

A black and yellow striped snake is coiled on a tree branch. The snake's body is black with bright yellow diagonal stripes. It is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its head raised and tongue flicking. The background shows a river and green foliage under a blue sky.

# ANIMA MUNDI

*Adventures in Wildlife Photography*

Issue 11, Year 3 - 3rd Quarter, July 2013

In This Issue:


**SCOOP** The Pinocchio Lizard

**THE RIVER OF LIFE** Borneo's Kinabatangan

**A PRAYER FOR A PREY** A tribute to Praying mantises

**EUROPEAN EMOTIONS** A portfolio by Andrea Zampatti

**BORN TO BE WILD** The African Hunting Dog



■ Weirdly regal, and yet utterly alien - the Wandering Violin Mantis *Gongylus gongyloides* from the Western Ghats of India. Enjoy our visual tribute to Praying mantids starting from page 56.

# ANIMA MUNDI

*Adventures in Wildlife Photography*

## A trip round the world

Welcome to a new wonderful issue of ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography*! We hope you'll have as much fun reading it as we did putting it together...between one fantastic trip to the Western Ghats and another wonderful one to Madagascar. Yes, it's hard work - but it's fun! So what did we cook up for you this time?

We start with a tantalizing appetizer - a photographic documentation of the elusive *Anolis proboscis*, a curiously-snouted little arboreal lizard from Ecuador which had been believed extinct for a long time. Well, it certainly isn't - go to page 4 and be delighted by our contributor Lucas Bustamante-Enriquez' beautiful images!

As a main dish, we are proud to serve you the first half of an extensive two-part feature about the amazing Kinabatangan, the mighty "river of life" of Malaysian Borneo...a place we have known well for a number of years, but which never fails to amaze us at each new visit (and yes - we plan to go back there in 2014). This unique Wildlife Sanctuary is a veritable treasure trove of rare and spectacular South-East Asian species, and a travel destination the serious wildlife photographer cannot afford to miss. Great guides, comfortable accomodation, yummy food and extraordinary sightings from Orangutans to Hornbills and from Estuarine crocodiles to Proboscis monkeys...What are you waiting for? The article starts on page 9.

We follow up with a real delicacy, a recipe for connoisseurs...Our dazzling photographic tribute to Praying mantises starts on page 56. Yes, we have a fetish for those sexy, sleek and sinister predators - with their quasi-human virtuous and slightly hypocritical stance, their delicately swaying movements, their cold stare and alien features, Praying mantises have no peer in the insect world, and as masters of camouflage and mimicry are almost unsurpassed. No wonder so

many people are utterly fascinated by them - including our new contributor, celebrated entomologist and book author Piotr Naskrecki!

We then pass to something lighter before the Grand Finale...enjoy our friend and contributor Andrea Zampatti's Personal Portfolio from page 85, a delicate palette of patterns and nuances paying tribute to the tender beauty of the Old Continent's natural world. Andrea's dexterity and creative vision truly give justice to a somewhat underestimated universe - we love his portraits and we are sure you will too.

And finally, our special dessert - Bjorn Olesen's feature on the African Wild Dog, truly the Continent's child of a lesser god - persecuted, hunted, poisoned, this lithe, relentless and highly intelligent predator of the African bush tethers on the brink of extinction all over its range. Discover the secrets of its social life starting on page 100. Bjorn has moreover just been awarded the First Prize in the 2012 Smithsonian Magazine Photo Contest, and we'd like to take advantage of this opportunity to congratulate him!

So, once again, ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography* upholds its three-year old tradition, offering in a single issue a broad input from the four corners of the globe - a veritable trip round the world. But wait, there's more! We are busy modifying our home page at [www.animamundimag.com](http://www.animamundimag.com) to incorporate a fully-fledged blog - this means you'll be able to enjoy the single articles one by one online, before seeing the actual magazine ready for downloading. Sounds complicated? Stay tuned and you'll understand.

In the meantime...

Have a good trip!  
Andrea & Antonella Ferrari  
[www.animamundimag.com](http://www.animamundimag.com)

We appreciate your feedback - constructive criticism, useful suggestions and interesting contributions are most welcome.  
Please drop us a line at [nautilus@reefwonders.net](mailto:nautilus@reefwonders.net)

**ANIMA MUNDI**  
Adventures in Wildlife Photography  
is a Free Quarterly Online Magazine  
[www.animamundimag.com](http://www.animamundimag.com)

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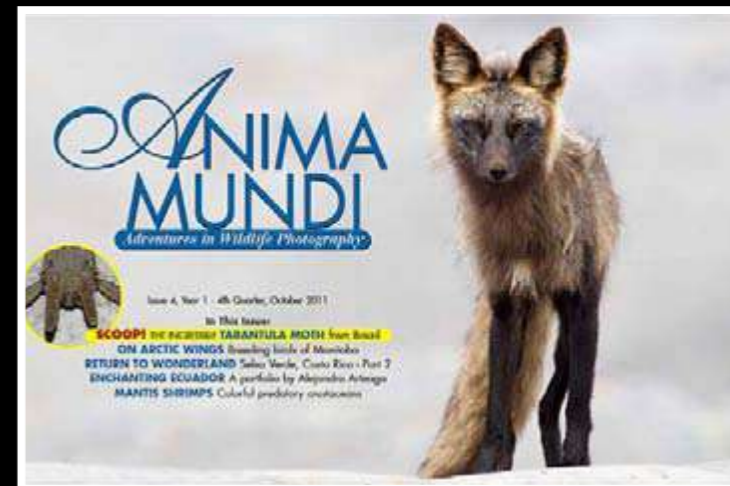
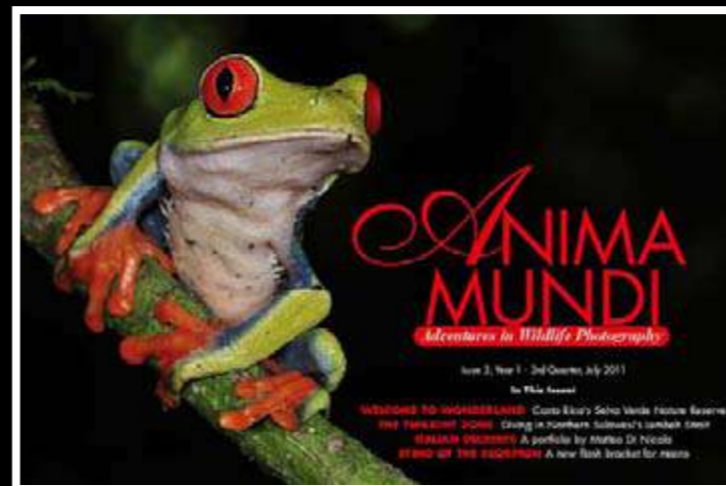
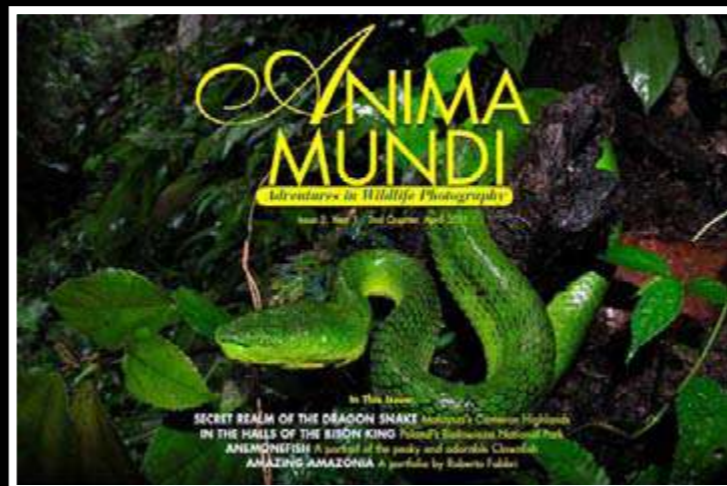
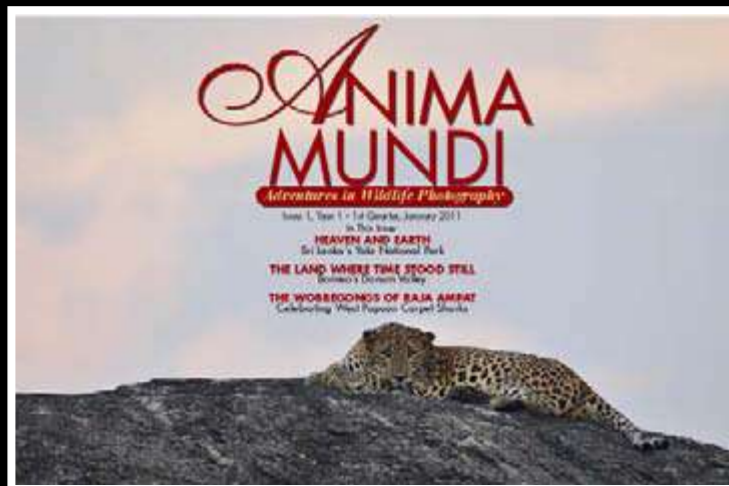
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Frilled Tree Frog  
Rhacophorus appendiculatus  
on tree fern,  
Kinabatangan river basin, Borneo.

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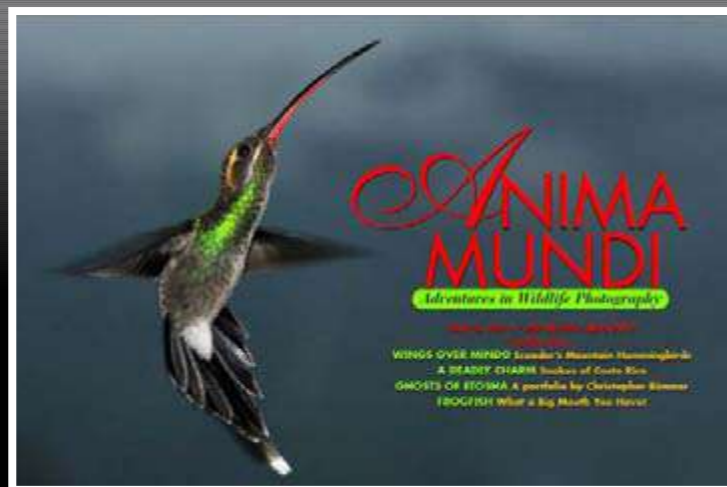


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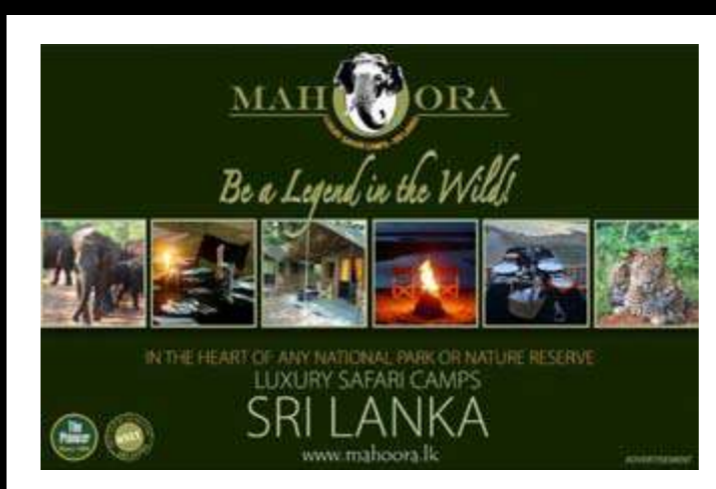
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Dear Andrea & Antonella,

*I have just finished reading your latest edition of Anima Mundi and I was inspired to write and say how much I am enjoying your publication and following your adventures. My wife and dive/photo partner Cherie and I were so inspired by your feature on Yala National Park that we booked a Safari with Eco Team and we had a fantastic time. It was exactly as portrayed in your article and we also followed your recommendations for visiting the cultural triangle in Sri Lanka. As we were leading one of our dive tours on a live aboard exploring the Maldives last June, a private side trip to Sri Lanka was clearly not to be passed up due to your information. So, I guess it's good news for you both that others are reading and responding to your work. So, we just wanted to give you some feedback, say hello and wish you all the best with your future adventures. Keep up the great work.*

Kevin & Cherie Deacon  
Dive 2000  
Sydney, Australia.  
www.dive2000.com.au



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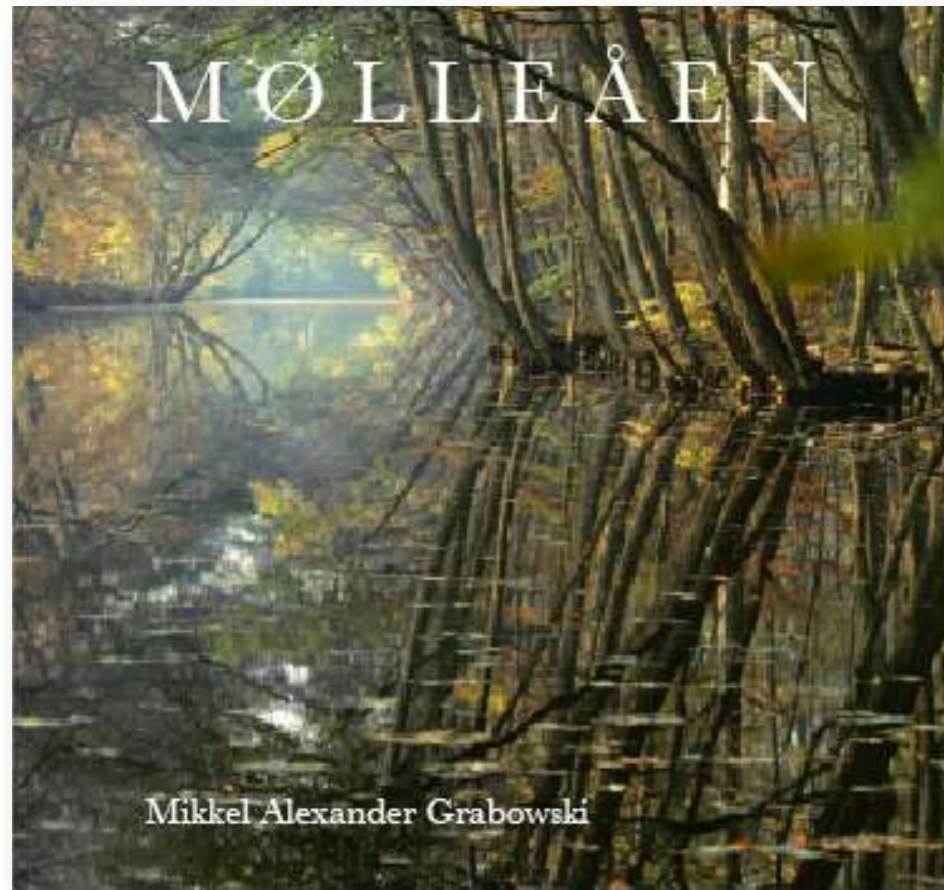
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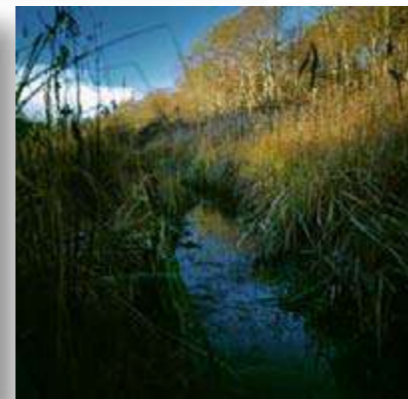
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■ Ecuador's most wanted! The elusive Horned Anole *Anolis proboscis* was believed to be extinct in the wild for nearly fifty years, and even today - after its "rediscovery" in 2005 - it remains very hard to locate. Its silhouette is definitely unmistakable - the sharp frontal "horn" immediately distinguishes it from all other Ecuadorian lizards.

## Ecuador's rare Horned Anole **THE CLOUD FOREST "PINOCCHIO" LIZARD**

LONG BELIEVED EXTINCT, AN AMAZING  
AND UNUSUAL LITTLE SOUTH AMERICAN REPTILE  
IS FINALLY REVEALED IN STUNNING PHOTOS





■ *Anolis proboscis* can be exceedingly difficult to find in the field, not only because this species is commonly perched on high branches, but also because of its small size and cryptic livery, which forms an ideal combination with branches and colorful leaves.



TEXT BY LUCAS M. BUSTAMANTE - ENRÍQUEZ  
PHOTOS BY TROPICAL HERPING

(LUCAS M. BUSTAMANTE - ENRÍQUEZ & ALEJANDRO ARTEAGA)

It took me more than two years of constant visits to Mindo, a cloud-forest town in the Western Ecuadorian foothills, to finally encounter the Horned Anole (*Anolis proboscis*)! I always felt it was a mythological reptile, not only among Ecuadorian herps but throughout the world. Can you imagine a lizard with a long appendix

on the tip of its snout, a variety of colors throughout the body, a prehensile tail and even spines on its back? It is difficult not to speak mystically when we refer to Horned Anole. For over 50 years it was listed as "Possibly extinct", until 2005, when a group of Ecuadorian scientists "rediscovered" it. But it was not until two years ago that the global and local anole experts, led by Jonathan Losos, Steven Poe and Fernando Ayala, started several expeditions to investigate everything about its morphology, phylogeny and natural history. The Horned Anole is a

diurnal and slow-moving lizard that usually is found perched between 4-8 meters above the ground. Although most records are in vegetation by roadsides, highways and near open areas, it can be very difficult to find due to its excellent camouflage, which blends perfectly with twigs, mosses, lichens and epiphytes. But what is the use of its proboscis? Sexual selection, defense of territory and fights between males are the first hypotheses that leap to the mind. Science will tell us soon. Whatever the case, we are left to enjoy its beauty and unparalleled mystique. ●



■ *The Horned Anole*  
*Anolis proboscis'*  
*tail is prehensile,*  
*and it is possibly*  
*used to hold tight to*  
*branches and twigs*  
*when the animal*  
*sleeps. This is*  
*a slow-moving*  
*species, which*  
*spends most of its*  
*time 450–800 cm*  
*above the ground*  
*and which feeds*  
*on a variety*  
*of arboreal*  
*arthropods.*



Given its efficient camouflage, most records of the Horned Anole *Anolis proboscis* come from human-disturbed areas, including roadside vegetation, botanical gardens and bamboo trees. In the cloud forest proper this species would be almost impossible to find.





■ *Anolis proboscis* can occasionally be found in bamboo groves and on vegetation growing on steep, near-vertical slopes. However, it usually sleeps on horizontal twigs and leaves, with juveniles seeming to prefer lower perches.





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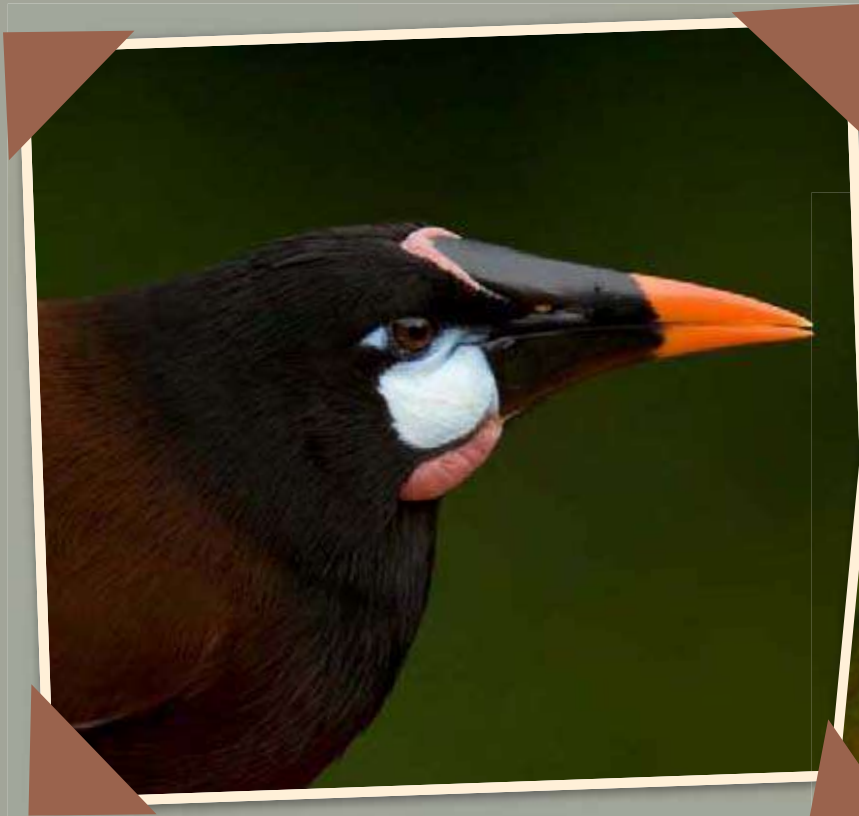
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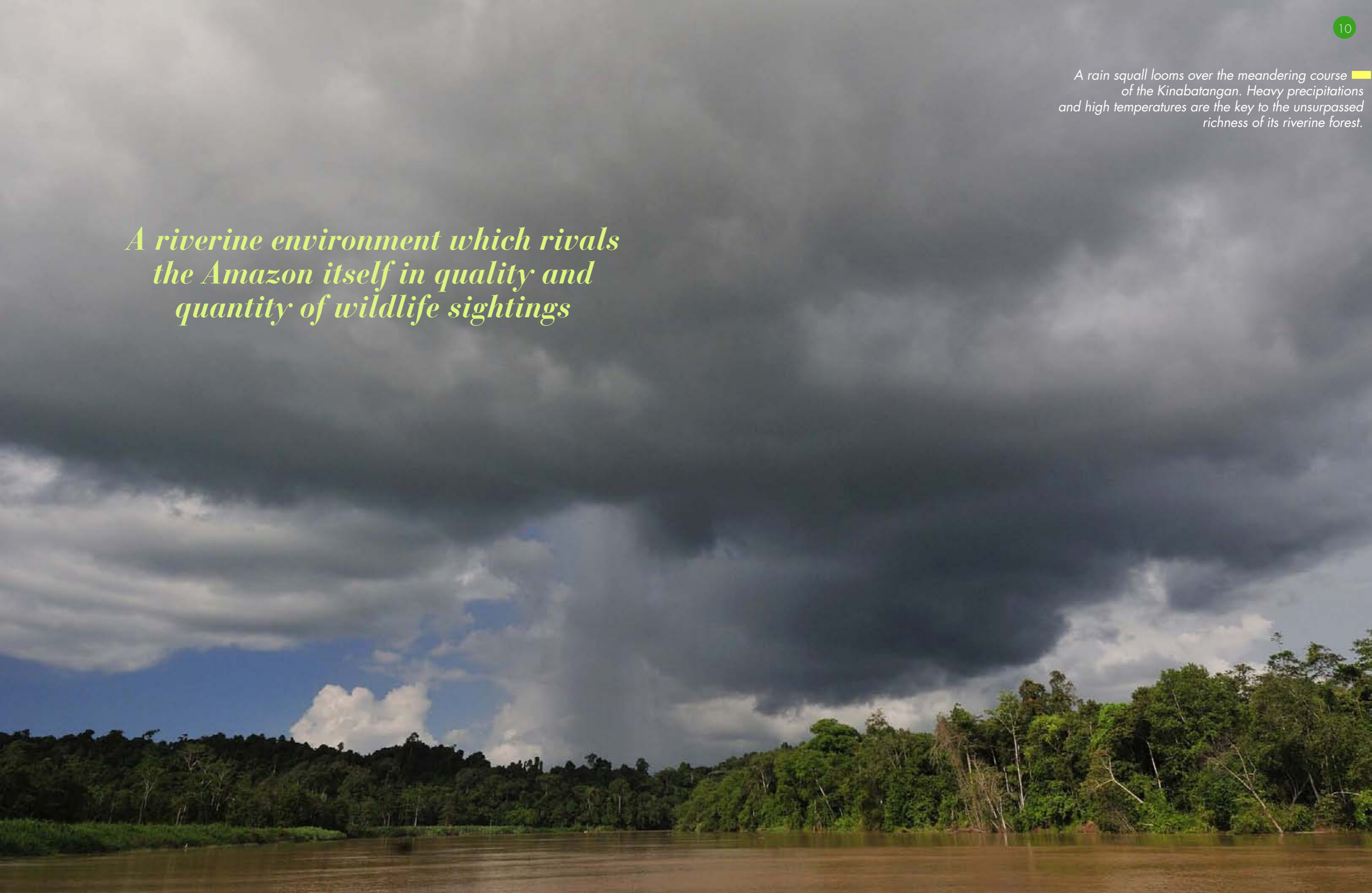
BORNEO'S KINABATANGAN  
**THE RIVER  
OF LIFE**

One of the world's most beautiful  
wildlife reserves - and one of the least  
known - Sabah's mighty water body is a  
treasure trove of rare and fascinating  
South-East Asian species

■ A subadult male Temple  
Pit viper *Tropidolaemus  
subannulatus* lies in ambush  
among the riverine foliage.  
This beautiful species used  
to be known as *Trimeresurus  
wagleri* until recently.

A rain squall looms over the meandering course of the Kinabatangan. Heavy precipitations and high temperatures are the key to the unsurpassed richness of its riverine forest.

*A riverine environment which rivals the Amazon itself in quality and quantity of wildlife sightings*



TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI  
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

The lowland riverine forest encompassing the extensive Kinabatangan river basin and its 26,000 hectares Wildlife Sanctuary has few rivals in the world for remoteness, richness of animal species and just sheer natural beauty. At the same time, this spectacular, somewhat little-known and mostly untouched wilderness of Malaysian Borneo is very accessible and easily explored – usually by small boat during the day, and by foot at night or late evening. Departing from the harbour of nearby Sandakan - a pleasant coastal town aptly named “Gateway to Borneo’s

Wildlife” - visitors can easily reach the Sanctuary’s headquarters in Sukau - where most of the tourist lodges are located - by a scenic one-hour long boat trip which ends at one of the riverside resorts’ piers. An inland route has also been opened recently, so visitors can also easily reach their lodge of choice by vehicle, with only a few minutes by boat left before reaching their final destination. The land route is admittedly faster, but much less interesting visually. More and more guesthouses, jungle camps and fully-fledged forest lodges have been recently popping up along the

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■ A young Saltwater or Estuarine Crocodile *Crocodylus porosus* basks on a muddy bank of the Menanggol - a tributary to the Kinabatangan - at the peak of the rainy season.





An Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* dries its feathers in the sun after a dive in the muddy waters of the Menanggal.

river's banks, all offering excellent accomodations (of varying level and cost, but all very clean and very well organized), good standards and very tasty Sabahan food, often using locally acquired, fresh organic products such as delicious vegetables or fruit and big river prawns grown and farmed by the local *Orang Sungai* (river people). The best way to visit the Kinabatangan river basin with its enormous, eerily beautiful oxbow lagoons and many small, twisting tributaries is by booking a week-long stay via a specialized wildlife travel agency in Sandakan - service is usually excellent and specific needs of visitors are normally very well cared for. We always try to visit in May or October, ie just at the end or just before the start of the rainy season, avoiding the July-August peak of the tourist season, when veritable fleets of small tourist-filled boats sadly strip the

Kinabatangan of its magical, primordial atmosphere. Regularly subject to tides and periodical inundations during the rainy season, in a perennial state of flux and sparsely populated along its banks by small fishing and farming communities, the Kinabatangan river basin represents a very unique natural environment, peacefully shared by humans and wildlife alike.

**GOOD ACCOMODATION AND GREAT GUIDES**

The Kinabatangan river basin is a wildlife photographer's dream come true, as most Borneo wildlife is not only richly represented in the area but also often easily sighted and photographed in the vicinity of Sukau, provided one knows where and when to look. This is obviously a destination where the

*continued on page 15* >

■ The Menanggal's riverbanks are graced by countless, often colorful flowers immediately after the end of the rains.



■ *Adult Crested  
Serpent eagle  
Spilornis cheela*  
- one of the most  
commonly  
observed large  
raptors of the  
Kinabatangan  
river basin,  
often seen  
perching or  
soaring above  
the forest  
canopy.





■ A female Rhinoceros Hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros*, identified by the light blue eye ringed in red. In the males of this truly incredible species the eye is black. This is a reasonably common sight in the Kinabatangan river basin area.

services of an experienced local wildlife guide are a must, especially for those taking their exploring and photography seriously. After a number of visits spanning many years' time, we can safely recommend the services of Cede Prudente, a very gifted local wildlife photographer who caters to others' needs via his agency **North Borneo Safaris** - but we hasten to add that most of the local guides and boatmen offer an uncommonly high degree of professionalism, guaranteeing good wildlife viewing opportunities and a comforting degree of information. Remember to take with you a good telephoto (VR-equipped or with a sturdy tripod) for all the big and not so big species you'll observe during the day from the safety of your boat, plus a good flash set-up and your macro lens of choice for all the weird and wonderful little critters you'll see at night. Being this Borneo, a sun hat and a lightweight rain poncho are nice to have around, especially if you plan to spend a lot of time exploring the river

**continued on page 18** >



■ Primates are exceptionally well represented in the Kinabatangan river basin area. Left, a wild adult female *Pongo pygmaeus* with her baby. Right, top, a rare sight as a dominant male *Nasalis larvatus* briefly descends to the ground; right, bottom, two Long-tailed or Crab-eating Macaque *Macaca fascicularis* engage in grooming.







The truly beautiful Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus* is the most easily observed species - among hornbills - in the Kinabatangan river basin area.

Amphibians are present in great numbers in the riverine rainforest of the Kinabatangan, especially during the rainy season from November to April. This is the ubiquitous - and very colorful - Harlequin Tree Frog *Rhacophorus pardalis*.



by boat. Night walks are safe and easy, but bring a pair of strong, comfortable jungle or trekking ankle boots and a small torch with you, and be prepared to get very wet and very muddy - with the added boost of leeches in wet weather.

### WHERE TO GO AND WHAT TO SEE

The average day in Sukau starts just before dawn, with the faraway *hok-hok* of some distant hornbill welcoming the first warm rays of the sun over the steaming jungle - after a lovely breakfast at the lodge, visitors hurry down the riverside jetty to board a small, low aluminum canoe powered by both petrol and electric engines to start the day's explorations. The boats are lightweight, flat-bottomed and very stable, making an excellent platform for a photographer's tripod - the local boatmen employed by the lodges take great pride and are very good at switching from petrol to electric just at the right time to allow as close an approach to wildlife as humanly possible. Most exploration takes place at a leisurely pace along the Kinabatangan muddy banks and up its small, meandering tributary, the extraordinarily scenic Menanggal - it's

*continued on page 22* >



■ The insect life of Borneo is rightfully legendary - and can offer some rather impressive encounters. Left, a Lantern bug *Pyrops whiteheadi*, family Fulgoridae; right, the colorful nymph of the aptly-named Shield bug *Pycanum rubens*.



*A dangerous beauty quietly coiled among the leaves by the river's edge*

■ A stunningly beautiful adult - and probably pregnant - female Temple Pit Viper *Tropidolaemus subannulatus*. This is a venomous but very calm and hardly aggressive species, typically found among the vegetation overhanging the river's edge.





At the end of the wet season many primates are often seen foraging for the abundant fruits of the forest. Far left, Long-tailed or Crab-eating Macaque *Macaca fascicularis*; left, adult male Proboscis monkey *Nasalis larvatus*.

a good idea to book one's accomodation as close as possible to its mouth, as the winding course of the forest-canopied Menanggol is a favourite destination for wildlife enthusiast and birdwatchers visiting the Kinabatangan area, so to enjoy it at its most evocative, unpopulated best it's better to get there before anybody else, immediately after sunrise. If you're staying at a lodge close to its mouth you'll also be able to linger around for a longer time in the evening before going back for dinner and your night walk. If you can afford it and are serious about your wildlife photography, go for your own personal guide and boat - it will surely make a difference. The thickly forested area around Sukau itself - this is prime virgin lowland dipterocarp country - makes extended exploration on foot rather difficult, but that around the village of Abai - somewhat downriver and closer to the coast and the sea - allows excellent walks on well-maintained secondary forest trails and boardwalks, offering wonderful opportunities for safe, comfortable and very fruitful night walks. Even closer to the coast and branching out to the Sulu sea itself, the immense estuary of the Kinabatangan in the vicinity of Abai is clogged in thick, labyrinthine, impenetrable forest of mangroves and *Nypa* palms - primordially beautiful and rich in species but not easily explored or - thankfully - exploited. You will have

*continued on page 26* >



*Wallace's Hawk-eagle* ■  
*Spizaetus nanus,*  
*a fast-flying*  
*raptor which*  
*usually prefers*  
*the forest canopy.*

*Life is abundant  
everywhere -  
even on vertical,  
towering  
tree trunks*



Giant Forest Gecko ■  
Gekko smithi,  
a true master  
of the fine art  
of camouflage.



■ Top left, Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*; top right, male Wrinkled Hornbill *Rhyticeros corrugatus*. Bottom left, female Rhinoceros Hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros*; bottom right, male Black Hornbill *Anthracoceros malayanus*.





A unique encounter - an adult male Orangutan *Pongo pygmaeus* feeding on wild figs in the morning mist.

■ *Storm's Stork*  
*Ciconia stormi*  
is a large and rather  
colorful bird usually  
seen in small groups  
perching on treetops.



excellent opportunities to admire this unique environment on your way to and from Sukau if you are reaching your lodge by boat. Encroached on all sides by rapidly developing oil palm plantations - the scourge of Borneo's primeval forests - and endangered by logging plantations which severely curtail the larger animals' migratory routes and forest corridors, the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary is nevertheless officially considered today to be one of the most important and pristine areas of wilderness in the whole world, and as such it cannot be missed by wildlife enthusiasts - floating down its murky, deep, slow-flowing waters is like taking a veritable trip back in time.

**A VERITABLE HEAVEN FOR WILDLIFE LOVERS**

But what about the animals one can hope to see? Well, we know very few areas outside of the African plains and the Venezuelan Llanos where one can hope to observe and photograph such spectacular amounts of tropical wildlife. Remember always, however...this is South-East Asia, not the Serengeti! Commonly sighted reptile species here are Estuarine or Saltwater crocodiles (with some very big individuals occasionally sighted up close), Reticulate pythons, Mangrove and Dog-toothed cat snakes, bright green Temple Pit vipers and very large Water monitors, while among the 250 bird

*continued on page 29* ➤



Top left, Crested Serpent eagle *Spilornis cheela*; top right, Grey-headed Fish-eagle *Ichthyophaga ichhyaetus*. Bottom left, Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*; bottom right, Lesser Fish-eagle *Ichthyophaga nana*.





■ Bornean Pygmy Elephant *Elephas maximus borneensis* feeding by the river's edge in the evening. This is an endemic subspecies, uniquely found in Borneo.

species found in the area one can sight - among others - several species of large hornbills (including the spectacular Rhinoceros Hornbill), Fish-eagles, Buffy owls, kingfishers, cuckoos and darters; among the large mammals, wild pigs, dwarf Bornean elephants, river otters, leaf monkeys, Long-tailed Macaques, wild Orangutans and Proboscis monkeys are commonly observed, often up close and at length. In fact, the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary is the best spot anywhere to observe the rare elephant of Borneo, a smallish and friendlier cousin of the Indian one which has recently been awarded its own species status, and of course the iconic and unmistakable Proboscis monkey. This is also the land of flying snakes and flying frogs, while those interested in insects and spiders - often quite large and very colorful - will keep their cameras clicking away, especially if going out at night and with a warm tropical drizzle shrouding the thick

*continued on page 33* ➤



*The impressive Buffy Fish-Owl Ketupa ketupu can often be encountered at night along sluggish streams or the main river's edge as it hunts for fish in shallow water.*



More examples of night life in the Kinabatangan. Left, Harlequin Tree Frog *Rhacophorus pardalis*; middle, a large katydid moulting in the dark; right, the omnipresent Huntsman or Giant Crab spider, *Heteropoda* sp..



■ *Reticulate pythons*  
*Python reticulatus* are  
often seen prowling the  
mudbanks at the river's  
edge after dark.  
This large species  
often preys on sleeping  
macaques or Proboscis  
monkeys in the treetops.





Tree trunks host a variety of species besides geckoes. Left, Bark-mimic Moth *Eupterote asclepiades*; right, the truly unique Colugo or Flying Lemur *Cynocephalus variegatus*, a master of camouflage not easily seen.







■ Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting*, possibly the most commonly observed kingfisher of the Kinabatangan river basin area.

forest. All in all, the Kinabatangan river basin is a treasure trove of rare, endangered and fascinating tropical species, all to be found and often easily observed in a landscape of unrivalled beauty and isolation. As a choice destination for the discerning wildlife photographer and nature enthusiast, it truly has few equals anywhere in the world, and one can only hope its currently protected status will keep it healthy, safe and relatively untouched for many, many more years in the future. ●

**DON'T MISS THE SECOND INSTALLMENT OF OUR KINABATANGAN STORY – COMING IN OCTOBER 2013 ON ISSUE 12 OF ANIMA MUNDI – ADVENTURES IN WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY!**



Small but stunning Spiny Orb Spiders belonging to the *Gasteracantha* genus are often seen along the Kinabatangan. Correct identification of the several species present is however difficult for the non-specialist.



*A new day dawns on  
the riverine rainforest  
of the Kinabatangan*


The golden light of dawn and the ever-present morning mist offer interesting opportunities to the landscape photographer.



Left, Smooth-backed Gliding Gecko *Ptychozoon lionotum*; middle, Green Cicada *Dundubia vaginata*; far right, a Huntsman Spider *Heteropoda* sp. indulges in cannibalistic behavior as it preys on another spider of the same species.



Locally - and rather aptly - known as "banana snake", the large Grey-tailed Racer *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* is found here in a stunning yellow morph rather than in the bright green, red-tailed color phase seen elsewhere in South-East Asia.



■ Bathed in the warm golden evening light, the Menanggal tributary offers a serene landscape of unsurpassed natural elegance.



■ The fruit season in late April and early May offers great photo opportunities to visitors. Left, adult male Proboscis monkey *Nasalis larvatus*; right, Pig-tailed Macaque *Macaca nemestrina*.



Close-up portrait  
of a large Giant Crab or  
Huntsman spider *Heteropoda*  
*sp.*, very commonly found  
on vertical tree trunks.  
This species is capable  
of surprising bursts of speed.



*Ready to spring  
at lightning speed  
on its unwary prey*





*Top left, Black Hornbill*  
*Anthracoceros malayanus, female;*  
*top right, White-crested*  
*or White-crowned Hornbill*  
*Bericornis comatus.*  
*Bottom right, Black Hornbill*  
*Anthracoceros malayanus, male;*  
*bottom left, Bushy-crested Hornbill*  
*Anorrhinus galeritus.*



Close-up  
with a Bornean  
Pygmy Elephant  
*Elephas maximus*  
*borneensis*.





The Dog-tooth Cat snake *Boiga cynodon* is a large and arboreal rear-fanged species which can be very aggressive if harassed.



Far left, wild figs;  
center, Pied Hornbill  
*Anthracoceros coronatus*;  
right, a strangling fig  
by the flooded shores  
of the Menanggol.

*The Kinabatangan is a haven for the gigantic - and extremely dangerous - Estuarine crocodile*



Large Estuarine crocodiles *Crocodylus porosus* offer a truly imposing sight. This species is responsible of several human deaths every year.



■ Left, a large adult male *Pongo pygmaeus* watches us from the forest canopy as it feeds on ripe wild figs. Right, a stunning pair of *Rhyticeros corrugatus*.



The quizzical, penetrating gaze of an adult male Proboscis monkey *Nasalis larvatus*. This is a highly dimorphic species, with the mature males characterized by a huge nasal appendage. The Kinabatangan river basin is one of the best areas in the world to watch this fascinating species in the wild.





■ Proboscis monkey *Nasalis larvatus* are exceedingly wary of Estuarine crocodiles lurking in wait, and will avoid swimming at all costs if possible, much preferring to jump across small rivers, often covering considerable spans. Notice the baby holding tight to the mother's chest as she launches into a spectacular jump from the treetops high up in the forest canopy.





*Dazzling plumage and  
outlandish beaks for  
the kingfishers of Borneo*

The beautiful Stork-billed  
Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*  
can be easily seen by the river  
shores as it scans the water  
surface beneath for its fish prey.





■ *Left, small boats from the tourist lodges start navigating the mist-shrouded Menanggol at dawn. Right, the Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*, a fish-eating and very skittish species which is not easily approached - notice the strongly webbed feet.*






Half-hidden by the thick riverine vegetation, a rope bridge installed to aid Proboscis monkeys in crossing the slow-flowing Menanggol can be faintly glimpsed in the background.



A highly unusual and lucky encounter with an adult male Smooth Otter *Lutra (Lutrogale) perspicillata*.

Also featured on this  issue's cover, the stunningly beautiful Mangrove snake *Boiga dendrophila* is a glossy black and bright yellow rear-fanged snake which is regularly sighted among the vegetation overhanging the slow-moving tributaries of the Kinabatangan. Notice the encroaching oil palm plantation in the background, beyond the Wildlife Sanctuary's boundary.



# At-a-glance travel guide

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION: MALAYSIAN BORNEO



## USEFUL TIPS FOR YOUR EXPEDITION

**Some simple, common sense, field-tested advice and information to make the best out of your trip and avoid hassles, worries and problems**

**ROUTE:** You will probably arrive in Kota Kinabalu - Sabah's capital city - with a flight originating from Kuala Lumpur or Singapore. From KK it's a short 45 mins domestic connecting flight to Sandakan, the coastal town on the Sulu Sea where you'll be spending one or two nights to recuperate before moving on - by car or boat - to the Kinabatangan. Once in Sandakan you might also want to stay longer and visit the Sepilok-Kabili Forest Reserve, which hosts an Orangutan Rehabilitation program.

**MEANS OF TRANSPORT:** The Kinabatangan is reached by private car or by river launch and is mostly explored by river boat, with a few occasional

short forest walks thrown in (especially at night). All riverside lodges in Sukau offer boat trips (in groups), but if you are serious about your photography rent your own river boat with a private guide and an experienced boatman - it really does make a difference. For all bookings we can safely recommend our friend and professional photographer **Cede Prudente's** company **North Borneo Safari**, the most reliable and experienced wildlife tour operator in town.

**CURRENCY:** Malaysian Ringgit, but USD and Euros are widely accepted by most tour operators in Sandakan and by most riverside lodges.

**ACCOMODATION:** The Kinabatangan river basin offers a large number of basic, no-frills campsites and several more expensive lodges, both in Sukau and in Abai. Lodges proper are usually very comfortable, spotlessly clean and just by the river's edge. We can safely suggest the lovely and very comfortable **Bukit Melapi/Proboscis Lodge**, where we usually stay when we visit the area.

**FOOD:** Malaysians - and Sabahans in particular - love to eat! You'll have lots of fresh vegetables, great tropical fruit, tasty fish soups, plenty of squid and prawns (try the local river variety - you'll also support the local economy) and lots of steamed/grilled fresh

# The lifelong dream of all wildlife photography lovers come true



seafood. Food is perfectly safe (and not too spicy, if you're squeamish about that aspect - we aren't!).

**LANGUAGE:** Bahasa Malaysia and English, which is perfectly spoken in all lodges and by all guides.

**WORRIES:** None whatsoever. Borneo has a romantic film-image of steaming, forbidden jungles and savage head-hunters, but in fact the Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah (which are part of the island of Borneo together with the Sultanate of Brunei and the Indonesian region of Kalimantan) are well-developed (some might say too much) and well-organized. Crime is almost non-existent, food is wonderful and tourism is very well cared for. Once in a few years there are spats of spasmodic violence (mostly kidnappings) in the coastal islands by pirates from the Sulu Sea, but these occurrences are rare and there are Army detachments to stand guard.

**HEALTH:** We have been visiting regularly Borneo for the past twenty years - sometimes twice a year! - and we haven't been sick once, despite having been all over the place and having been bitten by scores of mosquitoes. Leeches - in case you worry - are perfectly harmless and do not transmit any dangerous tropical disease. Just be careful with the sun (one can get easily sunstroke if going on long boat trips without a hat) and follow the usual precautions regarding street food and drink. Water served in the lodges is usually perfectly safe to drink.

**CLIMATE:** Equatorial lowland coastal forest - very humid, occasionally extremely hot, with frequent torrential downpours and extensive flooding during the rainy season from November to March. Nothing to worry about anyway, as you won't be doing too much walking in the forest - river trips in the early morning or at night can even be surprisingly cool.

**BESIDES:** Sabah has much to offer to the adventurous traveler and the wildlife enthusiast - we usually suggest to pick a destination and stick to it for at least a couple of weeks, but if you want to squeeze the most out of your stay (and your international flight) you might want to visit several other National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries - such as the demanding and exhilarating Mount Kinabalu (near Kota Kinabalu), the pristine and remote Danum Valley (see our feature on issue 1 of ANIMA MUNDI) or Tabin Forest Reserve. Opportunities for wildlife photography enthusiasts are endless! Sabah also boasts some stunning seaside locations - one can indulge in world-class scuba diving at Pulau Sipadan, Pulau Mabul or Layang Layang atoll, or opt to relax by the beach on private, exclusive islands such as Pulau Lankayan or Pulau Mantanani. Whatever your decisions will be, you won't be disappointed - this we can guarantee! ●

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*David Hemmings - President, Nature's Photo Adventures*



"My experience was EXCEPTIONAL! The trip exceeded my expectations in all areas. I hoped to get in a position to see owls and couldn't possibly have been happier. It was abundantly clear that David invested significant time and effort prior to the arrival of the group in scouting the area around Quebec and Ontario. He knew exactly where to go to find every species of owl. His knowledge and efforts were very much appreciated by the entire group. My primary objective was just getting in a position to photograph owls and was not expecting much in the way of photographic instruction. I was very pleasantly surprised and was very happy with the instruction. Prior to the trip I had a love/hate relationship with auto focus as it applies to photographing birds in flight. I've struggled with this for years. While I have a lot more to

learn, and need to work at honing my skills, the trip with NPA helped me tremendously in being able to photograph birds in flight. Photographing birds in flight was my main objective. Prior to the trip I was nearly clueless in comparison to my skills after the trip. You can also see from my bird list that I found the trip productive from a birding perspective as well".  
*Kevin McCarthy, USA*

"I recommend NPA workshops! The level of services by workshop leaders was excellent. Quality of photographic instruction was exceptional and they

were always on hand to solve issues that arose, and I had more than my share of equipment issues. Quality of wildlife provided was good and I was amazed at how easily the subjects accepted new setups provided. Locations visited were right on for the species targeted. My most memorable moment was using the flash setups the first time and capturing an image of the Swordbill Hummingbird. I feel that my level of photography has improved with the custom functions that were set up on my camera for me and the resulting images that I obtained. Overall experience and

expectations were achieved and we were fortunate to have a very compatible group on our tour, which made it very enjoyable. This was my first workshop and I would recommend them to friends".  
*Rosemary Harris, Canada*

"Great trip, great experience and great workshop leader. Great opportunity for capturing images of magnificent and uncommon (in southern USA) birds. Organizers contribute to great group dynamics and superb attitude. Cool techniques".  
*Eric Grossman, USA*



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# Beauty of the Beast

PRAYING MANTISES



**A  
PRAYER  
FOR  
A PREY**

A dazzling visual tribute to the sexy, sleek and sinisters "tigers of the grass" - unsurpassed masters of camouflage and elegance



*Mantis religiosa*

Deimatic behavior (threat display) by the common European Mantis. In the opening spread, a tiny nymph of *Idolomantis diabolica*.  
Photos by Stefano Ballerano

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI

PHOTOS BY STEFANO BALLERANO, PAUL HARCOURT DAVIES, SHANTANU KUVESKAR, CHAN KAR WAI, ANDREW ODOGWU, ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI



*Pseudoempusa pinnapavonis*

Deimatic behavior by the Peacock Mantis, distributed in Burma and Thailand.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano

I have always had - since I was a small kid - a fetish for Praying mantids (or, rather more correctly, *mantises* - but mantids sounds better, so we'll stick to it even if, strictly speaking, it should only apply to the members of the family *Mantidae*). I've always found them strangely sexy (in their own weird way, since they are strictly related - of all things - to cockroaches), with their hesitating, creepy gait, their alien stare which seems to never abandon you (due - no doubt - to the pseudopupil, that black spot which floats on their big, triangular eyes and always follows one's movements), their thin, top-model legs and flat thorax - truly ideal candidates for a catwalk of the insect world. Sexy, yes - but uniquely sinister too, with those ferociously spiked raptorial forelegs, perennially kept in that sanctimonious pose that has given mantises their common name. Like some unctuous old bishop from an extraterrestrial Middle Ages, they greedily contemplate their potential, unwary prey, slightly rocking to and fro like a leaf in the breeze, savouring in their own bloodless way the forthcoming banquet. And then they strike, lightning fast, extending like a switchblade their forelegs to grab the squirming prey and feast on it - alive and silently screaming - with a ferocious and yet detached appetite, a mechanical, terrifying daintiness. I admit it, I tend to

anthropomorphize Praying mantids - but only the coldest researcher wouldn't, and I am no professional entomologist. There's another aspect of these relentless, perennially hungry predators which never fails to amaze me - their stunning *penchant* for mimicry and camouflage. Exquisitely adapted to their plant and grassland environment, most species have evolved a stupefying array of liveries, shapes and patterns to literally disappear among the vegetation - looking like green, dry or rotting leaves, dry sticks, leaves of grass, even orchids in bloom, they're all over the place, and yet very few ever notice them. Some of the best examples of mimicry and camouflage in the animal world are shown by mantises, in fact. And then, to top it all, there's of course the dazzling deimatic behavior - a threat display, in common parlance - shown by several species when facing a real or perceived threat: a flurry of ocellated wings fanned wide in glorious technicolor, a samurai stance with bellicosely raised forelegs shining like razor-sharp *katanas*, a tilted rhythmic dance on those rocking, thin top-model legs which never fails to draw a gasp from the stunned onlooker. So, you see, I'm truly in love with these beautiful, elegant killers. They're sexy, they're sinister - and they're seductive. Take a look at the following pages - and be surprised.



*Mantis religiosa*

The ballet-like gracefulness of the threat display by the European Mantis.  
Photo by Paul Harcourt Davies



*Acanthops royi*

A mesmerizing dry-leaf mimic species found in the Amazon of Ecuador.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Hymenopus coronatus*

An exquisite *Phalaenopsis* sp. flower mimic, the Orchid Mantis is found in Malaysia.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari





*Toxodera hauseri*

An entomologist's Holy Grail, this twig-mimic Feather Mantis is found in Borneo.  
Photo by Chan Kar Wai



*Gongylus gongylodes*

The large and extravagant Wandering Violin Mantis from the Western Ghats of India.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Idolomantis diabolica*

The Devil's Flower Mantis from Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano



*Schizocephala bicornis*

This extraordinary grass stalk-mimic is found in the Himalayan foothills from Nepal to Assam in India.  
Photo by Shantanu Kuveskar



*Idolomantis diabolica*

A portrait of the Devil's Flower Mantis from the forests of Eastern Africa.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano



*Choeradodis rhombicollis*

The green leaf-mimic Shield Mantis is found in Central and northern South America.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Danuria sp.*

This dry-grass mimic haunts the bush of the South African lowveld.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Deroplatys desiccata*

A dry-leaf mimic species found in SE Asia from Thailand to Malaysia and Borneo.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Idolomantis diabolica*

Portrait of a newly hatched African Devil's Flower Mantis.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano



*Idolomantis diabolica*

The stunning deimatic behavior - or threat display - shown by an adult Devil's Flower Mantis.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano



*Empusa pennata*

A dry inflorescence-mimic species found in the Mediterranean "macchia" or *maquis*.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano



*Mantis religiosa*

A female of the species showing cannibalistic behavior after mating.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano





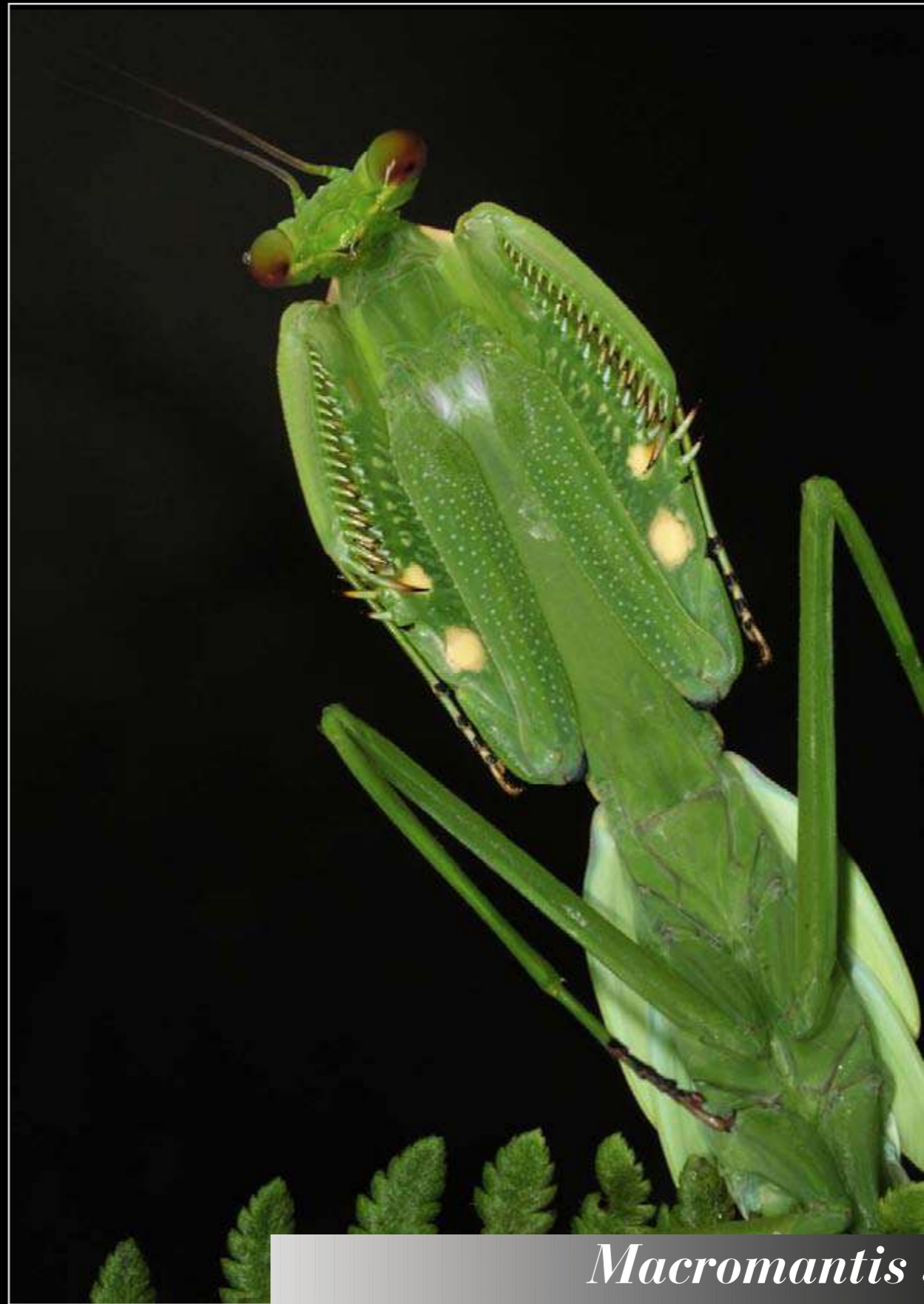
*Undescribed Bark mantis sp.*

An apparently still undescribed species of Bark Mantis found in Danum Valley, Borneo.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Phyllocrania paradoxa*

A stunningly effective dry leaf-mimic species from the South African bush.  
 Photo by Andrew Odogwu



*Macromantis sp.*

Deimatic behavior or threat display by a species from the Amazon of Ecuador.  
 Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Antemna rapax*

A large and highly effective green leaf-mimic species from Costa Rica.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Gongylus gongylodes*

The disturbing stare of the Wandering Violin Mantis from India's Western Ghats.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Hierodula sp.*

A large species from India's Western Ghats, whose eyes turn red at night.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari.



*Choeradodis rhombicollis*

Central and northern South American Shield Mantids effectively mimic green leaves when seen from above.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Idolomantis diabolica*

Threat display by the Devil's Flower Mantis from Eastern Africa.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano



*Gongylus gongylodes*

A subadult Wandering Violin Mantis from the Western Ghats of India.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Creobroter gemmatus*

The Jewel Flower Mantis is a bud-mimic species found in India. This individual has lost its left raptorial claw.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Idolomantis diabolica*

Subadult Devil's Flower Mantis from Eastern Africa.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano



*Mantis religiosa*

Adult - and possibly pregnant - female European Mantis.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano





*Idolomantis diabolica*

Portrait of an adult Devil's Flower Mantis from Eastern Africa.  
Photo by Stefano Ballerano



*Gongylus gongylodes*

Portrait of an adult Wandering Violin Mantis from India's Western Ghats.  
Photo by Andrea & Antonella Ferrari



*Phyllocrania paradoxa*

This small South African species is an extraordinarily effective dry leaf-mimic.  
Photo by Andrew Odogwu

A special contribution  
by Piotr Naskrecki, Harvard University

TEXT AND PHOTOS  
BY PIOTR NASKRECKI



*Pseudacanthops spinulosa*

A female Moss mantis from Guyana is indistinguishable from the mossy branch on which it is waiting for prey.  
Photo by Piotr Naskrecki

At first I thought that the little speck of bark that moved was just that, a piece of wood trembling in the breeze on an old *Acacia* tree in the Mozambican savanna. But years of experience compelled me to check again, and on the second glance I realized that I was looking at a very interesting African insect, the Short-necked bark mantis (*Amorphoscelis austrogermanica*). This small, inconspicuous creature, lacking flashy colors or extravagant shapes typical of other praying mantids, nonetheless offers a rare insight into the origin of this remarkable order of insects. Praying mantids are probably some of the most easily recognizable of insects: nearly all species possess a long "neck" (pronotum), a highly movable head with large eyes and, most importantly, a pair of massive, raptorial front legs. These are held in a fashion reminiscent of a person engrossed in a prayer, hence their common name. All known species of praying mantids, and there are over 2,500 of them, are strictly predaceous, making them one of only two orders of insects consisting exclusively of carnivores (the other one is the recently discovered Mantophasmatodea). In a handful of species young nymphs supplement their diet with pollen, but all eventually end up being hungry sit-and-wait hunters of insects and other small animals. Mantids are generally liked, or at least tolerated, even by people who are not fond of other insects. This is probably thanks to their almost human-like head, which can turn in almost any direction, and the big eyes that seem to meet a person's gaze. It may thus come

as a surprise to learn that praying mantids' closest relatives are lowly cockroaches, animals that are universally reviled as the mantids are loved. But a close look at the Short-necked bark mantis that I spotted on a tree in Mozambique reveals the connection: both groups have a triangular head, a shield-like pronotum, and strongly elongated coxae ("hips") on all legs. The main difference lies in the development of the front legs, which in most mantids are huge and heavily spined – powerful weapons, perfectly adapted for swift capture of an unsuspecting grasshopper, a butterfly, and even an occasional hummingbird. The Short-necked bark mantis, however, has the front legs not much different from those of a typical cockroach, and can only be told apart from one by the way it holds its head – pointing forward, rather than hidden under the pronotum. Perhaps if we start thinking of cockroaches simply as vegetarian praying mantids the attitude towards these generally harmless and beneficial insects will change? I have been fascinated by praying mantids all my life, and therefore was thrilled to discover that in my garden in Massachusetts two species of these remarkable insects had become established. They are not only fascinating organisms to watch and admire, as their slowly stalk their prey and strike with a lightning speed, but their often otherworldly yet strangely humanoid features offer endless inspiration to nature photographers everywhere these beautiful animals are found. ●



*Phyllocrania paradoxa*

A nymph of the leaf mantis *Phyllocrania paradoxa* resembles a piece of dry, shriveled vegetation.  
Photo by Piotr Naskrecki



*Idolomorpha dentifrons*

Males of this South African have comb-like antennae, used to detect female pheromones.  
Photo by Piotr Naskrecki



*Otomomantis scutigera*

A pair of Mozambican mantids *O. scutigera*.  
Photo by Piotr Naskrecki



*Sibylla pretiosa*

A portrait of a southern African tree mantis, *S. pretiosa*.  
Photo by Piotr Naskrecki



*Acanthops sp.*

A male Dead leaf mantis from Suriname.  
Photo by Piotr Naskrecki



*Epitenodera capitata*

A giant African mantis *E. capitata*, devouring a grasshopper.  
Photo by Piotr Naskrecki



*Miomantis sp.*

A female West African mantis against the setting sun.  
Photo by Piotr Naskrecki





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When Giovanna Holbrook took on the challenge of leading two University of Florida science professors and a group of naturalists to the Galápagos Islands in 1971, she had no way of knowing the lasting impact that experience would have on her life and on the lives of those traveling with her. The group journeyed throughout the archipelago aboard a retired navy vessel, propelled by their spirit of adventure and thirst for knowledge. At that time, the Galápagos was just celebrating its twelfth year as a national park, conservation work at the Charles Darwin Research Station was still in its infancy, and tourism in the islands was virtually non-existent.

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## Andrea Zampatti: A Wildlife Photographer in his own words

In love since childhood with wildlife and nature, it is during the Academy studies that I decide to pursue photography in the wild wonders that every day occur in the eyes of those who love and observe them. Although as a child my attention was focused on insects, my passion is now directed mainly towards mammals and birds, with a special attraction for the species of the Northern (Boreal) hemisphere: the Great North has always aroused strong emotions in me. In fact, my future perspective is to explore and photograph its cold and remote wilderness and its fascinating inhabitants.

But for now I have to settle and enjoy the benefits of places within reach, and for this - without any regret - I have focused particularly on the fauna of Italy and a few other European countries.

Italy, especially in the North and despite the overwhelming and often sickening urbanization, still retains certain areas of extreme beauty and importance, as in the Alps and some

lacustrine areas, where I often find myself to escape from that tenor of life that too often strangles me. Prerogative of my work is the attempt to place on the same level the aesthetic and the naturalistic visions, fields in which the emotional and ethical involvement become an essential ingredient. Photographing a wild animal in the end becomes - after being a patient and friendly challenge to the subject - a burning desire for knowledge and conservation of the fragile and fascinating biodiversity of our planet.

Although my main passion is wildlife, I can't deny enjoying, when conditions dictate it for its beauty, also photographing landscapes, especially those of my beloved Alps. I use Nikon equipment and I don't own very expensive camera bodies or lenses: I firmly believe that the equipment can aid only in small part the work of a photographer, though I admit that in difficult situations a good lens or camera can make a difference.



# European Emotions

My name is Andrea Zampatti and I live in Brescia, in Northern Italy, where I was born in 1985.

I work in the graphic and photography fields as I'm also professor of graphics, digital photography and photo-editing at the Academy of Brescia (LABA- Libera Accademia di Belle Arti).



### **Autumn Palette - Italian Pre-Alps**

*Nikon D40 – Nikon 18-55@55mm – 1/40s f/8.0 ISO400*

My main intent was to photograph a friendly dipper which lived close to a mountain stream. The day was gray and rainy, it wasn't certainly the best for a bird which doesn't stand still for a moment, and after several failed attempts I decided to dismantle the hide and go home. Luck had me to be at the apex of the autumn season: the mixed forests and the surrounding mountains coloured the landscape with a myriad of beautiful colours. I returned many times afterwards but I've not been able to find those same autumn colours again!

**European Bee-eater**  
***Merops apiaster***  
**Northern Italy**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon  
300f4+tc1.7 (510mm) –  
1/320s f/8.0 ISO400*

The European Bee-eater is a magnificent multicolored bird which nests in crowded and noisy colonies on sandbanks, usually on the banks of rivers, lakes or wetlands. It is a favourite subject of wildlife photographers, and it's always a joy to see them come back every spring. Hidden in a bush, an alternative to the hide - bugs aside - I took this picture without the subject noticing me at all.





**Baby Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* - Northern Italy**

*Nikon D40 – Nikon 55-200@200mm – 1/100s f/5.6 ISO200*

The Hazel or Common Dormouse is a small and pleasant mammal that is the only living species in the genus *Muscardinus*. Given its nocturnal nature it's not easy to observe it in the wild, but I have to admit that in this case I was really lucky!

The little creature was peacefully standing on the top of a yarrow; I always ask myself how he managed to get there. I asked him to smile for a couple of shots...and I was immediatly repaid!



**Great Egret *Casmerodius albus* - Northern Italy**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon300f4+tc1.7 – 1/500s f/7.1 ISO640*

The Great White Heron is the largest heron present in Europe. I photographed this specimen in its favorite hunting environment -at the edge of the reed banks - during a warm Spring sunset, which illuminated only the foremost reed curtain, painting beautiful reflections on the calm surface of the bog.



**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***  
**Northern Italy**

*Nikon D40 – Sigma 120-400@400mm  
1/250s f/5.6 ISO400*

The Grey Heron is undoubtedly a common subject, although in Italy it is not as confident as in other Countries, where I could easily get within touching distance to them!

This specimen had made a “dance step” as it was landing right in front of my hide, and I was able to immortalize it in an elegant and dynamic pose. The lovely autumn-green did the rest.



**Biebrza River – North-Eastern Poland**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon 55-200@80mm – 1/40s f/14.0 ISO500*

The Biebrza river and its valley are fantastic both in terms of landscape and wildlife features. The presence of wild animals is very high, both in mammals and birds. I shot this picture of the Biebrza river at sunset, near the village of its same name, in the last few days when its surface was still completely frozen



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**Common Red Squirrel**  
***Sciurus vulgaris***  
**Swiss Alps**

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*Nikon D300s – Nikon 300 f4 –  
1/100s f/4.0 ISO640*

The Red Squirrel is the elf of the woods and every time its appearance - often fleeting - gives us moments of great joy and amazement: watching one run up and down from the pine trees jumping from one peak to another always leaves one stunned!

It sometimes happens that some individuals are very curious to observe people for a moment, giving the opportunity to take some pictures. The specimen in this photo has the peculiarity of a dark fur in winter, which contrasts both the name and the common general idea of this species.






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**Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* stag – England**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon 300f4 – 1/640s f/4.5 ISO400*

The Red Deer is without doubt my favourite mammal: I think seeing an adult male showing off its huge antlers in the wilderness can be one of the most touching scenes a lover of nature and animals can witness, particularly during the rut. This beautiful male, after a refreshing and healthy swim in the mud, moves at sunset to reach the rest of the herd with which he will spend the night.

**Fallow Deer *Dama dama* - England**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon 300f4 – 1/250s f/4.5 ISO500*

Among the non-native unguulates there is the European Fallow Deer, introduced in ancient times and now well spread across most of Europe. It adapts well to different types of habitats and can be found from the lowlands to the highlands. One of its main features is the dappled coat, though often one can see albino or melanistic specimens. This female, after seeing me, ran away to a grove of ferns, hoping not to be seen but... the eye of a wildlife photographer is well trained!



**Fighting Hares *Lepus lepus* – Northern Italy**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon 300 f4+tc1.7 – 1/6.7 ISO640*

Watching the fights between hares is always fascinating. I was in the fields adjacent to the shores of a large river, waiting for roe deers and, of course, hares. When the very first light of dawn began to light up the fields in the distance, I saw a hare and I tried to approach it without being seen. At one point another hare jumped out of the grass and led itself with three long hops in front of the other: a few seconds of intense gaze and then... the battle began!



**Reed Bunting**  
*Emberiza schoeniclus*  
**Northern Italy**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon 300f4+tc1.7 – 1/400s f7.1  
 ISO400*

Surely to be a wildlife photographer one requires a good dose of patience, preparation, knowledge of animals and many other things... but sometimes also a little bit of extra luck.

The Reed Bunting is a bird that lives mainly in the thick reeds of the lake or its marshes. While I was in my hide waiting for a Bittern, this specimen was resting on a branch which seemed placed there on purpose, giving me a picture with an almost pictorial background.

**Moose *Alces alces***  
**North-Eastern Poland**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon 300f4 – 1/400s f/4.0 ISO800*

One of the symbols of the Great North is by far the largest deer that exists on earth, the majestic Moose. Despite the European Moose being much smaller than the American one, I must admit that only approaching this animal physically you can understand its true size.

Despite this, and despite its well-known character, defensive and protective towards its young, the moose dismisses any fear with its kindly expression. In reality, however, in the northern Countries there are more victims of moose mothers than grizzly bears! So... caution!

This young female was photographed in a beautiful pine forest in the Biebrza Valley.



**Pied Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*  
under the storm - Northern Italy**

*Nikon D300s – Sigma 120-400@400mm - 1/250s f/6.3 ISO1000*

That morning, while I was sitting in my hide close to a swamp, I had a thought that troubled me: "It's not possible I'm here, in a hide at 100 kilometers from home, when I could be on Texel Island, a paradise for bird photography!"

The plane that was supposed to take me had decided not to take off, because the damn Eyjafjöll volcano had erupted in Iceland! My moral collapsed further when grains of hail as big as golf balls started to fall from the sky. I focused, trying to make the most of these conditions... and with a little hope I snapped a picture that is without a doubt one of my favourites images!



**Sunset in the Saline - Northern Italy**

*Nikon D300s - Sigma 120-400@400mm - 1/25s f/5.6 ISO800*

On the Delta of the Po river, the most important and largest Italian one, photo opportunities are many. Along the canals, ponds, and salt marshes gather thousands of birds, especially herons, waders, ducks, geese and seagulls. That evening, the waning sunset tinged the water of the salt marshes that were packed with life with a pink color. On the arrival of a hawk, thousand of birds started flying away creating swirling textures of every shape and color. I tried to give the idea of the tumult with a dynamic shot, a mix between panning and blur.





**Marmot**  
*Marmota marmota*  
Italian Alps

Nikon D300s – Nikon  
300f4+tc1.7 (510mm)  
1/640s f/8.0 ISO400

During walks in the Alps  
it's common hearing strong  
whistles echoing in  
the valleys.

It's the alarm call of the  
marmot, a very nice alpine  
rodent which is not too  
difficult to observe in the  
spring and summer.

After the winter defrost,  
the puppies leave the den  
at last, after the long winter  
hibernation; it's beautiful  
to watch them chase each  
other madly in the  
meadows and when they  
exchange effusions, as in  
the picture taken a few  
meters from the entrance  
of the burrow.

**Alpine Chamois**  
*Rupicapra rupicapra*  
Italian Alps

Nikon D7000  
Nikon 300f4

1/1250s f/7.1 ISO500

As I'm a mountain lover  
I'm a lover of the king of  
the rocks as well, the  
Chamois, a mammal well  
spread over almost  
the entire Alps.

We can observe it  
perform amazing  
stunts on rocky  
ledges, spine-chilling  
scenes that give  
a stomach-ache even  
to the strongest  
of rock climbers!

During a trek in the  
mountains I took this  
picture of a beautiful adult  
female which was warming  
up with the very first light  
of dawn after a cold night.





**Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* – Italian Alps**

*Nikon D300s – Sigma 120-400@120mm –  
1/250s f/7.1 ISO400*

Heavily persecuted, in Italy the Red Fox is a particularly elusive and shadowy mammal. To see it is not that simple, photographing it even less. But there are some places, as in this case the Gran Paradiso National Park, in the north-east of the Italian Alps, where the foxes have become accustomed to the presence of tourists - and when they want (during five visits I photographed them only once) - they will leave you free to quietly approach and photograph them.

In this beautiful winter day where the valley was covered by a thick blanket of snow, I was from morning to evening in the company of this magnificent specimen, which posed for me like a star!





**The King of the Lek, Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* – Italian Alps**

*Nikon D300s – Nikon 300f4+tc1.7 – 1/1250s f/6.7 ISO400*

The Black Grouse is without doubt one of my favourite subjects. Every year, between April and May, this magnificent alpine grouse performs fascinating mating parades and fierce fights to earn its right to breed with the females of the lek. Hard work and dedication are required to witness such scenes, but the show is guaranteed almost always.



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# THE AFRICAN HUNTING DOG **BORN TO BE WILD**

The fascinating life habits of the extraordinarily efficient, highly social, much-maligned and severely endangered denizen of the African bush

The large, roundish ears of the African Wild (or Hunting) Dog *Lycan pictus* and its mottled coat are two unmistakable diagnostic features of the species.

*Lycaon pictus* is the scientific name of the African Wild Dog. It means "painted wolf" and refers to the colourful, patchy coat of many shades; their bushy tail with a white tip may serve as a flag to keep the pack in contact while hunting. They are poorly named, as they are not even dogs, though it is believed that they share a common ancestry with wolves. No two wild dogs are marked the same, and scientists still do not know the reason for this. The African Wild Dog is in serious decline, and the reasons are complex and many; for a start wild dogs are rare, and increas-

gly under pressure from humans - often killed in wire snares set by poachers, or killed by game farmers. The species have now been eradicated from 25 of the 39 countries that formed its historical range, and now they can now only be found in pockets of southern and eastern Africa. However, Lions are also one of the main causes of adult pup mortality, and the wild dog is now the most endangered carnivore in Africa with total numbers of around 6,600 individuals of which only 1,400 are mature - according IUCN's latest 2012 estimate. The average litter size is high, at just over 10 pups,

but there are many threats to the survival of the litter by predators and disease, and only around half of the pups survive their first year of life. A typical wild dog hunt is preceded by a noisy rally, which continues until all dogs are ready and prepared for hunting. Once rallied, the pack sets out. Owing to their good stamina wild dogs do not rely on ambushing their targets, instead, the pack fans out and pursues the prey at speed. They are often out-run initially, but over a distance of several kilometres the exhausted prey is run down. Most of the hunting takes place at early morning or later

continued on page 103 >

The alpha male of the *Lycaon pictus* pack observed by the author - instantly recognizable by its battle-scarred veteran looks!



*The relentless chase is on  
and there is no hope for the prey*

When prey is targeted, some of the Dogs run close to the animal, while others follow behind, taking over when the leaders tire. Owing to their good stamina Wild Dogs do not rely on ambushing their targets, instead, the pack fans out and pursues at speed. They are often out-run initially, but over a distance of several kilometres the exhausted prey is run down.



afternoon when it is cooler, and during the hot day-time hours the pack often sleeps. They are less likely to run into competition from other competing predators like lions and hyenas, when hunting this way. During the week I stayed in Botswana's Kwando Reserve, we were only able to locate the pack four times and always in the afternoon. I used one Nikon D3s and one D700 body with Nikon lenses 600mm f/4, 300mm f/2.8 or 70-200mm f/2.8 and a big beanbag; the large aperture lenses, are ideal. But photographing the wild dog is easier said than done. In Botswana the home range of one single pack can exceed 700 square kilometres (in Serengeti 2,000 sq km); so locating

the pack is often the biggest challenge. The pack we were looking for consisted of one alpha male and female, 9 other non-breeding adults, and 9 youngsters 8 months old. The alpha male and female have the sole breeding rights within the group, and the pair will often lead the pack when hunting. As the wild dogs spread out to cover a bigger area, you never know where the kill is going to be. The wild dogs are ravenous feeders consuming their prey very quickly to avoid the detection and confrontation from hyenas and predators like lions. All is eaten and often only small tell-tale signs remain to give clues to the site of a kill. By feeding fast and eating the prey's intestines too wild dogs will also

absorb a lot of fluids from their prey, and therefore they can go on for long periods without drinking. When water is plentiful, like during my visit, they will bathe and play in muddy water with great delight. This is one of the most unique animals that I have ever come across. Every individual of a wild dog pack has the responsibility to care for or providing for the alpha female's large litter. What impressed me is how gentle and considerate they are with each other; and watching them interacting together was endlessly entertaining with the constant chattering of the easily excitable youngsters. Every social activity plays a part in forming social bonds and hierarchy.

*continued on page 109* ➤



*The African Wild Dog - a social and highly intelligent animal - has been vilified and persecuted into extinction over most of its range.*





African Wild Dogs are rarely seen, even where they are relatively common, and it appears that populations have always existed in very low densities. The "big five" which most tourists want to see in Africa have been a successful marketing story - however, it can be argued that this has been to the detriment of other less well-know species, such as the African Wild Dog.

*Surveying the bush before  
starting their deadly chase*

A typical wild dog hunt is preceded by a noisy rally, which continues until all dogs are ready and prepared for hunting. Once rallied, the pack sets out. Relying on their good eyesight the wild dogs spot their prey, and then give chase.





Wild Dogs need to be fast eaters to avoid confrontations with other predators – both lions and hyenas never need an invitation to challenge Wild Dogs for their meal.



In order not to attract hyenas and lions, the Wild Dogs are very careful not to puncture the stomach, which could alert these bigger predators gifted with a keen sense of smell. Being so much larger, lions are a real 24-hour threat to Wild Dogs and their youngsters, and by some estimates 25% of all Wild Dog deaths can be attributed to lions.



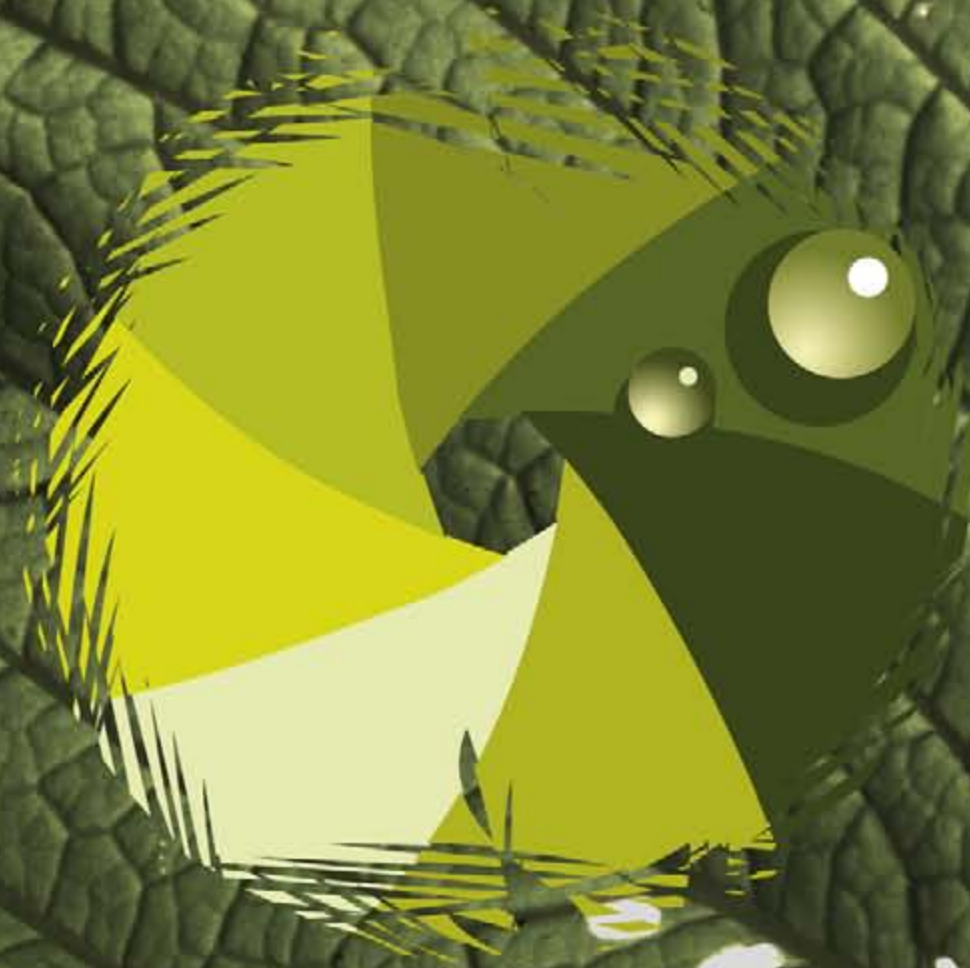
The pack has killed a female impala with a young fawn, and we observed at close range one of the young Wild Dogs running around holding the head of the baby impala as a trophy – and all of the other youngsters chasing it.

Unfortunately, because of their social nature diseases like rabies and canine distemper can spread rapidly and severely affect individual Wild Dog populations.

Alpha females often utilise old aardvark burrows for their den, and the same den can be used for several years. In the breeding season after a litter is born, they will limit their traveling and hunting in areas closer to the den. All the females cooperate in raising the pups, and kills are shared, and when one is made some distance from the den, adults return with meat to regurgitate to the young pups. According to the Botswana Predator Conservation Trust the cooperative hunting is likely to be the main reason why the Wild Dog is the most effective hunter in Africa in terms of kills to hunting attempts: Wild Dogs: 44%, Cheetahs 41%, Spotted Hyenas 35%, Lions 27%. I should add that all the 3 hunts that I witnessed were successful. Spending a week in the territory of wild dogs was an unforgettable experience. Unfortunately the population of Africa's most endangered carnivore is decreasing in spite of meaningful conservation efforts in South Africa, Botswana, and East Africa. Development of Wild Dog tourism ventures and other new initiatives are however evidence of how conservation NGOs are working hard to find new ways to establish a lasting place for the "underdogs" in a developing continent. ●



■ The cooperative hunting is likely to be the main reason why the wild dog is the most efficient hunter in Africa in the ratio of kills to hunting attempts.



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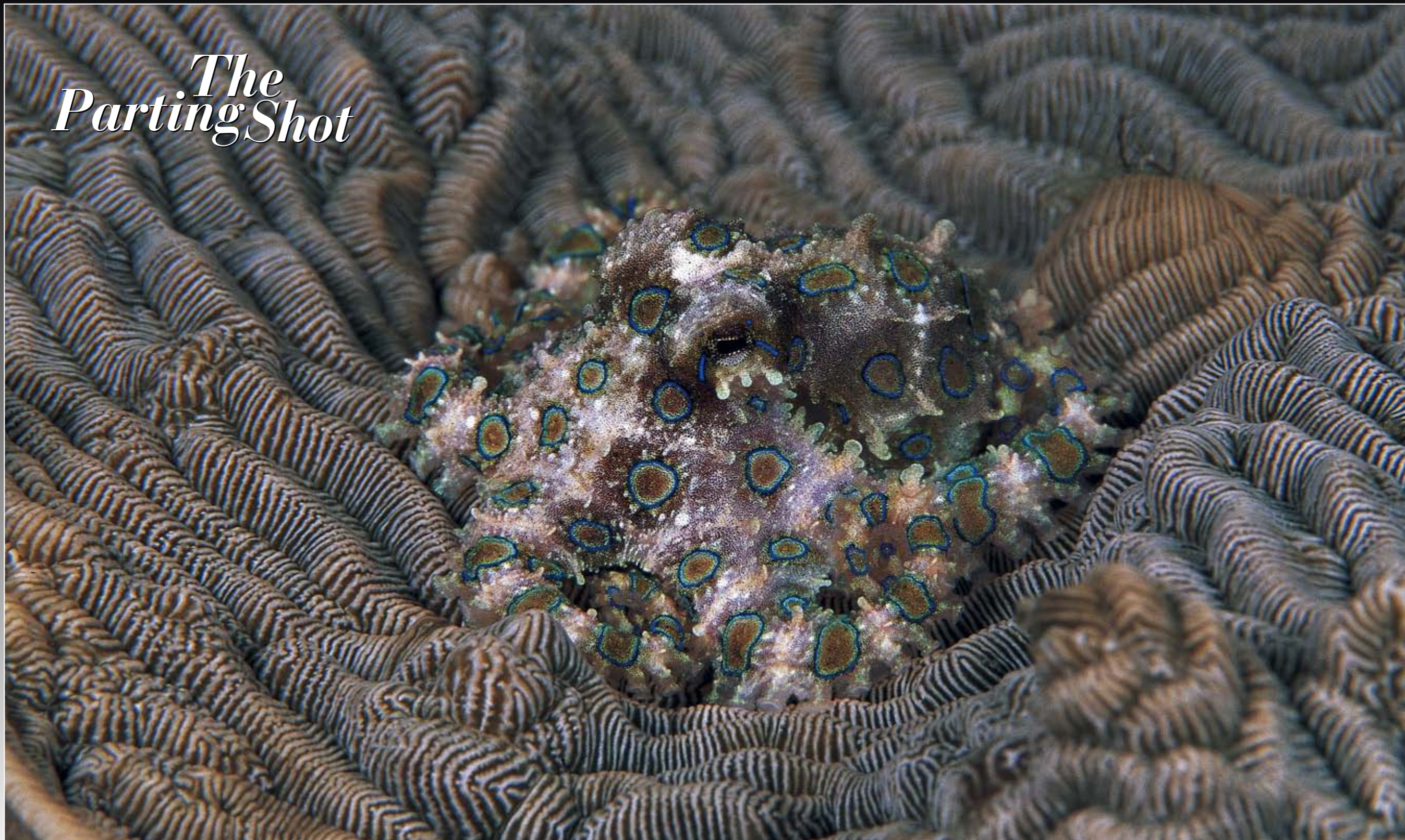


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# The Parting Shot

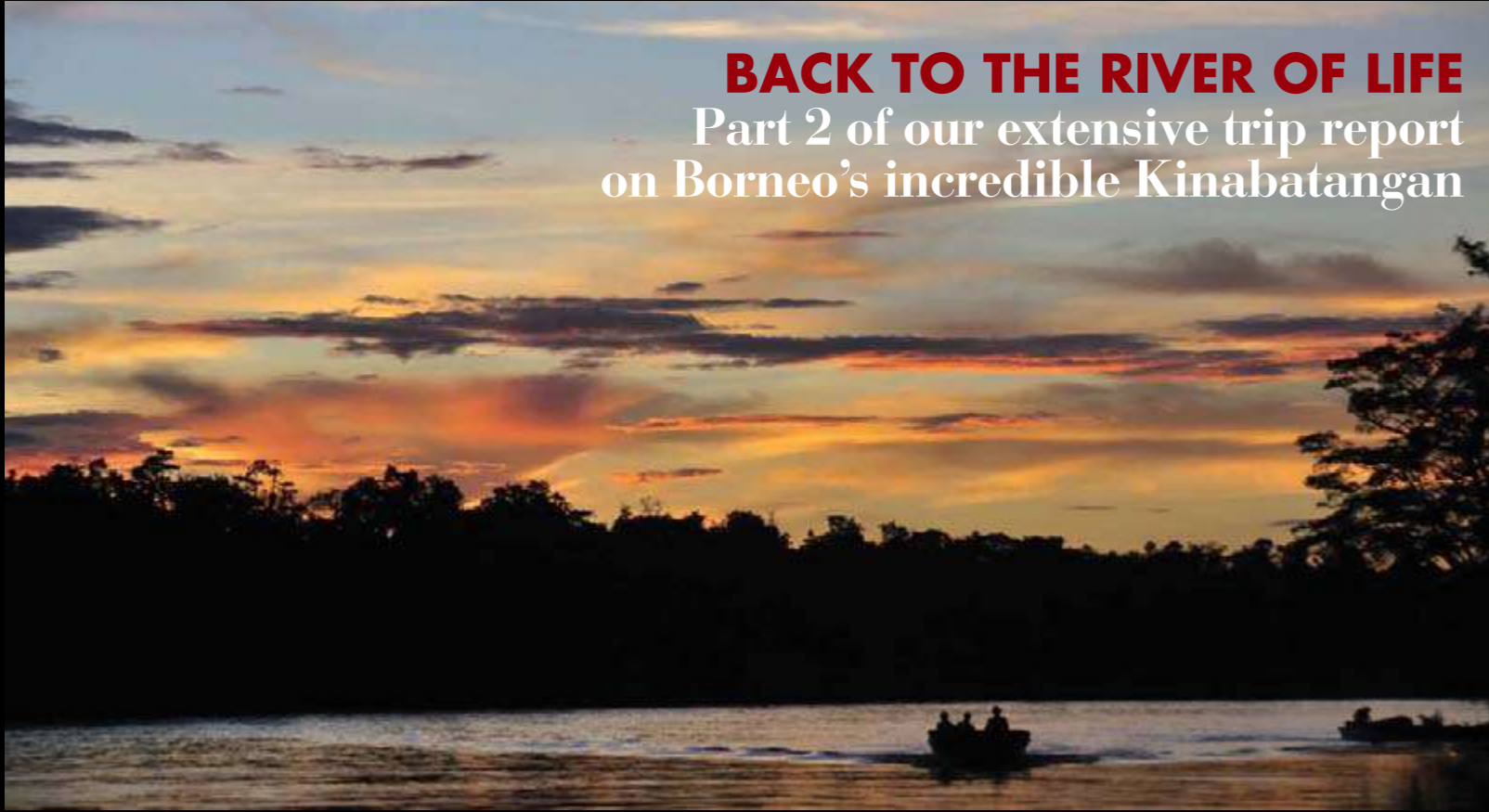


Hidden among the mangroves of the Strait of Lembah, in Northern Sulawesi, Batu Anggus ("Black Rock") used to be one of our favorite diving spots in Indonesia. A bowl-shaped depression of about 30 meters diameter and about 10 meters deep, probably volcanic in origin and with its bottom and slopes littered with literally thousands of free-moving *Fungia* corals, it was the hotspot for photographing the psychedelic and very skittish Mandarinfish *Synchiropus splendidus* as they scooted and rapidly

mated among the broken corals at twilight. I still distinctly remember our magical first dive there - and how the scything beams of our torches - searching among the mushroom corals for the elusive technicolored glimpse of the Mandarinfish - had illuminated this tiny, coin-sized Blue-ring Octopus *Hapalochlaena lunulata* as it huddled, exquisitely camouflaged, on the labyrinthine surface of a brain coral. It was our first sighting ever of this stunningly patterned and deadly venomous small cephalopod - a

species which is highly sought after by underwater photographers - and the enthusiastic chorus of collective "oooohs" and "aaaahs" ascended to the surface in a swirling tornado of chromed bubbles, as we settled on the bottom frantically pressing buttons and turning knobs on our camera housings. We spent the full 90 minutes of our shallow dive with this splendid little fellow, carefully expending the meager 36 film shots in our Nikon f4 - but I still think this shot - our first - is the best of all. ●

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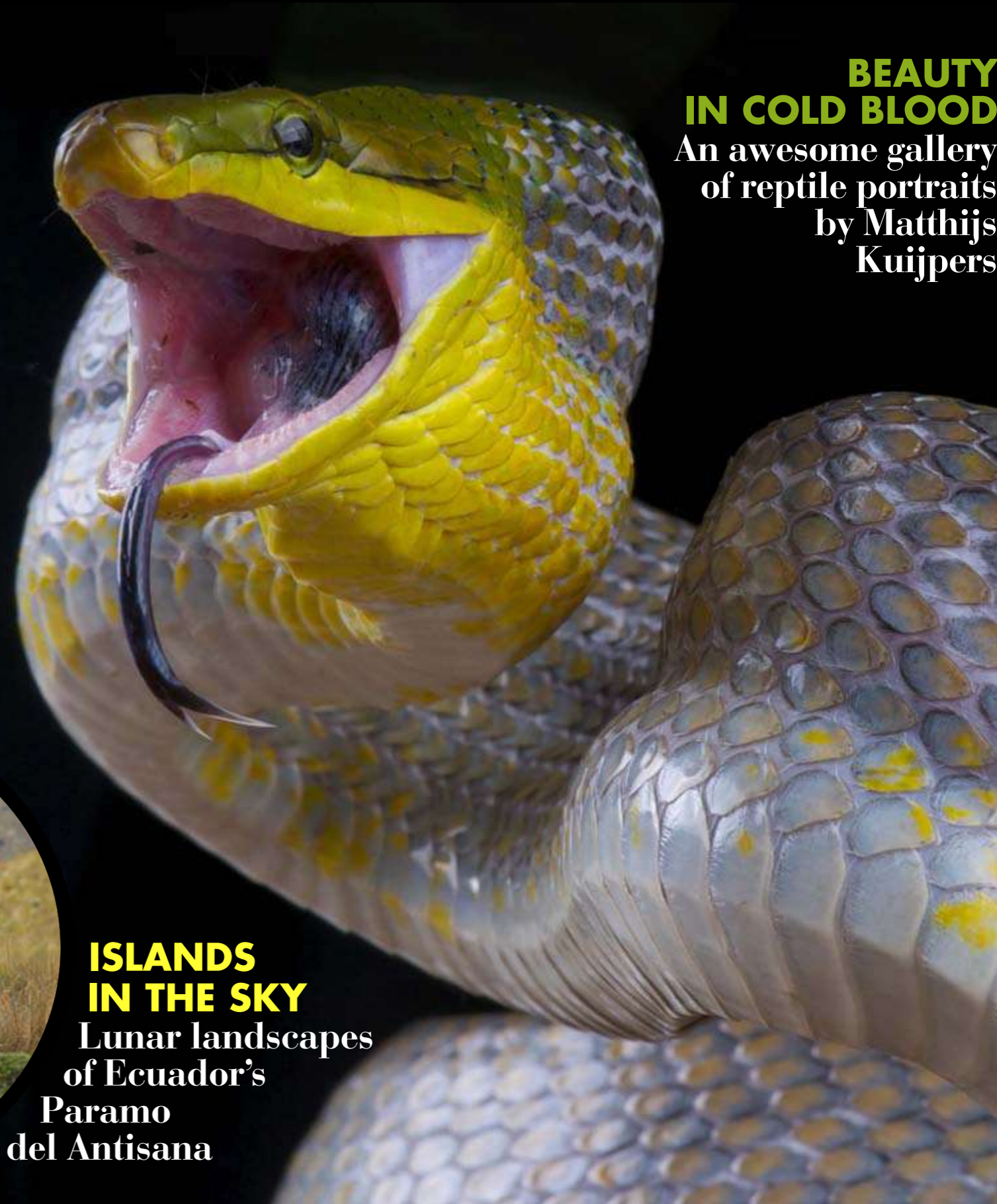


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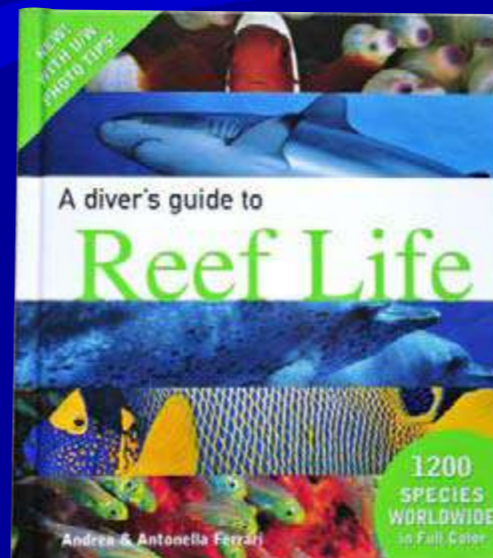


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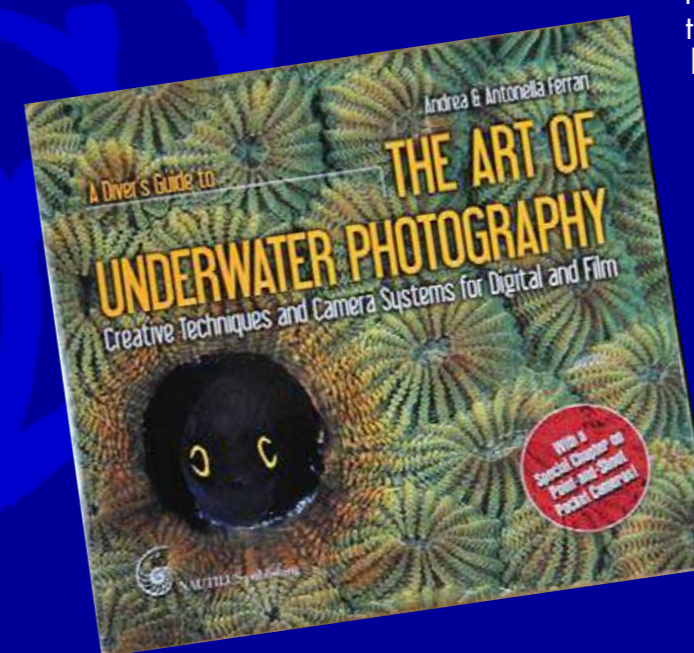
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