

# A Passage to India

*Yuwaraj Gurjar – a Wildlife Photographer in His Own Words*

The glorious wildlife of the Indian subcontinent is celebrated by a passionate photographer - who shares a deep love not only for iconic species such as tigers but for small, unsung creatures too

As I live in Thane - which is on the outskirts of Mumbai's Sanjay Gandhi National Park, spreading across 104 sq. km and home to many small, wonderful creatures and even leopard - I have been visiting this Park almost every weekend for the last 25 years, and still find new things in my each visit. Though the initial focus was on birds, slowly I started admiring the lesser fauna which is very unusual, fascinating and goes unnoticed all the time. I started observing and photographing butterflies, ants, bugs, beetles, dragonflies, other small insects and wild flowers. Though I work with Raymond Limited, which is a renowned textile manufacturing company, my love towards nature always attracts me to go wandering in the wild. India boasts a number of hugely diversified habitats, and I have traveled across the Country for my nature observations and photography.

I have visited many of India's National Parks, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench (in Madhya Pradesh), Tadoba, Melghat, Sanjay Gandhi (in Maharashtra), Velavadaar and Gir (in Gujarath), Bharatpur and Ranthambhore (in Rajashthan), Namdapha National Park

(in Arunachal Pradesh), Kaziranga National Park (in Assam), Bandipur and Dandeli (in Karnataka) and Jim Corbett National Park (in Uttarakhand). I have used Nikon camera bodies (D70s and D90) and Tamron lenses (180 macro, 200-500 zoom and 18-270 VC) for my photography.

My photos have won several national/international awards and have been exhibited across the world. Some have been included in field guides, educational websites and magazines. Observing and photographing nature and wildlife is not my only aim, as I love to spread awareness & knowledge about nature and wildlife. I have written and published more than 1000 photo articles in various newspapers, magazines and blogs. I have published and distributed audio video CDs for school children about "Nature Education and Awareness". I have conducted slide talks/workshop on nature, wildlife and photography. For the same reason I accompany students, groups and families and help them to see the hidden natural world and India's rich bio-diversity across the Country.





**Blackbuck Male - *Antilope cervicapra***

*Velavadar National Park, Gujarat, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 200-500, 1/2500, f6.3, ISO 400*

Blackbucks are grassland mammals and often seen chasing females or running after rival males. When they sense some danger they leap into the air and run with great speed.



### Crab spider pair with kill

Yeoor Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.

Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f13, ISO 200

A male Crab spider attempts to copulate with a female that has injected its prey, a honey bee, with its deadly poison. On the now dead bee we can still see several smaller bees and fruit flies that had come to steal food from the pollen baskets of the larger bee.

### Apefly - *Spalgis epius*

Maharashtra Nature Park, Mumbai, India.

Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro 1/60, f25, ISO 200

Usually butterflies are framed sideways.

But I purposely captured this butterfly from the front, from a low angle and with the sky as a background.



**Damselfly laying eggs in water**

Nampong, Arunachal Pradesh, India.  
Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro,  
1/60, f11, ISO 200

Damselflies do not have a specialized ovipositor. Generally they simply dip the tip of their abdomen into water and release their eggs. Some species lay their eggs in a gelatinous mass which sticks to rocks or vegetation, while others have long filamentous strands attached to their eggs that are used to wrap around aquatic plants.



**Synchronised Caterpillars of Fruit Piercing Moth**

Yeoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India. Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f13, ISO 200

These moth caterpillars were alarmed by my looming macro lens and all of a sudden positioned themselves just like dancers.



**Checked Keelback -  
*Xenochrophis piscator***

*Tadoba National Park,  
Chandrapur, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 180  
macro, 1/60, f18, ISO 200*

Keelbacks are very common  
freshwater snakes. They strike  
with great determination,  
holding on tenaciously.

Reptiles smell using the tip  
of their tongue, and a forked  
tongue allows them to sense  
where a smell is coming from.



**Camouflaged Bark Gecko**

*Yeoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.*

*Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro 1/60, f8, ISO 200*

The Bark Geckos are perfectly camouflaged on large tree trunks. It is extremely difficult spotting one.

**Indian Ornamental Spider - *Poecilotheria regalis***

*Matheran, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f13, ISO 400*

*Poecilotheria regalis* is one of the most popular arboreal tarantulas. Its legspan sometimes exceeds 7 inches. In the wild these large spiders live in holes of tall trees, where they make asymmetric funnel webs.

Their primary prey consists of various flying insects, which they seize in mid-flight and paralyze with their venom.





**Butterfly with dew drops**

*Yoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.*

*Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f14, ISO 200*

Butterflies are often seen studded with dew drops on early winter mornings. This is a very tiny butterfly, just 18/20 mm size, with lots of dew drops shining like jewels.

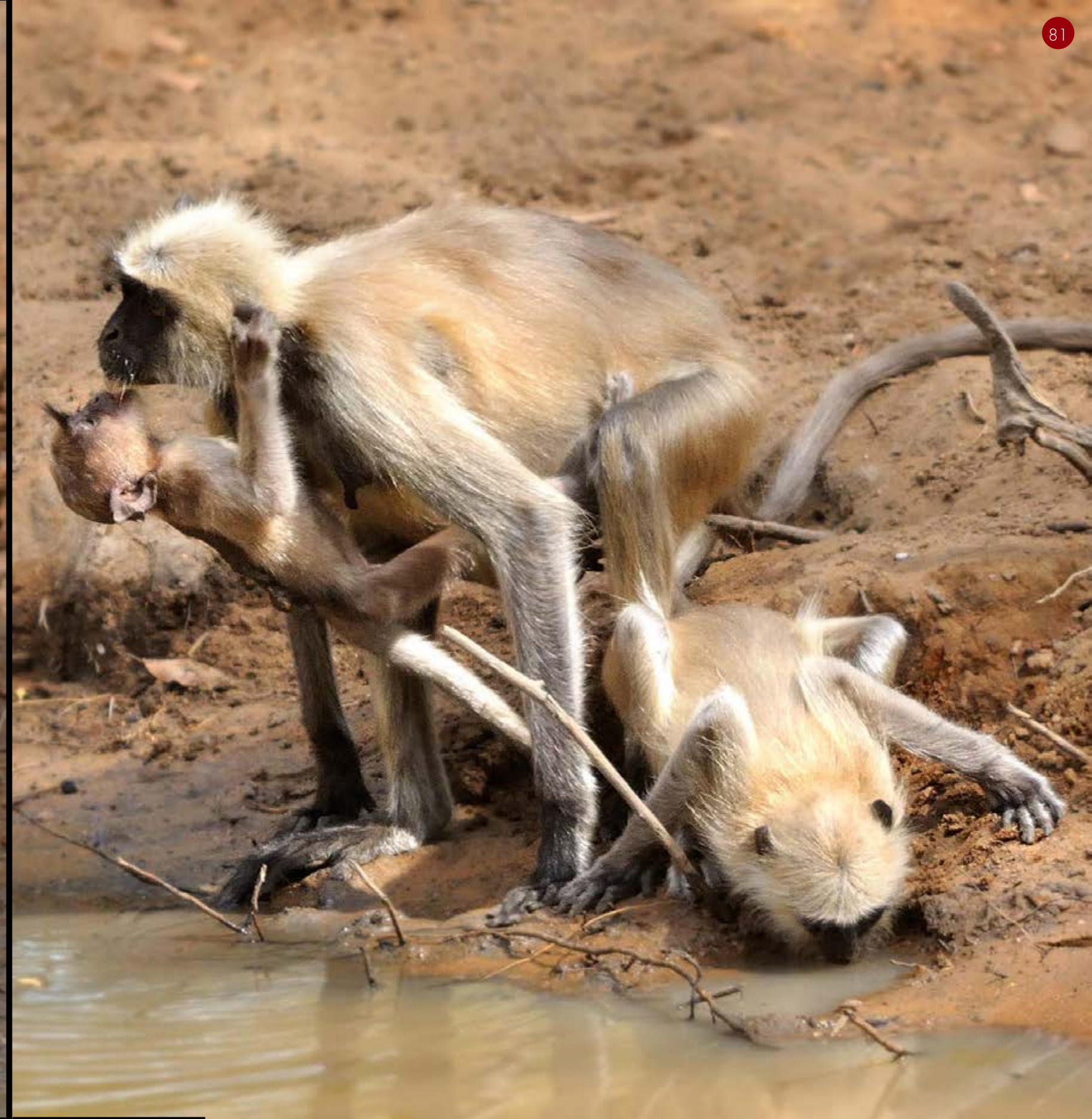


**Changeable Hawk Eagle - *Nisaetus cirrhatus***

Tadoba National Park, Chandrapur, India.

Nikon D90, Tamron 200-500, 1/200, f6.3, ISO 400

This majestic bird of prey had landed near a waterhole to drink water.



**Hanuman Langur with baby - *Semnopithecus dussumieri***

Tadoba National Park, Chandrapur, India.

Nikon D90, Tamron 200-500, 1/640, f6, ISO 800

The baby was not able to drink the water, so it was sucking the droplets from its mother's mouth.





**Sapan Mori**

*Bharatpur National Park, Rajasthan, India.*

*Nikon D70s, Tamron 200-400, 1/160, f8, ISO 200*

A very famous area where one can see  
and photograph thousands of birds.

Also one of the World Heritage Sites from India.



**Saw Scaled Viper - *Echis carinatus***

Yoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.

Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f22, ISO 200

This is one of the most common and venomous snakes of India. It is very small in size and perfectly camouflaged among the dry leaf litter.

**Red naped Falcon *Falco peregrinus* with Lapwing Kill**

*Serengeti National Park, Tanzania.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 200-500, 1/1600, f6.3, ISO 400*

This bird of prey had killed a Lapwing and was relishing it on the ground. Somehow our jeep roared there at that spot and at the same time the Falcon leaped in the air with the kill in its talons.

**Scorpion babies with mother**

*Yoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.*

*Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f20, ISO 200*

I was looking for butterflies when somehow I sensed movement and saw this female scorpion mother carrying her tiny babies on her back.



**Spider in rain**

*Yeoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.*  
*Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f10, ISO 400*  
This spider was waiting for its prey in thundering rain.  
It was very difficult to capture this image under the downpour.



**Slime Mould**

*Yeoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.*  
*Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f18, ISO 200*  
Slime molds were formerly classified as fungi, but are no longer considered part of this kingdom. Their common name refers to part of some of these organisms' life cycles where they can appear as gelatinous "slime". This brightly colored slime mould was growing on a dead Teak leaf which was rotting on the forest floor.

**Giant Squirrel - *Ratufa indica***

*Bondla Sanctuary, Goa, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/125, f5, ISO 400*

The Indian giant squirrel is an upper-canopy dwelling species, which rarely leaves the trees, and requires tall, profusely branched trees for the construction of nests. The Giant Squirrel is mostly active in the early hours of the morning and in the evening, resting at midday. It is a shy, wary animal and not easy to discover but this particular animal was so bold that I managed to capture it with my "macro" lens.



**Striped Hyena cub - *Hyaena hyaena***

*Velavadar National Park, Gujarath, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 200-500, 1/100, f6, ISO 400*

This is one of three Hyena cubs - he was quite bolder in comparison to his brothers, who vanished in the den. He was so curious that he stayed on to look at us as we were filming him.

### **Tiny grasshopper on flower**

*Yeoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India. Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro, 1/125, f8, ISO 200*  
The first nymph to hatch out of the egg pod leaves a tunnel from the pod to the soil surface, making emergence easier for the nymphs which follow. They look like adult grasshoppers, but are smaller and have no wings. Nymphs molt every eight to ten days as they grow. They molt five or six times before becoming adults with wings.



**Preying Mantis laying eggs in ootheca**

*Yoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f9, ISO 200*

During the summer monsoon, females lay their eggs in a large egg case (the ootheca) made from a frothy, gummy substance glued to tree twigs, plant stems and other objects.

Tiny nymphs emerge from the egg mass in winter.



**Spider approaching planthopper**

*Yoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f25, ISO 200*

This funny looking Planthopper (*Derbidae*) was sitting idle on leaf. Its extra-long wings were kept in a very unusual way and reflecting the light. The approaching spider was about to jump and catch it.

**Coral**

*Sawantwadi, India. Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f16, ISO 200*

These corals were clicked on the seashore near Goa. Though the creatures were underwater, the photograph was taken with a normal camera from above the surface, avoiding reflections.

**Crab spider**

*Phansad Sactuary, India. Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f14, ISO 400*

The crab spider doesn't need to built a web to catch a prey. This species had adopted a camouflage which offers it the ability to take the color of the environment in which it lives. So, the crab spider disguises itself inside flowers and simply waits for the prey to land on the flower for nectar feeding.







**Vine snake - *Ahaetulla nasuta***

*Matheran, Maharashtra, India.*

*Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro,  
1/60, f29, ISO 200*

Vine snakes are the only snakes in India with horizontally elliptical eyes and a bright golden iris. The eyes are large and positioned frontally, providing stereoscopic vision. This common snake is rarely seen because of its excellent camouflage. Greatly feared, this harmless, beautiful snake is always killed by villagers when seen. It is foolishly believed that it will dart at a person's eyes and peck them out or it will jump on the head and break the skull.



---

**Saffron faced Damselfly**

*Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai, India.*

*Nikon D70s, Tamron 180 macro, 1/320, f9, ISO 200*

Damselfly perched on violet water lily. The flower was prominent, but the main focus in the composition was assigned to the damselfly.



**Clear wing Forest Glory - *Vestalis gracilis***

*Phansad Sanctuary, India. Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/60, f20, ISO 200*

This damselfly is very shy and always runs away from the camera lens. But somehow I managed to capture this individual, along with the dripping dew drops on the grass blade.

**Water Strider**

*Yoor, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Thane, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/320, f3.5, ISO 400*

Water striders use the high surface tension of water and long, hydrophobic legs to help them stay above water. I was able to capture the ripples made by this one - the bright green background in the photograph was due to the water algae.



**Olive Ridley Turtle babies -  
*Lepidochelys olivacea***

*Velas, Konkan, India.*

*Nikon D70s, Nikon 28 mm,  
1/250, f9, ISO 200*

Females of Olive Ridley turtle return to the same beach of their birth to lay their eggs for the next generation. Although a female may lay hundreds of eggs in one season, only a few of the hatchlings will survive to reach maturity. These hatchlings started their way to sea at sunset. Today over 40 species of turtles including most sea turtles and many types of tortoises are severely endangered.





***Ceropegia  
vincaefolia***

*Kas, Satara, India. Nikon D90, Tamron 180 macro, 1/200, f6.3, ISO 200*

The genus *Ceropegia* can be found in Africa, Madagascar, the Canary Islands, Asia and in the tropical forests of New Guinea. There are about 235 species.

**Tigress - *Panthera tigris***

*Tadoba National Park, Chandrapur, India. Nikon D90, Tamron 200-500, 1/640, f6.3, ISO 800*

We were sitting in our jeep, waiting for this tigress on the main road of the Tadoba Park. Our vehicle was facing the opposite way and we were checking for the alarm calls from the deers and monkeys. Casually, I just glanced back and saw the female which was approaching us.





**Tiger male -  
*Panthera tigris***

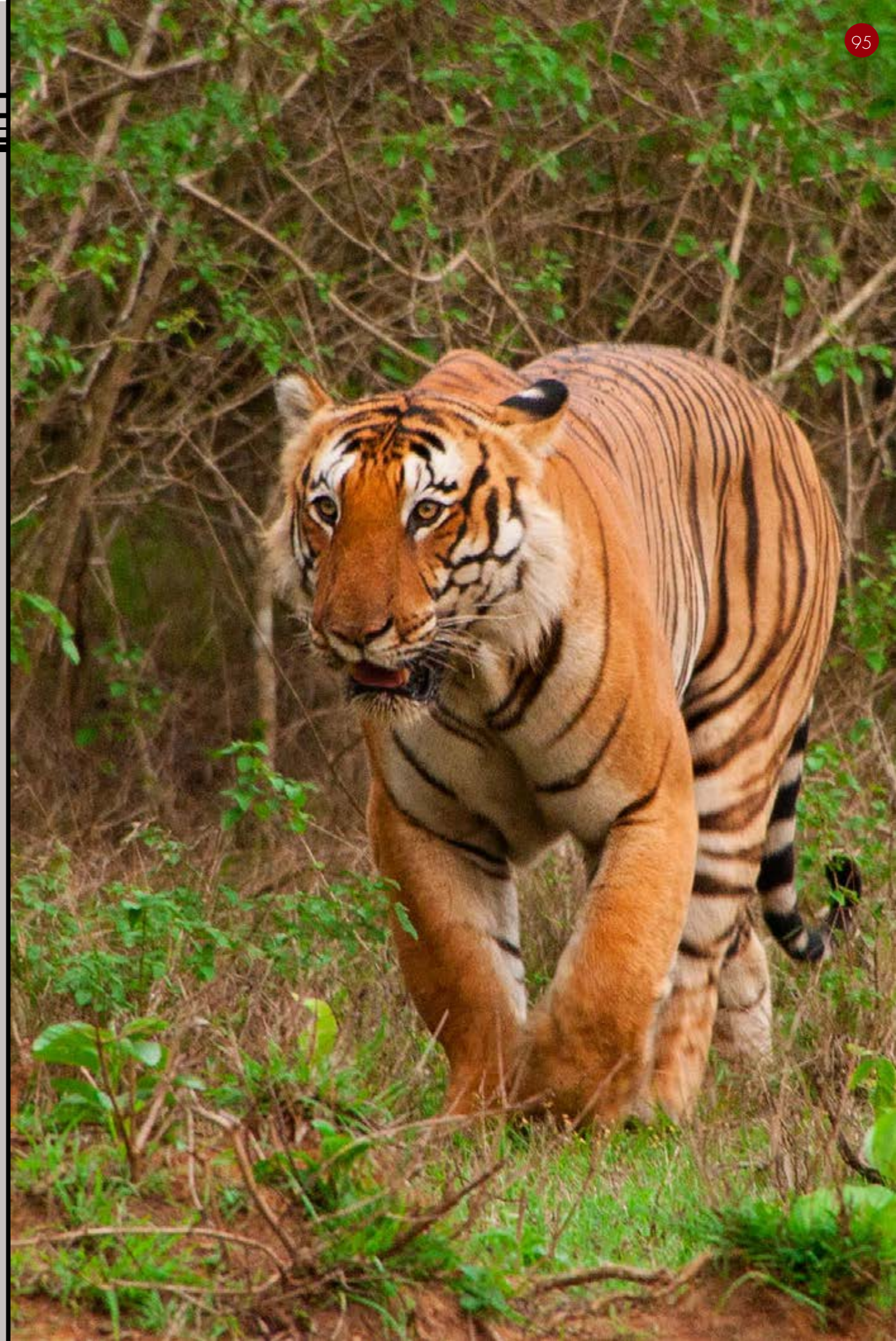
*Bandipur National Park, Karnataka, India. Nikon D90, Tamron 18-270 VC, 1/80, f6.3, ISO 1250*

All the vehicles were waiting for this male as they had spotted him on the other side of the road. Somehow he approached just in front of my vehicle.

**Tiger young male -**

***Panthera tigris***  
*Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh, India. Nikon D90, Tamron 18-270 VC, 1/60, f6.3, ISO 800*

A small boy from my jeep spotted it - sitting just next to road nearby, just 20 meters away from the vehicle.





**Tiger male -  
*Panthera tigris***

*Bandhavgarh National  
Park, Madhya Pradesh,  
India. Nikon D90,  
Tamron 200-500, 1/60,  
f6.3, ISO 3200*

This is "Kallu" from  
Bandhavgarh. I have  
been following this tiger  
since its birth - however  
he has been missing  
since October 2010 and  
might have actually  
been killed by poachers.



**Sunset**

*Bhigwan lake, Baramati, India.*

*Nikon D90, Tamron 200-500, 1/4000, f13, ISO 200*

A few species of heron were sitting on mud flats at Bhigwan lake, as the sun was setting in the background. Fishermen use the same lake for their activities, and birds are now quite used to the boatmen.