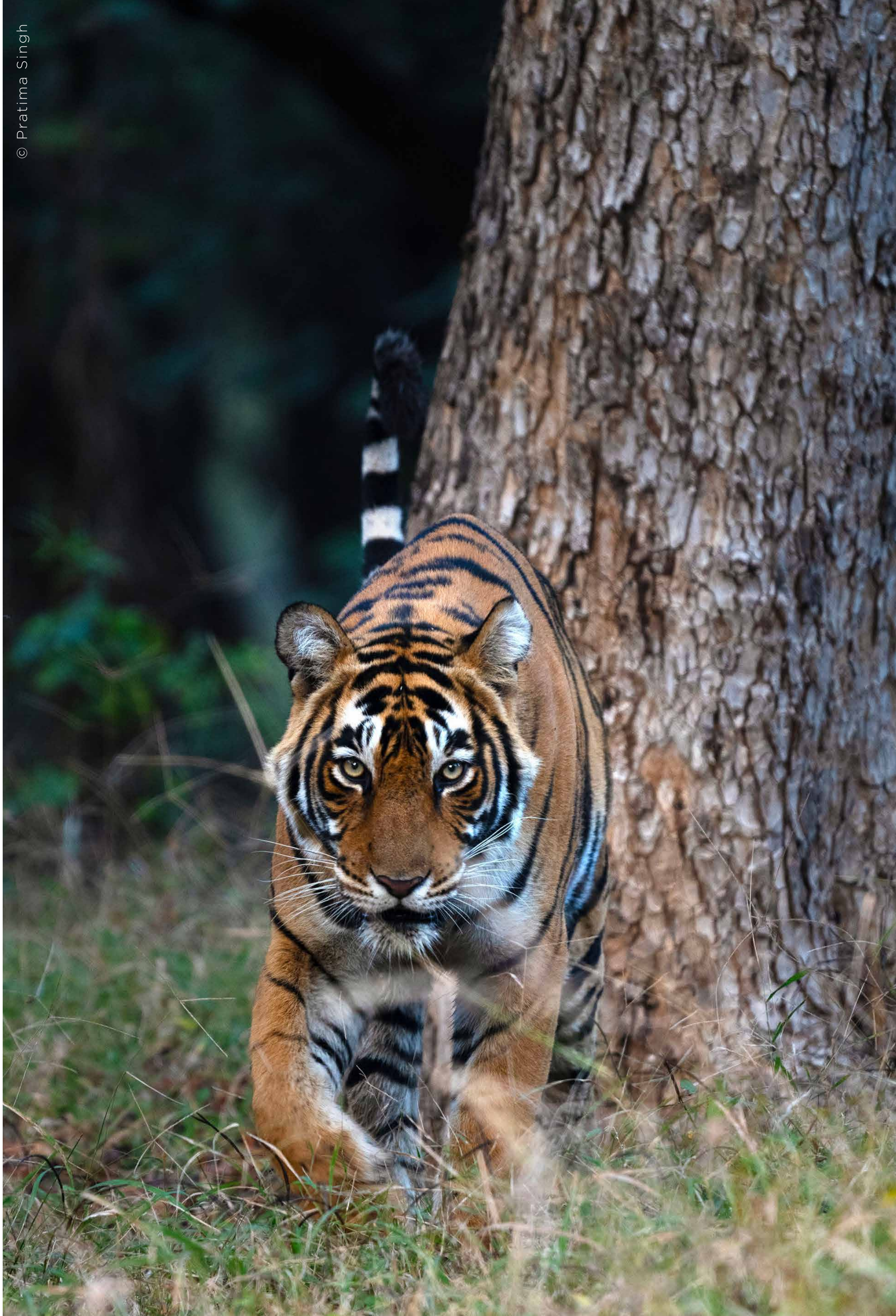
Gray Langurs (*Semnopithecus entellus*)



© Pratima Singh

Asian Woollyneck (*Ciconia episcopus*)





frame. It can be applied both vertically and horizontally, so don't be afraid to experiment with different orientations to see which works best for your subject. Make sure the background complements and doesn't distract from the main subject. Watch head turn, catch light etc.

In addition to this nature and Wildlife is unpredictable, so it is essential to understand animal or subject behaviour, do some research on the animals you are going to shoot, Learn about their behaviour patterns, social structures and habitats. This will help you predict their movements and behaviour. Anticipate action, like what animal is going to do next, something interesting such as changes in body posture or vocalisations. Be ready to capture the action as it happens.

Watch for interactions, they interact with each other in complex and fascinating ways. Look for social behaviour such as hunting, or parenting. These moments can make for powerful and emotional images. Animals move quickly, so it's important to use a fast shutter speed to freeze their motion and capture sharp images. And a very important thing is to always respect animals and their habitat, remember that you are a guest in the animal's habitat. Keep a safe distance from the animals and do not interfere with their behaviour or disrupt their natural environment. It is our responsibility to take care of the forest by following the rules and regulations.

What plans do you have in the future related to nature photography?

I would like to grow as a wildlife photography mentor, so that I can pass on my knowledge and promote awareness and conservation of wildlife and their habitats to others. As I believe, this skill is not just a skill, but also a power in your hand to change the perspective of the world. I would also like to support conservation societies and protect wildlife and their habitats.

Additionally, as we know, wildlife photography is a male-dominated career with fewer women in the field. I would like to encourage all women and girls who are hesitant to pursue wildlife photography as a hobby, passion, or career.

Tell us something about the gears you use?

I use the Sony Alpha 1, which is an excellent camera for action, sports, and wildlife photography. Its Animal Eye Autofocus is highly accurate and reliable, making it easier to capture sharp images of fast-moving subjects. The 50 fps feature is extremely impressive for capturing a wide range of action shots.

I mostly use a " 200-600mm f5.6-6.3 G OSS " lens for zoom shots and a 70-200mm lens for habitat shots. Both lenses are highly capable, with features like fast and silent autofocus that are essential for capturing fast-moving subjects in action photography. The animal eye autofocus system with blazing speed is also highly accurate and reliable, ensuring that I can take sharp images every time. Another favourite feature of mine is the zero change in length of lenses while zooming.



Sambar Deer (*Rusa unicolor*)

© Pratima Singh



© Pratima Singh



Oriental garden lizard (*Calotes versicolor*)



Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*)

THROUGH THE LENS

Discovering The Little Inventions of Nature

By Cynthia Bandurek



Long Horn Beetle (*Cerambycidae*)

THROUGH THE LENS

© Cynthia Bandurek

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

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

Cynthia is Paws Trails Explorers Magazine's Editor for South America. She is Nature First Photography's Ambassador

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As humans, we have always been fascinated with the universe and the vastness of space. However, what if I told you that an entirely new universe is waiting to be discovered?





Red Eyed Tree Frog (*Agalychnis callydrias*)



Ant (Hymenoptera)



Ant (*Hymenoptera*)

Macro photography is a technique that allows us to enter a new universe, to capture small things in great detail. By magnifying the image of tiny subjects, we can see details that are otherwise invisible to the naked eye. From insects to flowers, macro photography has opened up a whole new world of possibilities.

Arthropods, such as insects and spiders, are some of the most diverse and fascinating creatures on the planet. Their bodies are covered in intricate patterns and textures, and their colors range from vibrant and bold to subtle and muted.

Through macro photography, we can explore this world in stunning detail. We can capture the iridescent sheen of a butterfly's wings, the intricate spider silk webbing, and the delicate hairs on a bumblebee's legs.

But it's not just about capturing the beauty of these creatures; macro photography can also help us understand their behavior and ecological roles. By studying the structures and colors of this tiny world, we can learn about their adaptations and how they interact with their environment.

In fact, macro photography has even led to the discovery of new species of arthropods. By capturing detailed images of these creatures, scientists are able to identify new species and better understand their place in the natural world. Posting your images on Inaturalist is an easy way to identify your subject - the subject of your macro photo may be new to your location, or perhaps new to science.



Ant (*Himenoptera*)



Banded Calico Snake (*Oxyrhopus petolarius*)

But the beauty of macro photography doesn't just lie in the world of arthropods. We can also use this technique to capture the intricate and complex structures of the natural world, from the veins on a leaf to the texture of a rock formation, and the magical world that you can find at night in the jungle, such as frogs and snakes.

Through the macro lens, we can discover the unique adaptations of small creatures - usually insects. Many insects and other small creatures have evolved to survive in their environments. For example, some insects have developed camouflage that allows them to blend in with their surroundings, while others have developed defensive mechanisms, such as stingers or toxins. Through macro photography, we can capture these adaptations in detail, revealing the remarkable abilities of these creatures to survive in their environments.

As a conservation photographer and visual storyteller, macro photography is a powerful tool that can be used to showcase the beauty and complexity of the natural world and to gain a deeper appreciation for all the living beings that share the planet with us.

One of the great aspects of macro photography is that it can be done almost anywhere, from your backyard to a local park or nature reserve. There are endless opportunities to explore and discover new subjects, and with a little patience and skill,



Beetle (Coleoptera)



Salamander (*Bolitoglossa* sp.)





Honey Bee (*Auglochloa* sp. Hymenoptera)

you can capture stunning images that reveal the hidden beauty of the natural world, and transform them into a piece of art, with details and textures that are often overlooked.

I am absolutely in love with nature in all its forms and shapes. I find beauty and wonder in everything that surrounds us. There's just something so incredibly beautiful about the way nature works and all the intricate details that come together to make the natural world such a magnificent place.

Beyond the limits of our imagination, there still remains a vast field of inspiration that grows at the rate of evolution, a landscape of endless surprises that shows itself immeasurable before us in the world of small. We are still slowly knowing the first million of that substantial source of forms and functions, of that laboratory that seems that has already tried everything.

A fascinating path that we have been part of since the beginning of our species and will remain as long as our curiosity incites us to understand the infinite expression in which the cycles of life are immersed. Life that opens before us expanding constantly this vast ocean of knowledge. A wonderful adventure we undertake to observe the world of small.

Photography is not only a technical tool that allows us to see details that otherwise we would not see, or that simply allows us to capture an instant of reality. Photography is an artistic construction that involves a way of looking at and perceiving the world. The photographer's emotions and sensitivity become part of the image. And as every artistic fact, it may have the ability to transcend, expand and generate emotions in the beholder, so it is an excellent tool to communicate our values and knowledge.

So grab your camera and start exploring the universe through the lens of macro photography. Who knows what wonders you'll discover?



Grasshopper (*Orthoptera*)





Sirphidae (*Diptera*)



Trachelopachys cingulipes



TRAVELOUGE

Capturing the Elusive Pallas's Cat: A Photography Expedition in Mongolia

By Hermis Haridas

Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*)

TRAVELOUGE



Hermis Haridas, an accomplished wildlife photographer and conservationist, is widely recognized for his exceptional talent in capturing the beauty and essence of the natural world. As the founder of Paws Trails and Mara Trails Camp, Hermis has dedicated his life to protecting and preserving wildlife habitats while showcasing their splendor through his lens. With an unwavering passion for the wild, he has spent countless hours in the wilderness, patiently waiting for the perfect shot and documenting the untamed wonders of nature. Through his enthralling images, Hermis not only spreads knowledge and creates awareness about the need of protecting animals, but he also encourages others to explore the world in order to appreciate and preserve the planet's unique biodiversity.

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hermis.me

Mongolia, a land of vast and untamed beauty, beckons adventurers and nature enthusiasts with its diverse landscapes and unique wildlife. I recently embarked on an unforgettable photography expedition to capture the elusive Pallas's Cat, a mysterious and rarely seen feline. With my camera in hand, I ventured deep into the heart of Mongolia, ready to unravel the secrets of this enigmatic creature.

In recent years, Mongolia has seen an increasing number of tourists seeking to explore its pristine landscapes and experience its unique culture. The country's untamed beauty, warm hospitality, and the opportunity to witness the nomadic way of life make Mongolia an enchanting destination for adventurous travelers.

Embarking on a Pallas's cat expedition



Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*)





Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*)

Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*)

photography adventure is a remarkable opportunity to capture the elusive and enchanting beauty of one of the world's most enigmatic feline species. The Pallas's Cat, also known as the Manul, is a small wildcat native to the remote mountainous regions of Central Asia, including Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and parts of Russia and China.

Known for its distinctive appearance with a stocky build, dense fur, and expressive round face, the Pallas's Cat is a true gem for wildlife photographers. Its elusive nature and preference for high-altitude habitats make encounters with this elusive creature all the more thrilling.

A Pallas's t expedition typically takes place in the rugged and breath-taking landscapes that these felines call home. Guided by experienced wildlife experts, photographers have the opportunity to venture deep into the heart of their habitat, often trekking through rugged terrain and remote regions to seek out these elusive creatures.

Patience is key in Pallas's photography, as these cats are known for their solitary and elusive nature. Photographers may spend hours or even days observing and waiting for the perfect moment to capture the Pallas's in its natural environment. The rewards are immense, as the resulting photographs showcase the unique beauty and charm of this lesser-known feline species.

The expedition also offers photographers the chance to document other wildlife species that inhabit the same areas, such as snow leopards, ibex, and various bird

species. These encounters add an extra layer of excitement and diversity to the photography experience.

Beyond the photography aspect, Pallas's expeditions often involve interactions with local communities and opportunities to learn about the conservation efforts aimed at protecting these endangered creatures. Understanding the challenges they face and the initiatives in place to safeguard their habitats adds depth to the photography experience.

A Pallas's expedition in Mongolia requires both physical and mental strength. Physically, photographers must be prepared for the rugged and challenging terrain, which may involve long hikes, steep slopes, and extreme weather conditions. Endurance, stamina, and a good level of fitness are crucial to navigate these environments effectively. Mental strength is equally important as photographers need patience and resilience to handle the unpredictable nature of wildlife photography. Waiting for hours or days for the perfect shot, dealing with limited sightings, and adapting to the remote and isolated surroundings can test one's mental fortitude. Adaptability, focus, and a passion for the subject are essential to overcome these challenges and achieve successful Pallas's photography in Mongolia.

Photographing the Pallas's Cat requires not only technical skill but also immense patience. These nocturnal creatures are masters of camouflage and blend seamlessly into their surroundings. Our days were spent scanning the landscape,



Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*)





Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*)



Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*)

studying tracks, and searching for any telltale signs of their presence.

On the second day, as the first rays of dawn illuminated the snow, our perseverance was rewarded. From the corner of my eye, I caught a fleeting movement—a small, tufted-eared figure stealthily navigating the rocks. It was a Pallas's Cat! Excitement surged through me as I focused my lens on this rare sighting.

With my heart pounding, I captured the essence of the Pallas's Cat through my camera, its piercing gaze and graceful movements frozen in time. It was a privilege to witness such a solitary and mysterious creature in its natural habitat. In the golden light, I captured the enigmatic Pallas's Cat, its eyes gleaming with ancient wisdom, amidst the rugged beauty of Mongolia. The fleeting moment immortalized, a testament to the untamed spirit of this elusive feline.

Having glimpsed the Pallas's Cat, our mission was not yet complete. We continued our exploration, capturing the breathtaking beauty of Mongolia's diverse wildlife and landscapes. As the expedition drew to a close, I found myself reflecting on the profound connection I had developed with this rugged land. Mongolia had etched its wild spirit into my soul, leaving an indelible mark.

Conclusion:

My photography expedition in Mongolia, focused on capturing the Pallas's Cat, was a journey of discovery and wonder. It was a testament to the power of nature and the dedication required to film it.



Pallas's Cat (*Otocolobus manul*)



Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)



Corsac Fox (*Vulpes corsac*)



Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*)



Exploring The Natural
World Through Illustration
By Valentina Vargas Barrera



Expedition and trekking guide, outdoor educator, birdwatcher, explorer, and naturalist from Chile, Valentina discovered illustration just a few years back and found that art is a very powerful tool to educate and engage the local community in conservation activities. Her undeniable artistic talent has served science and education and also inspired others to discover the beauty of nature through art creation.

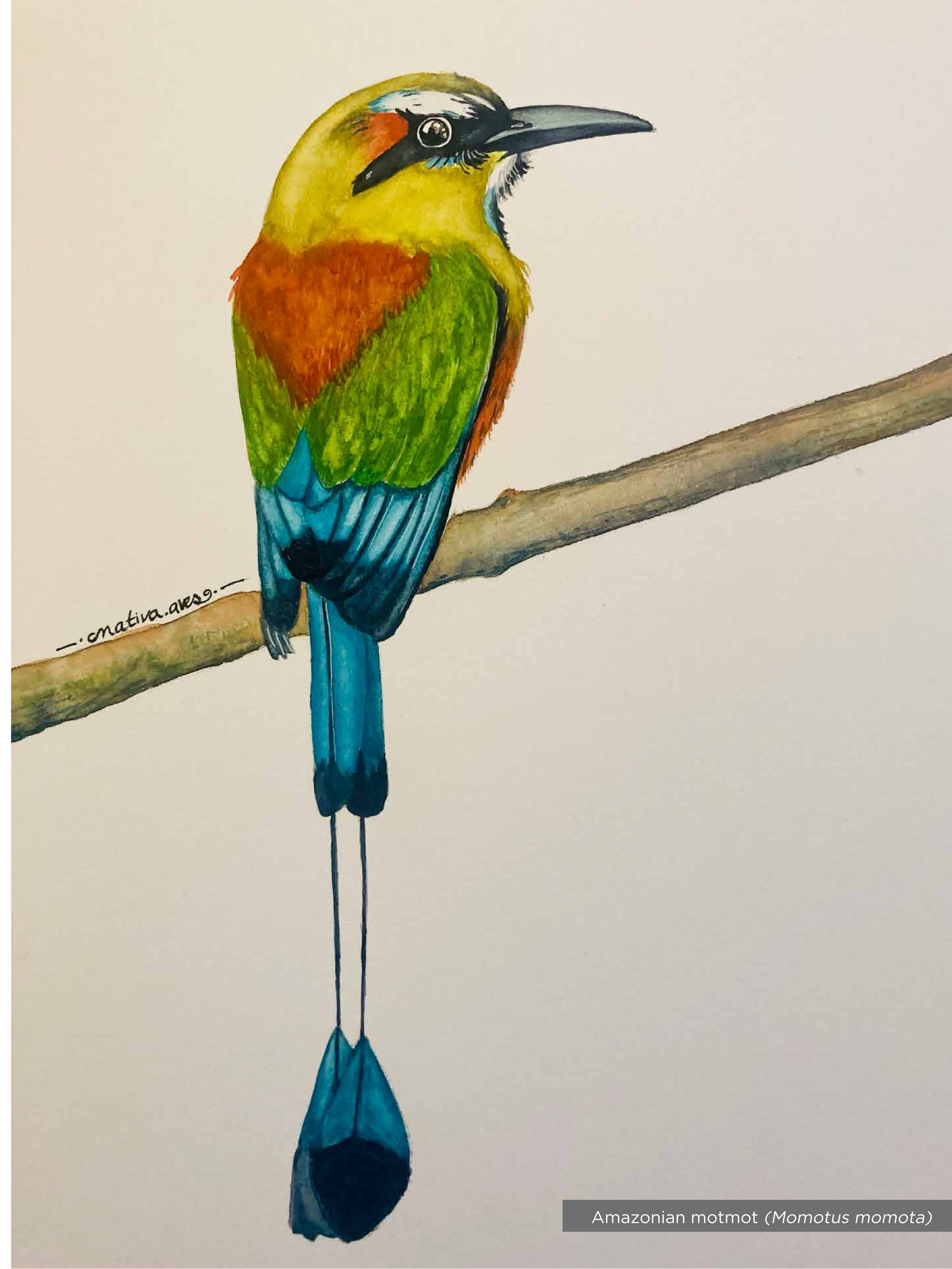
[instagram.com/nativa.aves](https://www.instagram.com/nativa.aves)

From an early age, I was always very close to Nature. Born and raised in El Monte, a small little town in Chile, I grew up in a spectacular country always close to the mountains and never far from the ocean. My unexhausted adventure spirit always took me to the most spectacular landscapes around the globe.

Ink, watercolor, oil paint, acrylic, charcoal, and pencils, never were strange

techniques, to me. When it comes to drawing and painting, shapes, forms, and colors easily appear in my hands. Nature is been the source of all inspiration, always.

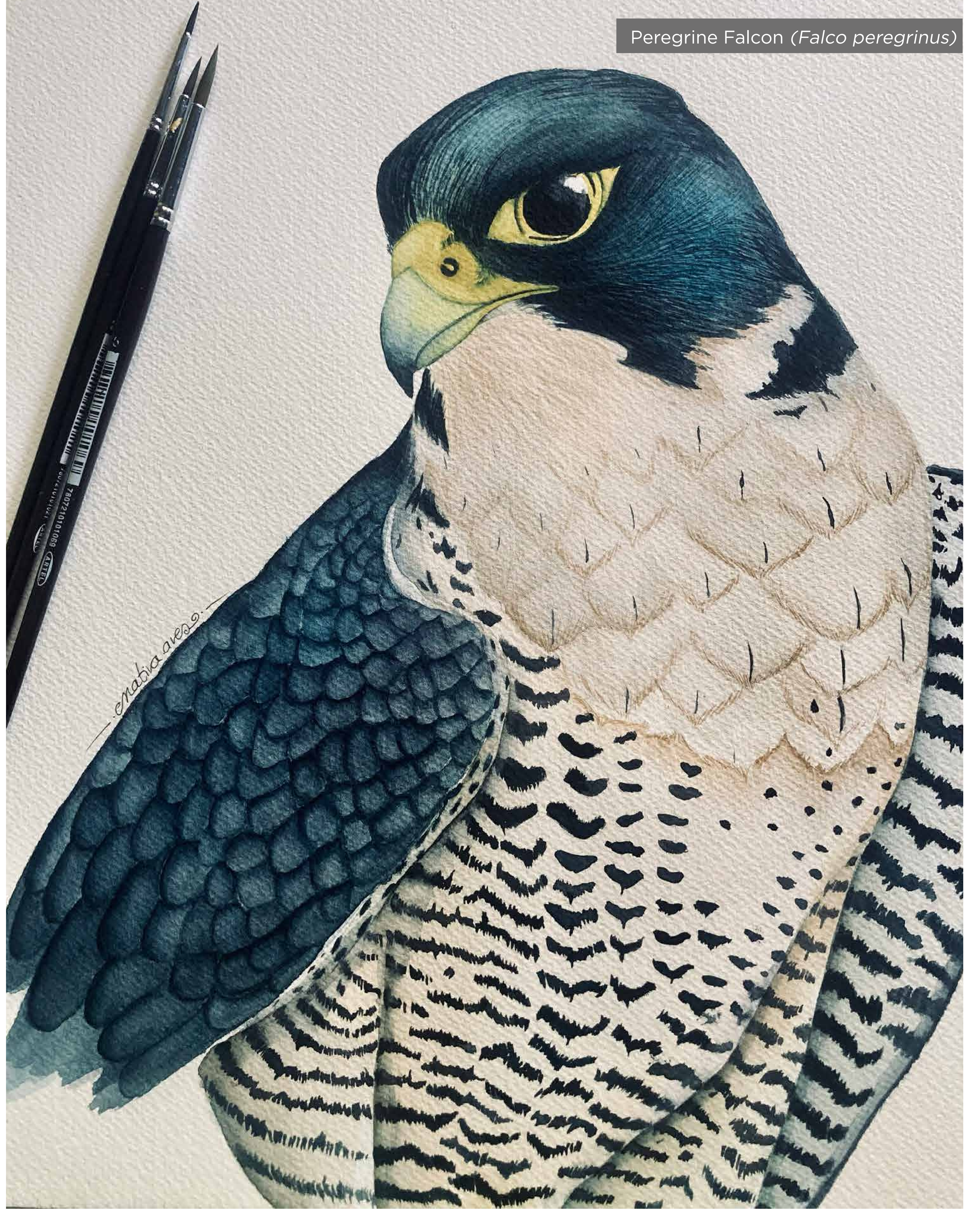
As a professional nature guide, I worked in the most spectacular places from Iguazu Falls and Amazonian Rain Forest to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. As a world traveler, I explored the most



Amazonian motmot (*Momotus momota*)



American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)



Burrowing Parrot (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*)



Culpeo (*Lycalopex culpaeus*)



amazing places on earth. Always traveling with a small notebook and a set of watercolors.

A remarkable trip that I have done was to the Amazonian rain forest where I expended a few months doing my professional practice for university and learning more about the amazing nature and biodiversity that lives in the Tambopata National Park in Peru, this hotspot is the habitat of many species, not only birds but also mammals, reptiles, and many insects. To be surrounded by this wonderful environment inspired my first work as an illustrator, I created a field guide to Tambopata birds.

To wake up at 4.30 am to do some bird watching was never a problem. A season working as excursion guide in the Atlantic rain forest in the Iguazu Falls area, nourished my knowledge about birds and wildlife, by sharing the experience with a select team of biologists, ornithologists, and guides. I became a bird-watching guide and also I created a field guide of the Atlantic Forest Birds.

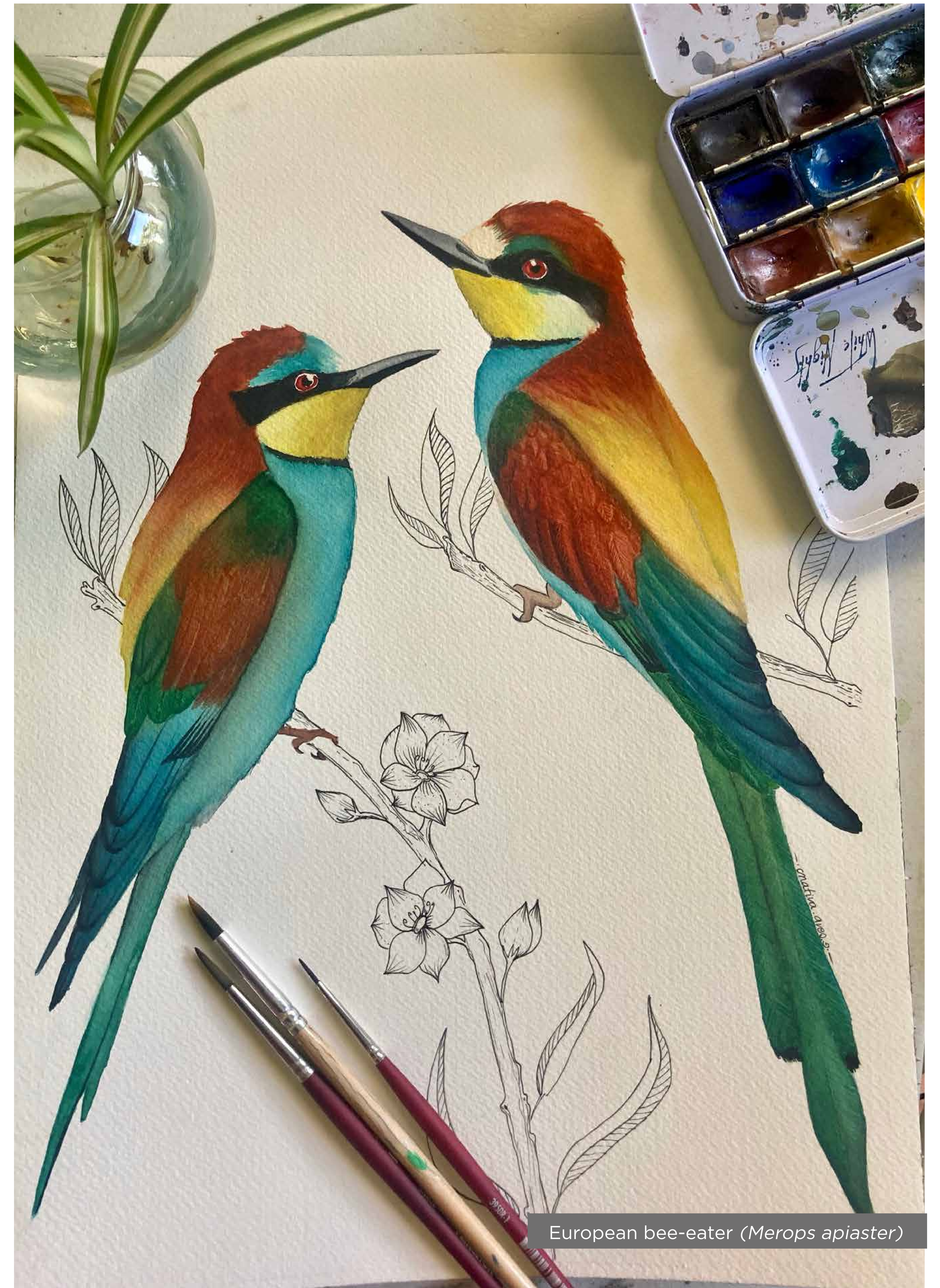
When the pandemic arrived in 2020, my life experienced a “plot twist”, my nomadic life took an indefinite break, giving me the time, tranquility, and the chance to settle for a while and start working, in a more serious way, on artistic projects at home, in Chile. This is when “Nativa Aves Ilustraciones” was born. Mostly inspired by birds, animals, and plants, I became a full-time illustrator, completely dedicated to exploring new artistic techniques and learning by myself to represent nature in a real and a poetic way. Understanding art as a very powerful

tool for environmental education.

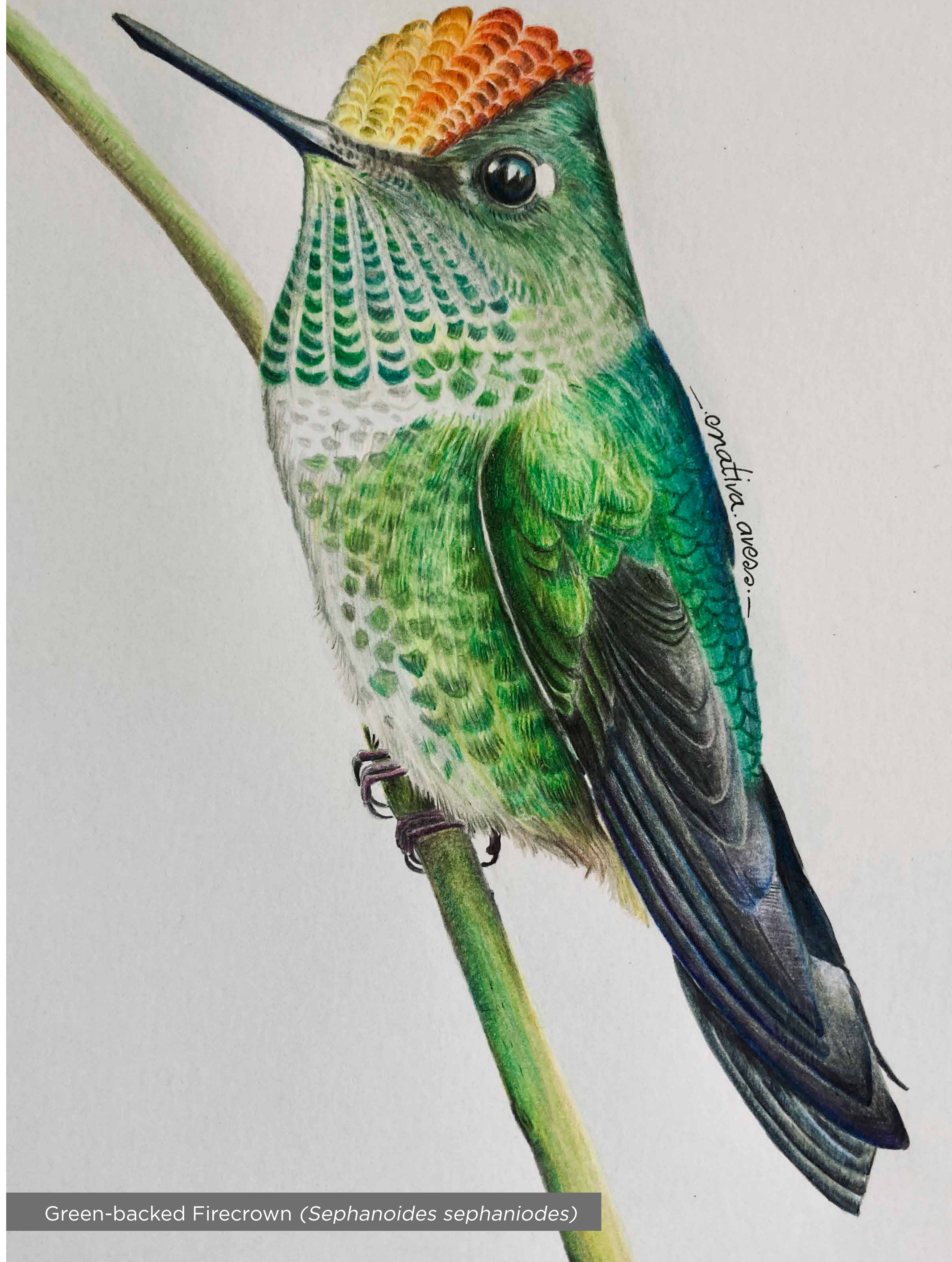
For the last past years, I also became a teacher, sharing my knowledge through social media, in open classes where everybody is welcome to explore the illustration techniques, bringing art and nature to many homes in different countries, and creating a small little virtual community that cares about nature, and use it as an artistic inspiration.

This skill took me to the most exciting projects such as botanical illustration for books, I have worked on the illustration in two different books about native flora in Chile, one of them called “Mirtáceas en la Flora Silvestre de Chile: Historia Natural y Situación Actual” and the other one is named “Arboles de Chile” (Trees of Chile), during the development of this project I learned a lot about native flora and the fascinating process of botanical illustration, besides working with recognized botanical illustrators and scientists, I had the chance to keep learning about the complexity of botanical art.

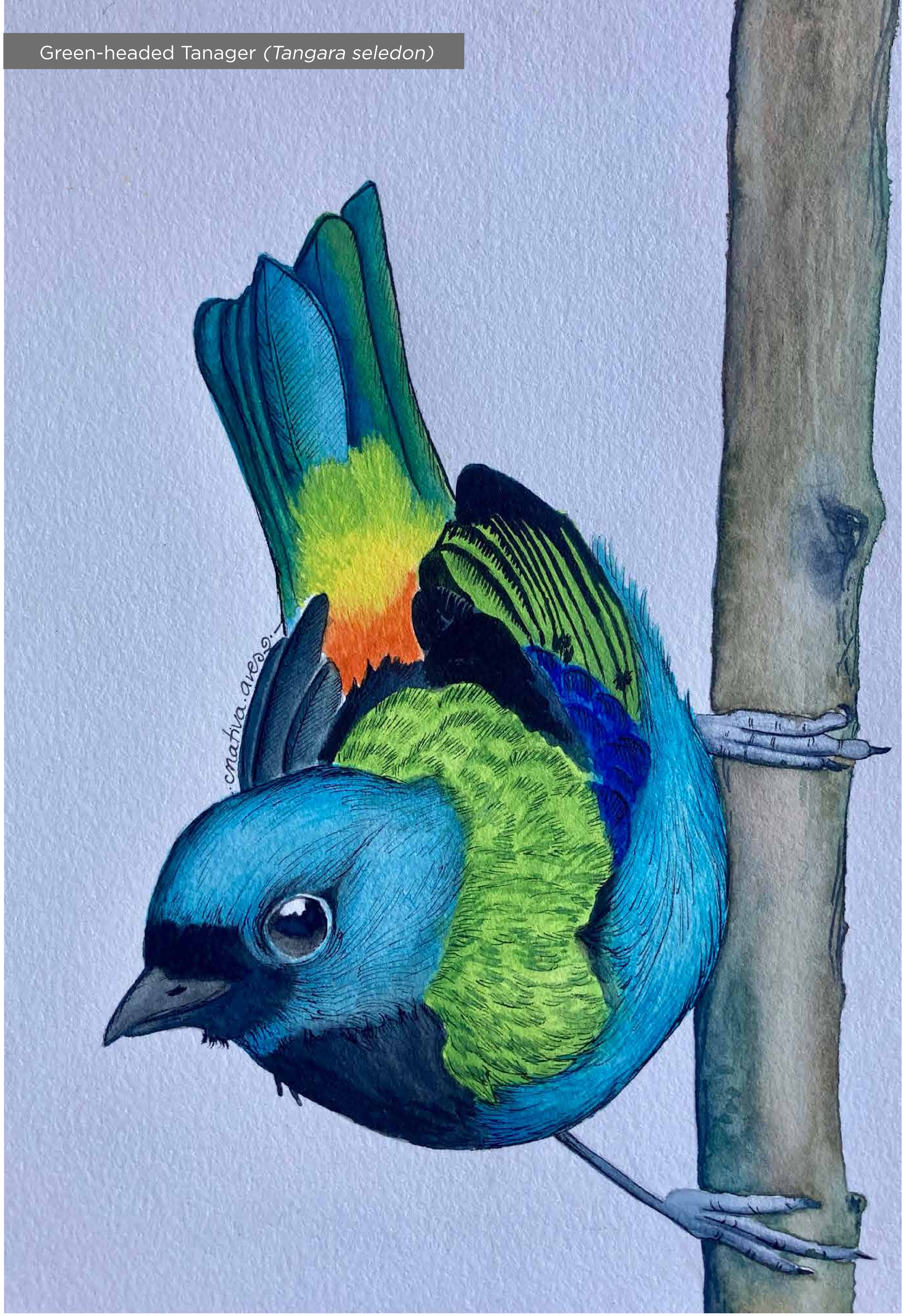
Also, I have got invited to participate in two different projects related to environmental education. The first one was to draw and paint all the species that live in Pedro de Valdivia wetland, to be able to create educational panels along an interpretative trail design for environmental education. The second one was to illustrate an infographic for a project held in my hometown as well, so I worked with a group of biologists and designers to create the Ecopark, a place to restore nature, and a place that is also a recycling and environmental



European bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*)

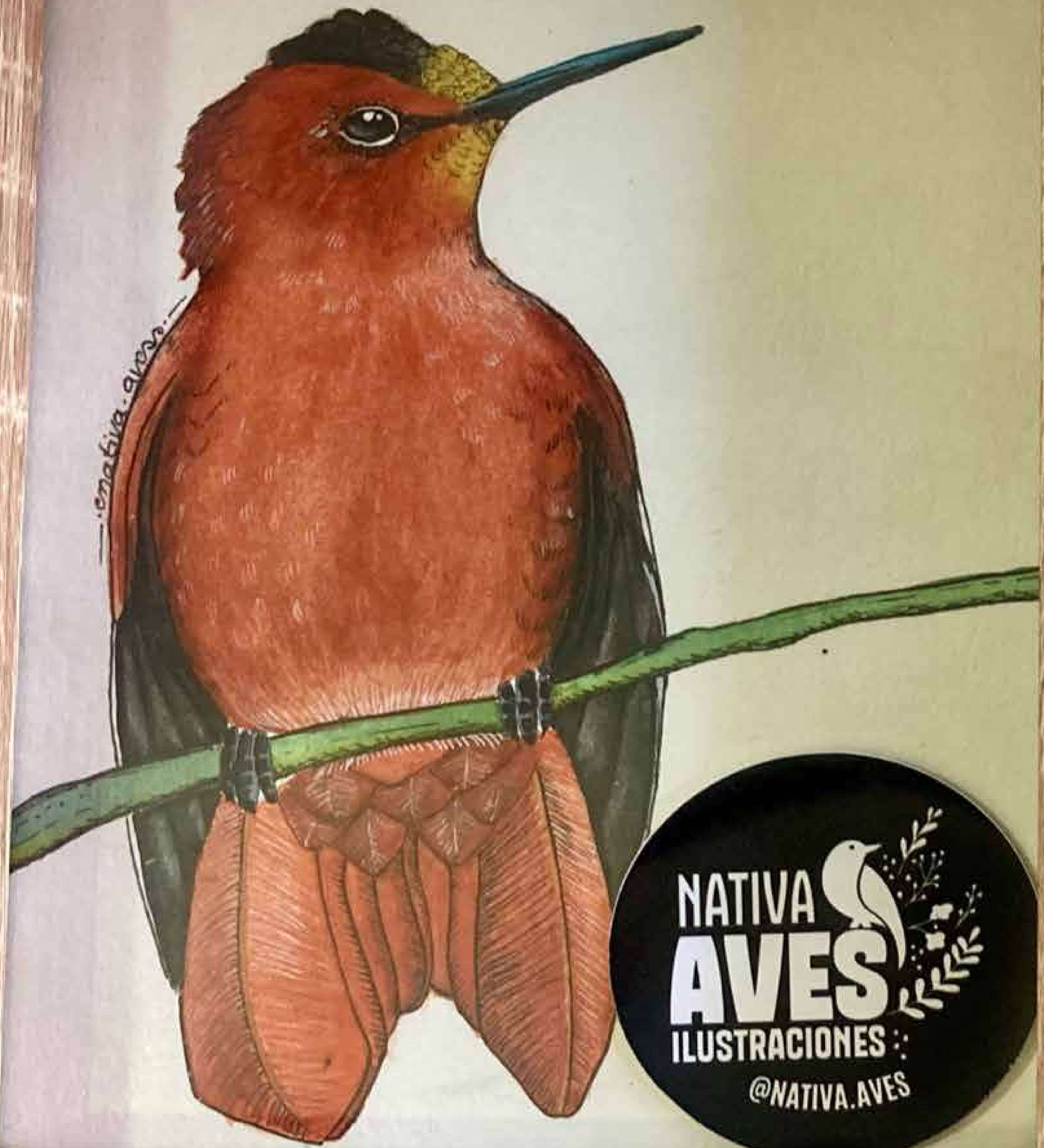


Green-backed Firecrown (*Sephanoides sephaniodes*)



Green-headed Tanager (*Tangara seledon*)

Green-backed Firecrown (*Sephanoides sephaniodes*)



Green-backed Firecrown (*Sephanoides sephaniodes*)



education center. I also collaborated on a museum creation, illustrating part of the Tipaume Natural Reserve History, it was a very important olive oil factory during the past century. Part of my work can be found in interpretative walks and educational centers, in botanical books about native flora in Chile, and some of my major pieces will be on permanent exhibition in the Museum of Tipaume, Natural Reserve.

Nowadays I work as an expedition guide on board of the M/N Stella Australis, sailing to the most remote and unexplored areas in the world, Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, where I have the chance to be in contact with nature every single day, being in touch daily with species like whales, dolphins, sea lions, albatrosses, penguins, petrels, condors, eagles. During the landings, I also have the chance to explore the subantarctic forest from mosses and mushrooms to a spectacular forest and incredible glaciers.



Malesherbia linearifolia (Estrella azul de cordillera)



Peruvian Pelican (*Pelecanus thagus*)



Inca Tern (*Larosterna inca*)

Enabha Aves

Many-colored Rush Tyrant (*Tachuris rubrigastra*)



— *Ornativa. elis.* —



Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*)



Scintillant Hummingbird (*Selasphorus scintilla*)

Roman cassie (*Vachellia caven*)



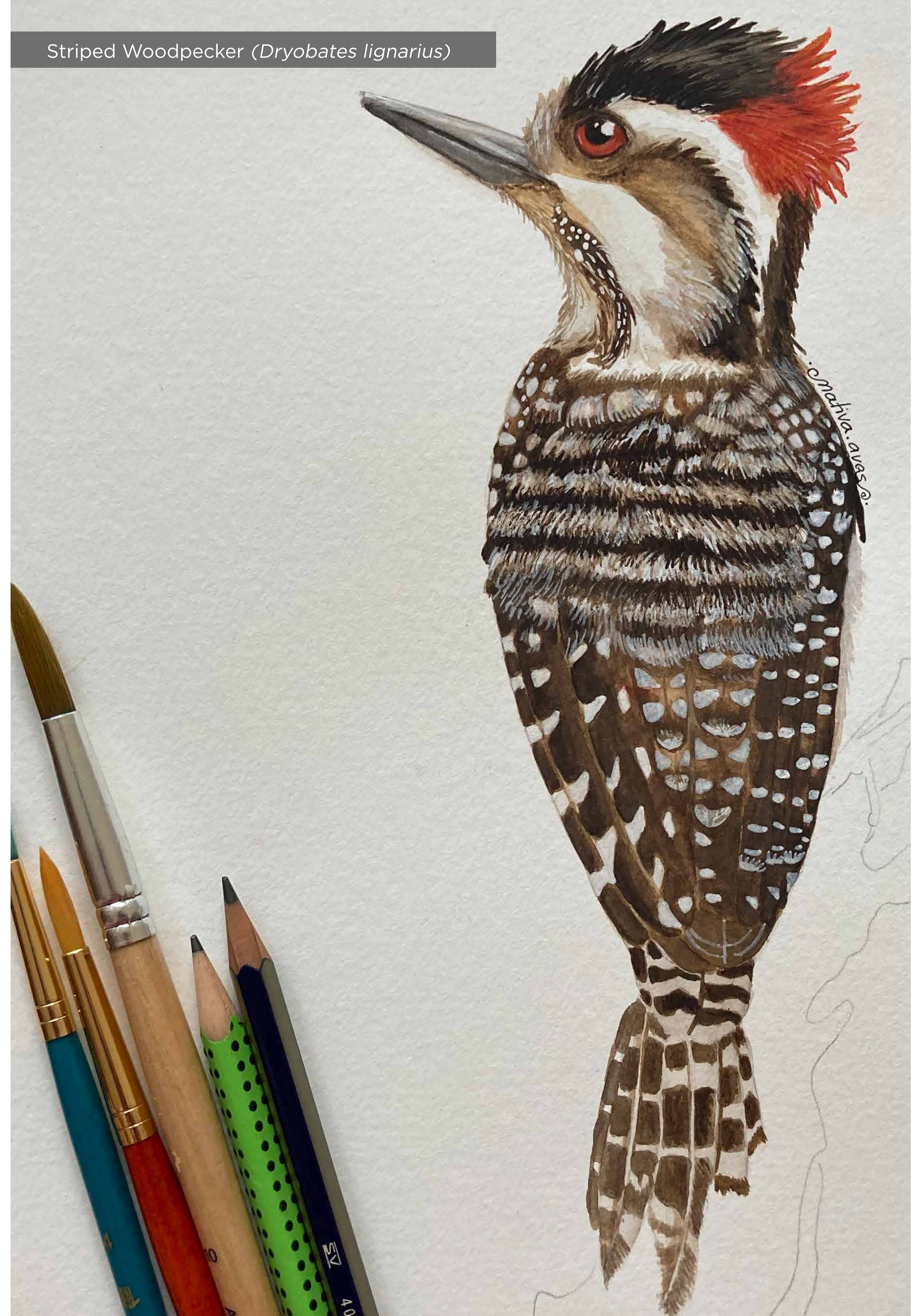
Rufous-legged Owl (*Strix rufipes*)





Sparkling Violetear (*Colibri coruscans*)

Striped Woodpecker (*Dryobates lignarius*)





YOUR GALLERY



Amith Krish
Lion (*Panthera leo*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Solomon Rajkumar
Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Sibin Nelson
Mottled Wood Owl (*Strix ocellata*)
Pune, India



YOUR GALLERY



Glenn Gomez
Spotted Eagle Owl (*Bubo africanus*)
Dubai, UAE



YOUR GALLERY



Syed Ahmar Amjad
Spotted Hyena (*Crocota crocuta*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



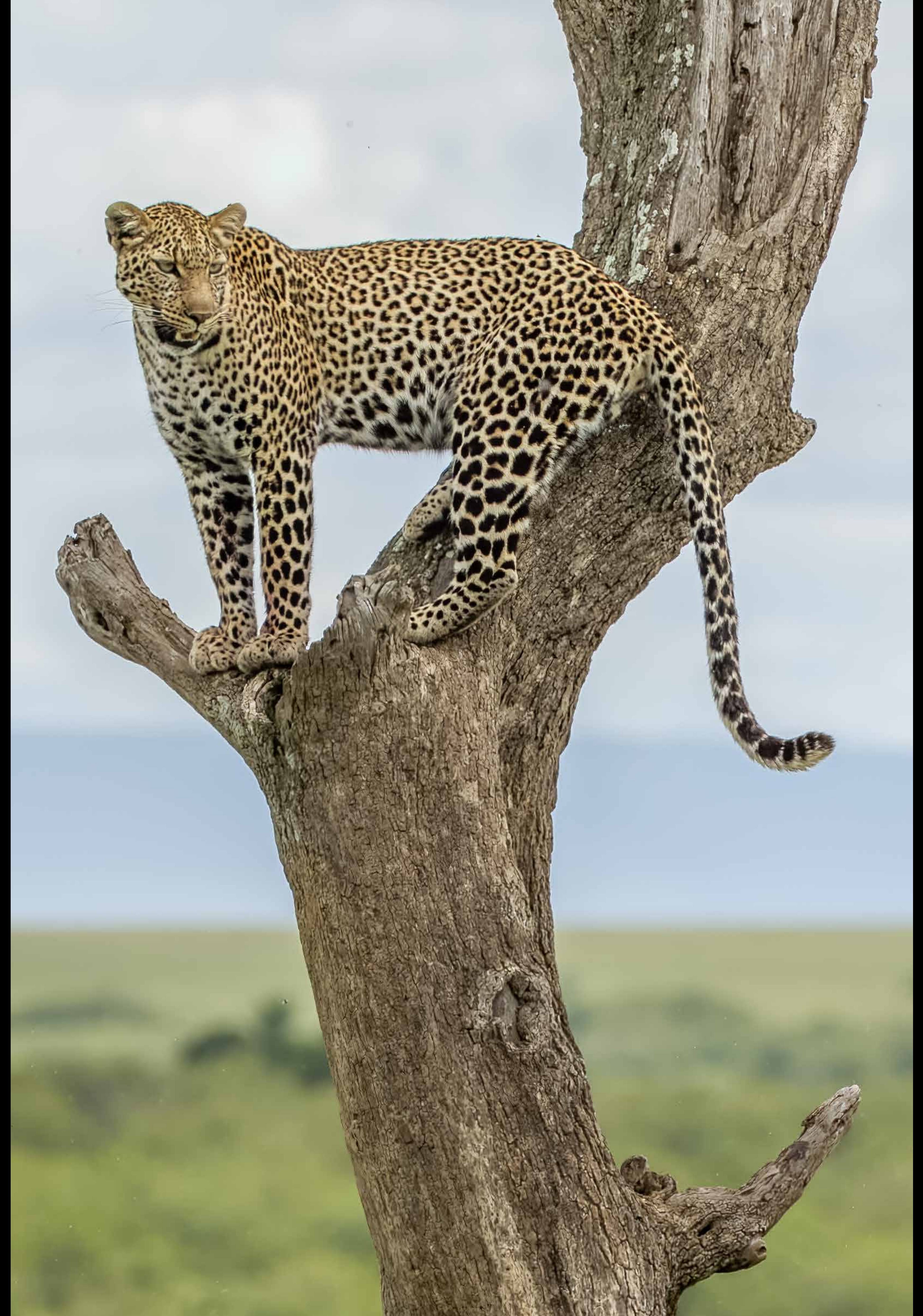
Solomon Rajkumar
Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Biby George
Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Syed Ahmar Amjad
Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Amith Krish

Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*)

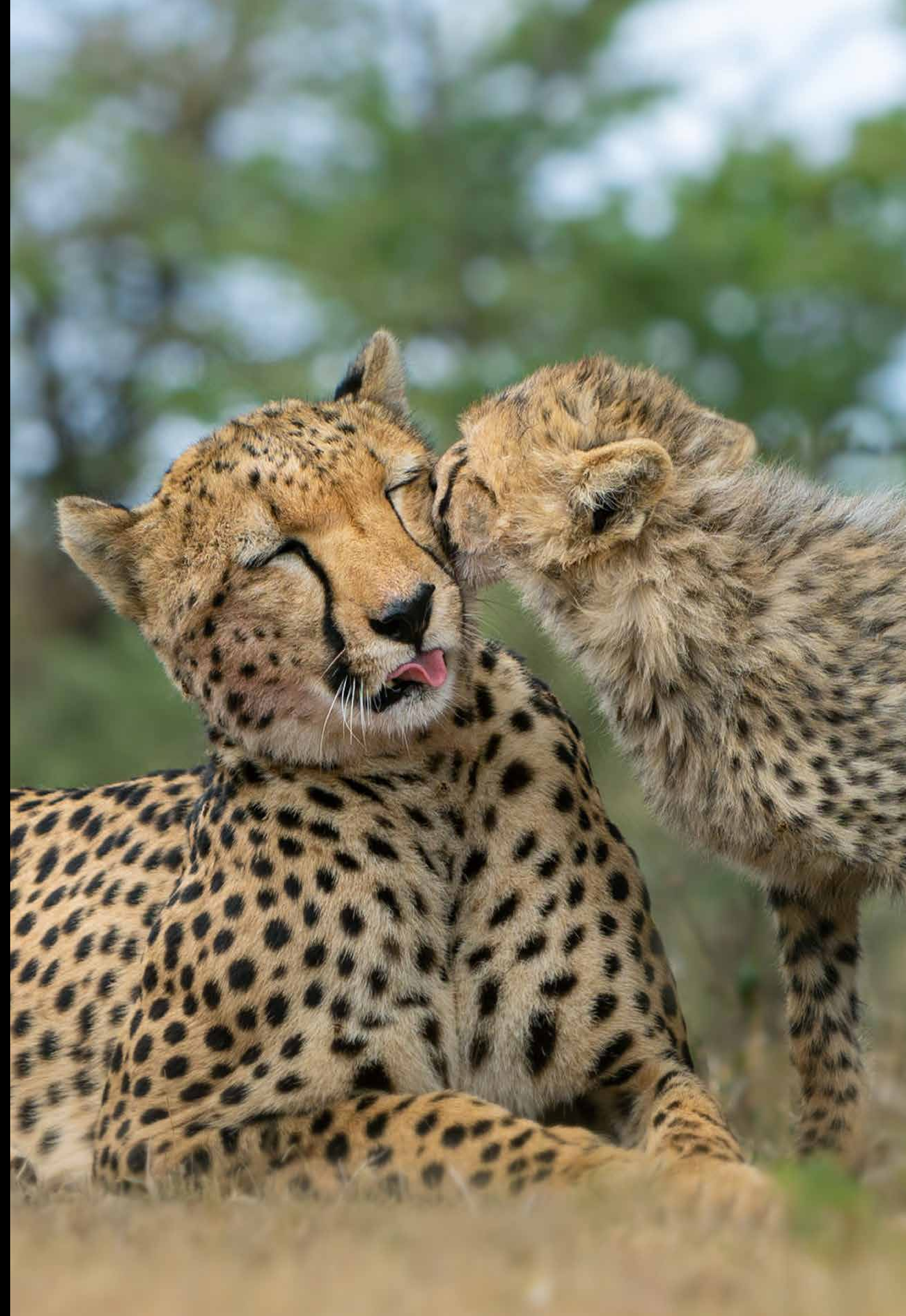
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Divesh C M
Masai Giraffe (*Giraffa tippelskirchi*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Sibin Nelson
Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Sneha Kumari
Arabian gazelle (*Gazella arabica*)
Dubai, UAE



YOUR GALLERY



Elie Sakr
Lion (*Panthera leo*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Ramachandran Rajagopal
Blue-rumped Pitta (*Hydrornis soror*)
Vietnam



YOUR GALLERY



Jayaram Kulur

Black Rhinoceros, (*Diceros bicornis*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Elie Sakr

Masai Giraffe (*Giraffa tippelskirchi*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Ramachandran Rajagopal
Grey-headed Kingfisher (*Halcyon leucocephala*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY



Ananth Satheesh
Rainbow Agama (*Agama agama*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

P

EXPLORERS

UPCOMING
FEATURES



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LITTLE OWL

By Hermis Haridas



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HER VIEWS & VISUALS

By Mridula Murali



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CUB'S CORNER

By Vidyun R Hebbar