



ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

Issue 13, Year 4 - 1st Quarter, January 2014

In This Issue:

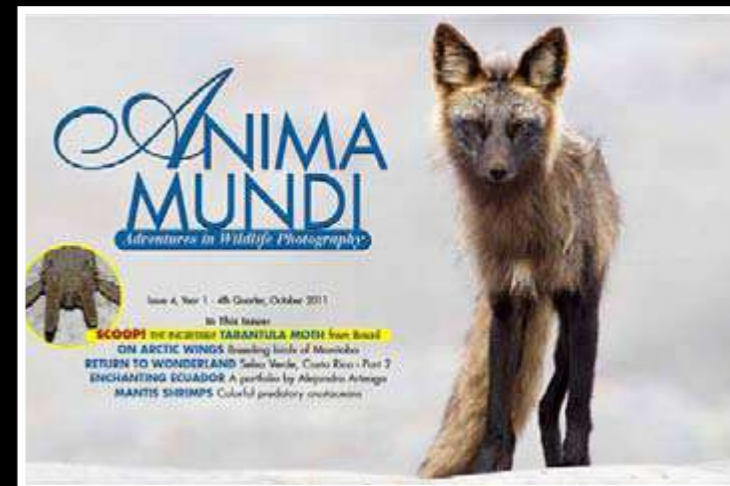
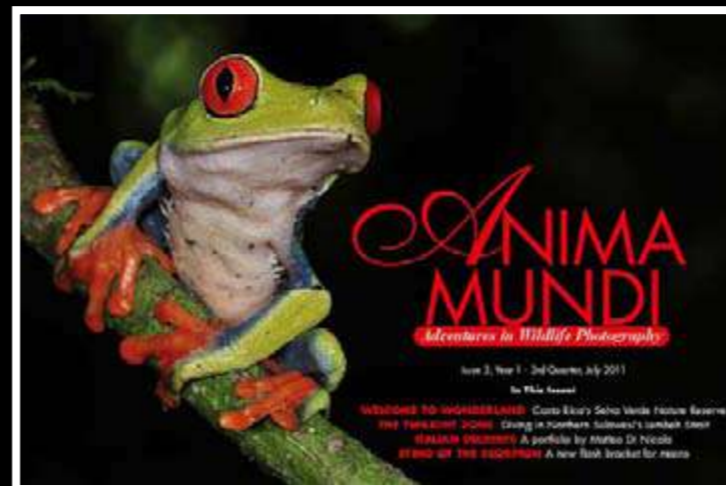
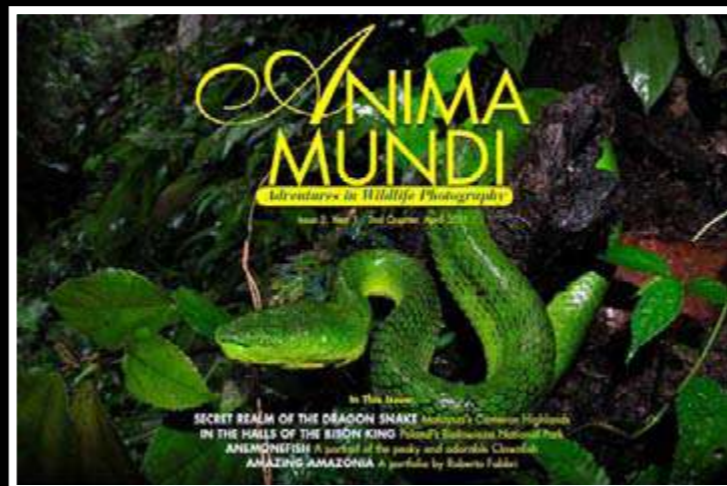
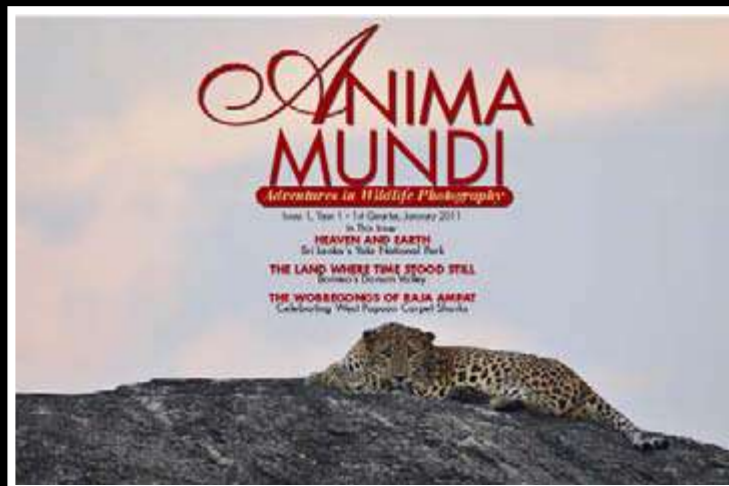
SCOOP The Gentle Ghost of Madagascar

THE SECRET GARDENS India's Western Ghats

DARK WATER The Great White Shark

BACKYARD BEAUTIES A Portfolio by Markus Braun

HIMALAYAN BIRDS A Photo Trip Report

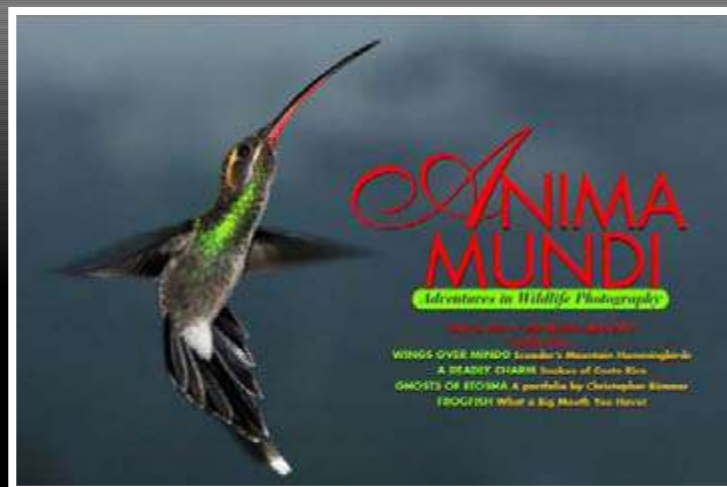
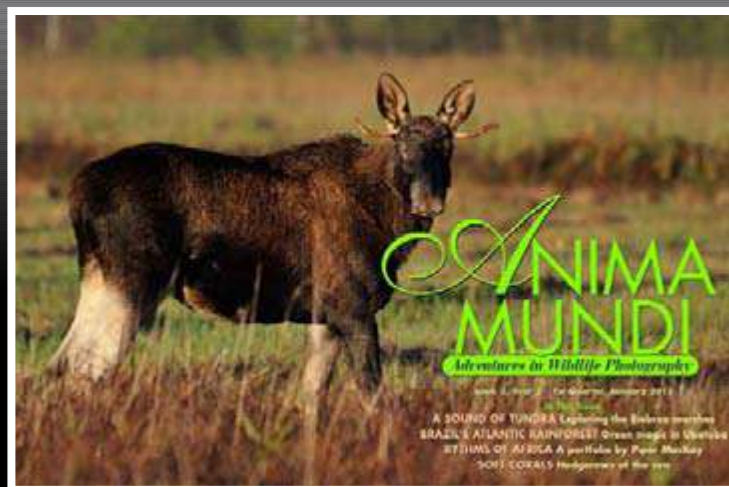


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With more than 15,000 downloads worldwide per issue (as per August 2012), ANIMA MUNDI has seen its readership consistently and rapidly growing in the brief span of only two years and eight published issues. Its authoritative and unbiased travel reports and wildlife articles offer a high level of scientifically-correct information - at absolutely no cost - to thousands and thousands of nature and photography enthusiasts all over the world. Each and every issue of ANIMA MUNDI - Adventures in Wildlife Photography is permanently available for FREE downloading - our mission is the dissemination and condision of information to promote nature awareness and habitat conservation, and we are proud to reach out on a quarterly basis to a world of passionate, highly motivated, seriously interested readers who all share our passion for wildlife photography and travelling. This is a sample - among many others - of what our readers say:

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



Advertising on ANIMA MUNDI - Adventures in Wildlife Photography means reaching out and getting in personal contact with such people - passionate travellers, dedicated wildlife and nature photographers, world-famous field researchers. All sharing a common bond, all interested in serious, reliable information on wildlife and nature travelling and photographic workshops, trips and equipment. All waiting to hear from you!

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■ A Grey Langur
Semnopithecus dussumieri,
one of the many wonderful
species to be admired in the
Western Ghats of India -
our extensive two-part feature
starts at page 9 of this issue.



ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

A New Year full of surprises

Welcome to a new wonderful issue of ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography!* We enter our fourth year of life with élan and a triple bang - our website has been completely renewed and upgraded, with this issue we introduce a brand new article format and with the beginning of the new year we enter a new strategic partnership.

The new upgraded version of our website is for you all to see at www.animamundimag.com so there is no further need to elaborate here - just drop by and have a good long look, you're going to love it.

The new article format we are introducing starting with this issue is something many of our followers will find quite interesting - it's named "Trip Report" (not really original, we know...) and it will feature tales and photos from our most gifted readers, relating travel and wildlife photography experiences and opportunities from little-known, little-visited locations. We start with a trip report on birding in the Himalayan foothills, but we hope to hear from you with many other interesting proposals!

In 2014 we also proudly inaugurate our strategic partnership with the **Amphibian Survival Alliance**, an international scientific community of high repute which will allow us to feature even more interesting and exclusive contents on our pages in the near future. Stay tuned, you'll be amazed - we already have in preparation an extensive feature on the field research being done to save the emperilled Darwin's Frog *Rhinoderma darwinii* by none other than Dante Fenolio, conservation biologist, book author and Manager of Conservation and Research at the San Antonio Zoo.

In the meantime, enjoy the goodies in our current issue - we begin with a unique photo documenta-

tion of the weird and wonderful Aye-Aye from Madagascar, an exceptionally shy (and ugly) lemur which is very difficult to photograph properly in the wild - meet it on page 4.

Our main dish follows on page 9 with a huge two-part feature about our recent trip to several different locations in the Western Ghats, truly India's "secret gardens" and a UNESCO World Heritage Site whose stunning biodiversity rivals that of the Amazon. Exploring the Ghats was an unforgettable, highly enjoyable experience for us, and you'll love the images we brought back.

From the sunny, forested hills of the Ghats it's a big jump then to the dark, cold waters where the majestic and endangered Great White Shark *Carcharodon carcharias* roams - enjoy our stunning tribute to this marine apex predator starting on page 58 thanks to the stupendous, moody photo-portraits by Dr. Dirk Schmidt...This is atmospheric underwater photography at its best.

Nothing better to relax, after that, than the comforting beauty to be found in our European gardens - we find beauty in our own backyards through the delicate images of Markus Braun's own Personal Portfolio on page 73.

Finally, it's time to go back to some exotic destination again - enjoy our new article format with an exclusive, pleasantly personal Trip Report from the Himalayan foothills of Pangot and Sat Tal by our new contributor Dr. Caesar Sengupta. Take a good look at his wonderful work, and if you think you can contribute with something similar and equally interesting - just drop us a line!

In the meantime...

Have a good trip!
Andrea & Antonella Ferrari
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

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Publishers
 Andrea and Antonella
 Ferrari
nautilus@reefwonders.net

Editor-in-Chief
 Andrea Ferrari
andy@reefwonders.net

Layout Design & Art
 Direction
 Laura Genovese
 Anna Bortolini

Videographer
 Antonella Ferrari
anto@reefwonders.net

Video Editing
 Leon Joubert & Claudia
 Pellarini-Joubert
info@bittenbysharks.com

Technical Support
 Komodo adv
mail@komodo-adv.com
 Peter Symes
editor@xray-mag.com

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■ *Malabar Pit viper*
Trimeresurus malabaricus,
 an endemic and very beautiful
 species from the Western
 Ghats of India.

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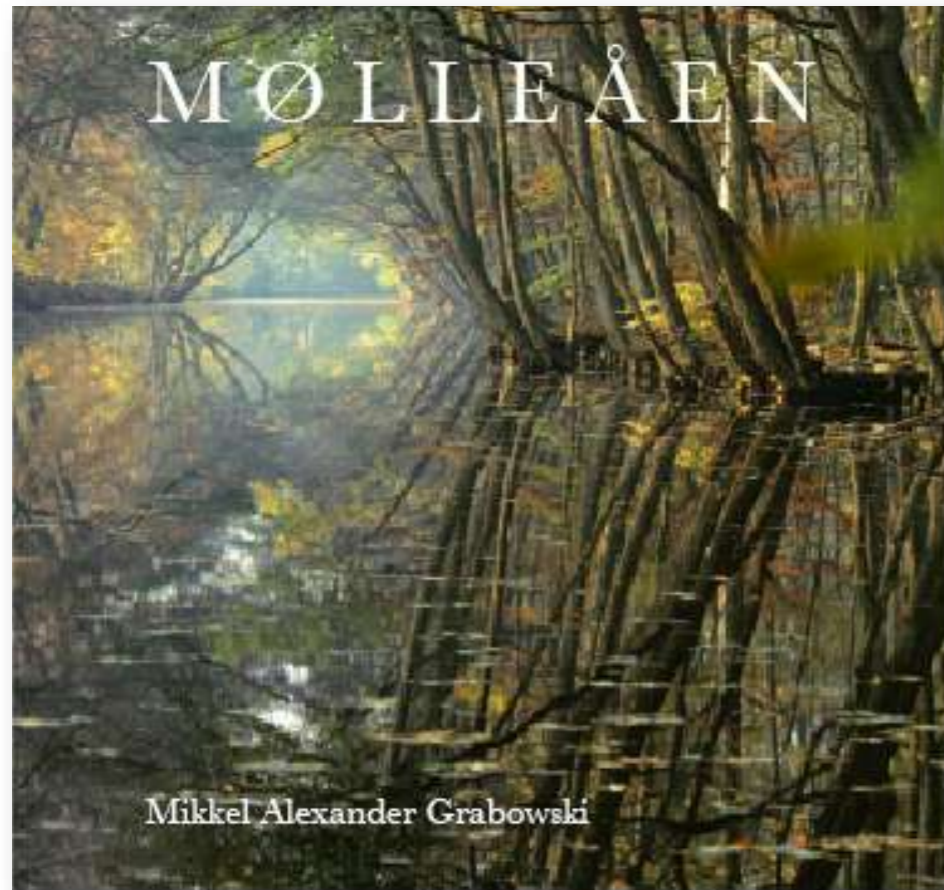
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A magical journey through Denmark's Mill Brook Dale...

MØLLEÅEN

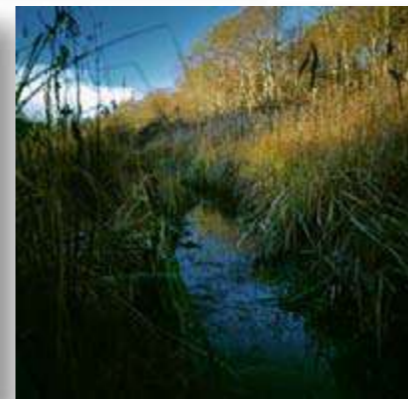
- a protected wetland habitat of river, big lakes, deep forests and extensive swamps supporting an amazing variety of flora and fauna - just 10 km from the country's capital Copenhagen!



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TO TRAVEL IS TO LEARN.

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.

More than thirty years later, Holbrook Travel continues to serve the needs of teachers, students, academic institutions, and nature lovers. Although many changes have taken place over the years, Holbrook Travel has taken great care to remain true to its roots. As news of environmental concerns and world conflicts continue to fill the airwaves, it seems more important than ever to help people gain a better understanding and appreciation of the natural world and other cultures through firsthand experiences. In the words of Andrea Holbrook, president: “Our goal is to try to continue the great work my mother started.”

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HOLBROOK
TRAVEL

*Aye-Aye
Daubentonia
madagascariensis
are very shy,
quite rare and
somewhat
endangered -
besides, they are
very active, agile
and seen only at
night. Getting this
close to one is
almost unheard of.*

Meet the legendary Aye-Aye
**THE GENTLE GHOST
OF MADAGASCAR**

AN EXCEPTIONAL CLOSE ENCOUNTER IN THE WILD
WITH ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST DIFFICULT
(AND WEIRDEST!) CAMERA SUBJECTS

The Aye-Aye's salient features are clearly seen in this close-up portrait - the grizzled hair, large eyes, big ears and skeletal middle finger all contribute to the less-than-flattering image of this species.



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY THORSTEN NEGRO
WWW.TANALAHORIZON.COM

It was very hot in Masoala and the rain wouldn't stop. Perhaps it was not the best time to visit the wettest place in Madagascar - at the end of the rainy season. What can you do if it's raining in a place where all excursions depend upon the weather? Ok, let's go for breakfast and think about it...while we were drinking a coffee I glimpsed a man I knew from my Madagascar

expedition in 1995. He recognized me, sat down with us and began to relate about a conservation project of his brother-in-law about the most bizarre lemur of Madagascar, the Aye-Aye. I asked him how close it would be possible to come to this lemur. He thought for a moment about my question and asked: "How close do you have to be for a good picture? Are two meters close enough?" Wow! Yes! That's perfect! I couldn't believe what he said to me! Two meters! I had never seen this lemur so close, and I never had the opportunity to take a picture so close.

Almost nobody has, in fact! We fixed an appointment on the plantation of his brother-in-law that same night. It had been my biggest dream for a long time to see this rare, amazing, mysterious and for some - perhaps - rather ugly animal. The rarest of all the lemurs of Madagascar - the Aye-Aye! A nocturnal primate, it is characterized by a typically elongated, skeletal middle finger. With its help the Aye-Aye knocks on tree trunks, listens to the echo produced and finds food in the hollow chambers inside. Because of this unusual method of finding food, one could call him a



The Aye-Aye was thought to be extinct in 1933, but was rediscovered in 1957. Nine individuals were then transported to Nosy Mangabe, an island in eastern Madagascar, in 1966.


“woodpecker”. But the Aye-Aye is not only eating with the help of its middle finger, it also drinks with it. It takes a coconut, makes an hole in it and sticks the middle finger inside. Then he flicks it very quickly (3-4 times a second) to its snout and drinks. The scientific binomial name of the Aye-Aye is *Daubentonia madagascariensis* - the Malagasy named him “hay-hay” for a vocalization it is claimed to make, and the common name stuck. By day it hides and sleeps in a nest up in the tree crowns - one individual can have seven different nests. It eats

animal matter, nuts, insect larvae, fruits, nectar, seeds and fungi. Like in many other lemur species, the female Aye-Aye is dominant over the male - they are not typically monogamous, and will often change partners to mate. Unfortunately some Malagasy believe the Aye-Aye to be a symbol of death, and kill each and every one they see. Others consider it a symbol of magic and good luck, and set them free when they see a captive one. I prefer the second version of the myth, obviously, and my favorite Malagasy folk tale tells that the Aye Aye makes a grass pillow for every person who sleeps in the forest. When

you wake up in the morning, if you find the pillow under your head, than you will get very, very rich. If you find it under your feet, you will instead soon be the victim of a magician...So, I hope I’ll have my pillow under my head tomorrow morning!

●

Thorsten Negro is the founder and leader of [TanalaHorizon](#), a leading and highly specialized company with 20 years experience for wildlife and photography trips to Madagascar. ANIMA MUNDI has successfully travelled to Madagascar with this company and can safely recommend it to all our readers.



Recent research has shown that the Aye-Aye is more widespread than was previously thought, but this species is still categorized as Near Threatened by IUCN.

■ The main threats to the Aye-Aye's survival in the wild are superstition, as the Aye-Aye is considered evil; habitat destruction, as the forests of Madagascar are being destroyed; active persecution, as the farmers will kill Aye-Ayes to protect their crops; and poaching.





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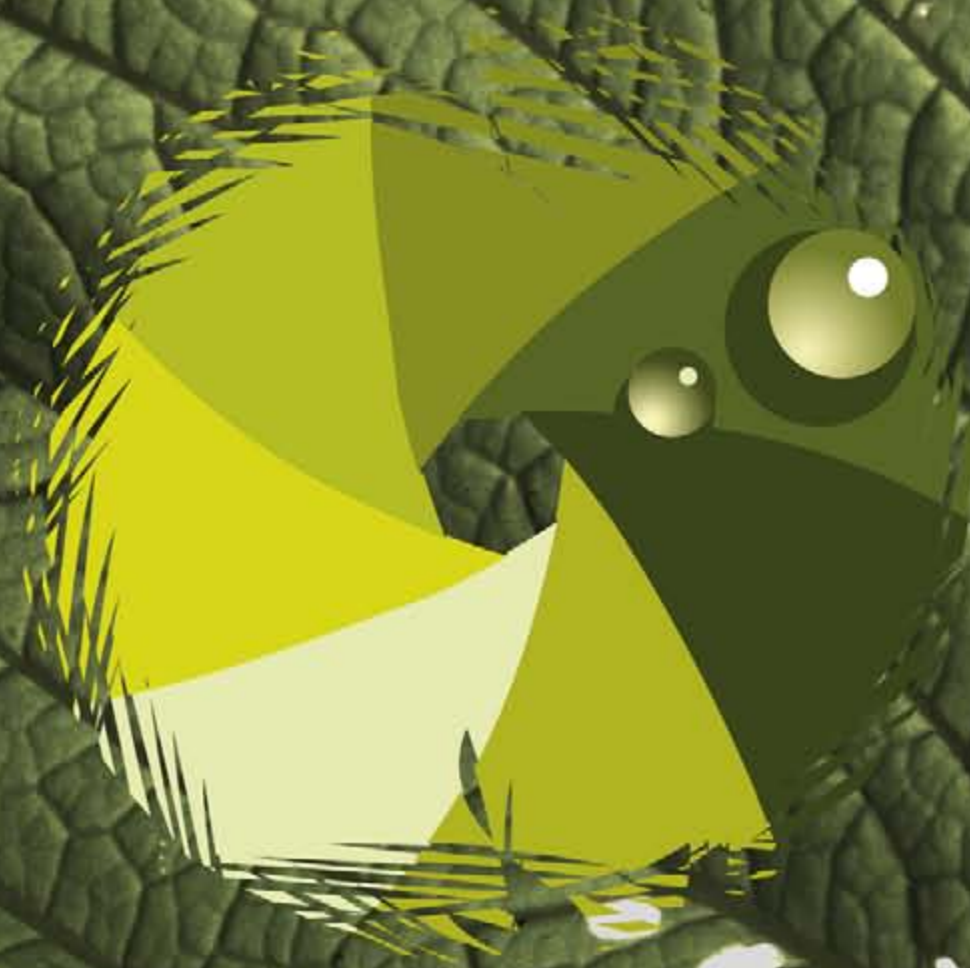
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EXPLORING INDIA'S WESTERN GHATS
**THE SECRET
GARDENS**

A trip to the UNESCO's World Heritage Site -
one of the "hottest hotspots" for biodiversity
and a little-visited, exceptionally beautiful,
richly rewarding destination for serious wildlife
and nature photography

*An Indian or Spectacled Cobra
Naja naja spreads its hood, rearing
up in a truly impressive threat display
- a symbol of the Western Ghats
at their wild, natural best.*

*Steep hill forests crossed
by quiet brooks and inhabited
by countless creatures*



A Grey Langur *Semnopithecus dussumieri* surveys its home range with the Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve forested hills in the background. Truly wild Grey Langurs are very shy and not easily approached.

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

*V*irtually - and inexcusably - ignored by most European or North American wildlife photographers and nature travellers, India's Western Ghats are an immense region of mystery and legend, exceptionally rich in fauna, flora and spectacular landscapes. According to a short summary from Wikipedia, "The Western Ghats or the Sahyadri constitute a mountain range along the western side of India. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the eight "hottest hotspots" of biological diversity in the world. The range runs north to south along the western edge of the Deccan Plateau,

and separates the plateau from a narrow coastal plain, called Konkan, along the Arabian Sea. A total of thirty nine properties including National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and reserve forests were designated as World Heritage sites - twenty in Kerala, ten in Karnataka, five in Tamil Nadu and four in Maharashtra. [The range starts near the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra, south of the Tapi river, and runs approximately 1,600 km (990 mi) through the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala ending at Kanyakumari, at the southern tip of

continued on page 13 >



■ A brown phase Malabar Pit Viper *Trimeresurus malabaricus* waits in ambush by a forest trail. This endemic, highly variable species is rather common in its range but not easily seen due to its exquisite camouflage.



A pair of mating Blue Mormon butterflies *Papilio polymnestor*. The Western Ghats are a true paradise for those interested in butterflies.

India. These hills cover 160,000 square kilometers (62,000 sq mi) and form the catchment area for the complex riverine drainage systems that drain almost 40% of India. The average elevation is around 1,200 m (3,900 ft). The area is one of the world's eight "hottest biodiversity hotspots" and has over 5000 species of flowering plants, 139 mammal species, 508 bird species and 179 amphibian species; it is likely that many undiscovered species live in the Western Ghats. At least 325 globally threatened species occur in the range". We had long desired visiting and exploring at leisure this veritable naturalistic treasure trove, and we finally realized our dream thanks to our friend Yuwaraj Gurjar, a true macrophotography maestro from Mumbai. But before telling you where we went and what we saw, let us quote

here a few more paragraphs, this time from the UNESCO website, which will help you realizing how exceptionally unique is this enormous stretch of wilderness: "Older than the Himalaya mountains, the mountain chain of the Western Ghats represents geomorphic features of immense importance with unique biophysical and ecological processes. The site's high montane forest ecosystems influence the Indian monsoon weather pattern. Moderating the tropical climate of the region, the site presents one of the best examples of the monsoon system on the planet. It also has an exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism and is recognized as one of the world's eight "hottest hotspots" of biological diversity. The forests of the site include some of the best representatives of non-equatorial tropical evergreen forests anywhere and are home to at least

continued on page 15 ➤

A stronghold of rare, endemic and amazingly beautiful species



■ A large Bamboo Pit viper *Trimeresurus gramineus* in the idyllic setting of the Yeoor Hills - just a few minutes from the noisy and polluted streets of Mumbai and its suburbs.

■ A stunningly colorful Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons* from the grounds of the Old Magazine House lodge in Ganeshgudi, on the Londa-Dandeli road in the State of Karnataka.



325 globally threatened flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species. The Western Ghats are internationally recognized as a region of immense global importance for the conservation of biological diversity, besides containing areas of high geological, cultural and aesthetic values. A chain of mountains running parallel to India's western coast, approximately 30-50 km inland, the Ghats traverse the States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat. These mountains cover an area of around 140,000 km² in a 1,600 km long stretch that is interrupted only by the 30 km Palghat Gap at around 11°N. The Western Ghats of India are a geomorphic feature of immense global importance. The outstanding universal value of the Western Ghats is manifested in the region's unique and fascinating influence on large-scale biophysical and ecological processes over the entire Indian peninsula. The mountains of the Western Ghats and

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The small, strangely-shaped and highly cryptic Hooded Leaf grasshopper *Phyllochoreia* sp. is rather common but quite difficult to spot in the shrubbery of the Western Ghats.



The lower reaches and the coastal strip of the Western Ghats offer wonderful opportunities for bird photography. Left, dueling Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* at Carambolim lake; top right, Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* in Dr.Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary; bottom right, White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* in Bhagwan Mahawir Wildlife Sanctuary,.





A beautiful Tamil
Lacewing butterfly
Cethosia nietneri
photographed
in the Cotigao
Wildlife Sanctuary.

A pair of ■
Malabar Pied Hornbill
Anthracoceros coronatus
perch on a dead tree on
a cloudy, rainy day in
Dandeli. This is a rather
common but nevertheless
very impressive species.



their characteristic montane forest ecosystems influence the Indian monsoon weather patterns that mediate the warm tropical climate of the region, presenting one of the best examples of the tropical monsoon system on the planet. The Ghats act as a key barrier, intercepting the rain-laden monsoon winds that sweep in from the south-west during late summer. A significant characteristic of the Western Ghats is the exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism. At least 325 globally threatened (IUCN Red Data List) species occur in the Western Ghats. The globally threatened flora and fauna in the Western Ghats are represented by 229 plant species, 31 mammal species, 15 bird species, 43 amphibian species, 5 reptile species and 1 fish species. Of the total 325 globally threatened species in the Western Ghats, 129 are classified as Vulnerable, 145 as Endangered and 51 as Critically Endangered. The Western Ghats contain exceptional levels of plant and animal diversity and endemism for a continental area. In particular, the level of endemism for some of the 4-5,000 plant species recorded in the Ghats is very high: of the nearly 650 tree species found in the Western Ghats, 352 (54%) are endemic. Animal diversity is also

▶ continued on page 22



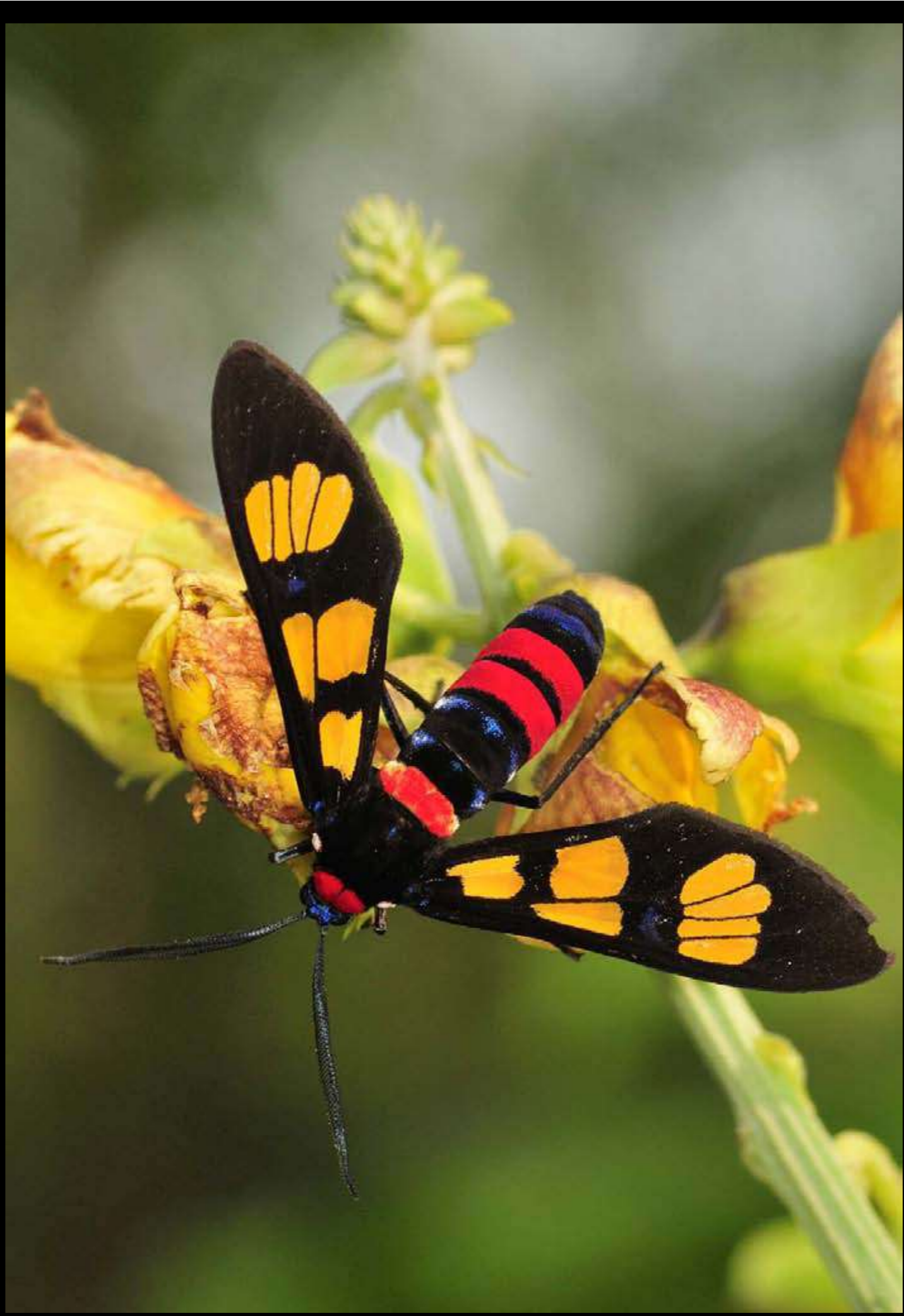
Left, a rare encounter with a brightly patterned juvenile Common Indian or Bengal monitor *Varanus bengalensis*; left, the fairy-tale atmosphere pervading the open forests of the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary in the early morning hours.





Colors and shapes blending in an infinite variety of unique elegance

A large Green Vine Snake *Ahaetulla nasuta* puts on a very impressive but harmless threat display. This is an exceptionally common, rear-fanged species with a relatively weak venom.



■ Far left, Owl Fly (Ascalaphidae) photographed during a night walk in Tambdi Surla; left, Handmaiden Day moth *Euchromia polymena* in the bungalow gardens at Cotigao.

exceptional, with amphibians (up to 179 species, 65% endemic), reptiles (157 species, 62% endemic), and fishes (219 species, 53% endemic). Invertebrate biodiversity, once better known, is likely also to be very high (with some 80% of tiger beetles endemic). A number of flagship mammals occur in the property, including parts of the single largest population of globally threatened "landscape" species such as the Asian Elephant, Gaur and Tiger. Endangered species such as the Lion-tailed Macaque, Nilgiri Tahr and Nilgiri Langur are unique to the area. The property is also key to the conservation of a number of threatened habitats, such as unique seasonally mass-flowering wildflower meadows, Shola forests and Myristica swamps.

EASILY REACHED AND EASILY EXPLORED

Even before we had read and digested the above, we had long been under India's spell for a long time - we simply had to go there. Now, we have visited India several times and we feel fully entitled to offering a word of advice here - do visit her National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries and do not miss her incredibly beautiful wildlife, but always try to do so with the help and advice of an Indian friend. The country's stifling bureaucracy has often mysterious ways, and India's

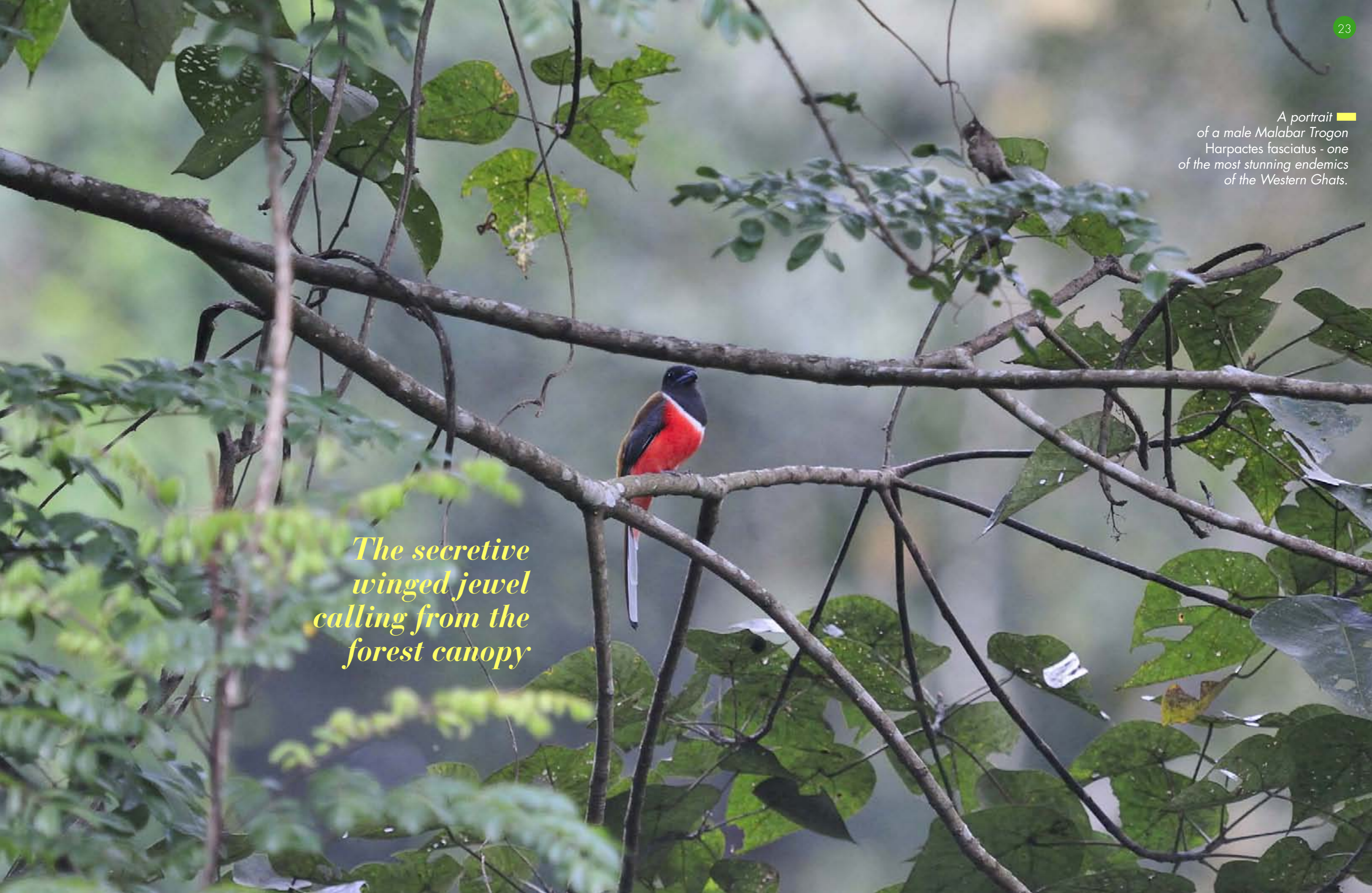
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Male Loten's Sunbird - also known as Long-billed Sunbird or Maroon-breasted Sunbird - *Cinnyris lotenius* in Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary.

A portrait
of a male Malabar Trogon
Harpactes fasciatus - one
of the most stunning endemics
of the Western Ghats.

*The secretive
winged jewel
calling from the
forest canopy*





■ Top left, unidentified metallic grasshopper; top right, Jewel beetle *Chrysocoris stollii*. Bottom left, *Antestia* sp., family Pentatomidae; bottom right, Tessaratomid Stink bug *Catacanthus incarnatus*.



■ The terror of the forest floor - highly active, fast, aggressive and with a venomous bite, the Indian Giant Tiger Centipede *Scolopendra hardwickei* is a fearsome day predator heralded by a gaudy aposematic (ie warning) coloration and pattern.





■ An idyllic brook murmurs quietly among the trees of the Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary. This is the perfect place to look for frogs, King Cobras - and leeches.

transportation system can be bafflingly efficient or downright frustrating for the uninitiated. This is a place which can bring a fully grown man to tears with its stunning beauty - or with its exhausting, incomprehensible delays! So do yourself a favor and try to enlist the help of a local fellow photographer to organize your itinerary and solve the inevitable problems which are going to crop up. This will not only make your life easier and your photographic work more rewarding, but will also offer the rare chance to fully and intimately interact with true local culture - a priceless joy and privilege for us.

THE RIGHT PEOPLE ARE THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Our friend Yuwaraj - being an experienced wildlife photographer himself - knew exactly what our needs and desires were, and cooked up a wonderful (and affordable) itinerary for us. After one day of spectacular snake photography in Yeoor - Sanjay Gandhi National Park in the wooded hills and rocky escarpments above Mumbai and Thane, we moved by night train to our first and most important base camp - Nature's Nest Nature Resort in Surla, in the hills above Goa. This was a most welcome surprise after the stifling heat and deafening noise of Mumbai - a simply delightful little lodge hidden in the wooded countryside, with basic but very clean amenities, excellent local

continued on page 29 >



■ Top left, Assassin bug
Sycanus sp., family
Reduviidae;
top right, Tortoise beetle,
probably *Aspidomorpha* sp.
Bottom left, Jewel beetle,
Chrysochroa sp., family
Buprestidae; bottom right,
Stink bug nymph,
Tessaratomia sp.



■ The intimidating and unmistakable threat display of the Indian Violet Tarantula *Chilobrachys fimbriatus*, a large, very colorful and quite ready-to-bite species.





food and a highly-motivated, exceptionally knowledgeable team of resident young naturalists. Lodge managers Pankaj Lad and Ramesh Zarmekar and wildlife guide Omkar Dharwadkar spared no efforts to make our stay truly memorable, and to help us finding a great number of rare or highly cryptic endemic species. As we have already said, it's the right people who make the difference when in India!

A WELL-DESERVED REPUTATION

What followed in the three weeks which ensued was a veritable whirlwind of day and night activity - we could not have ever imagined the Western Ghats had so much to offer, even in the relatively small area we explored. This is a chronicle of our activities:

15 Oct:Evening: Plateau near Nature's Nest (Bhgwani Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary) 16 Oct:Morning:

continued on page 33 ➤

A lucky and very uncommon find - the Brown Vine snake Ahaetulla pulverulenta, a rare, endemic and exceptionally cryptic species of the Western Ghats.



Many small species of the █ Western Ghats are exceptionally cryptic. Left, Southern Flying Lizard *Draco dussumieri*; center, Ornamental Tree Trunk Spider *Herennia multipuncta*; right, Indian Bark Mantis, possibly *Humbertiella* sp.





■ The unmistakable profile of a Green Vine snake *Ahaetulla nasuta* shows to advantage its typical keyhole-shaped pupils. This extremely common, easily observed and truly beautiful species is gifted with frontal, binocular vision.



India's Western Ghats are home to some of the world's most wonderful and cryptic mantids. Left, Wanderin Violin mantis *Gongylus gongylodes*; right, Indian Stick mantis *Aethalochroa* sp.



■ A tiny jewel of the Western Ghats open forests - the Monkey Puzzle butterfly *Rathinda amor*.



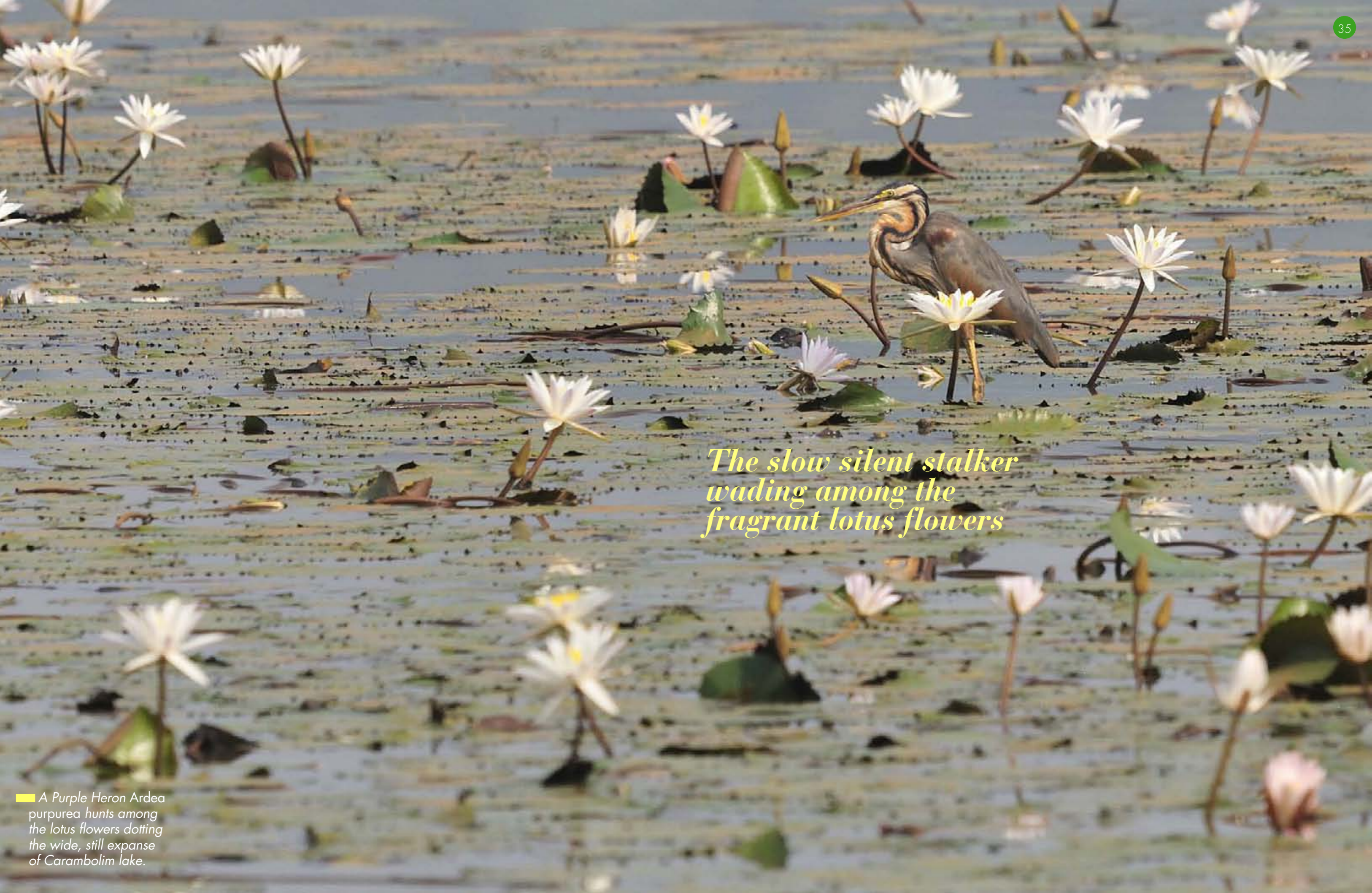
Tambdi Surla area (Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary) Evening: Night trail on the plateau. 17 Oct:Morning: Sunset Point Trail at Mollem (Bhagwan Mahavir WLS) Evening: Around Nature's Nest 18 Oct:Morning: Chorla Ghat and Surla (Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary) Evening: Nature's Nest 19 Oct:Morning: Castle Rock (Karnataka) Evening: Nature's Nest 20 Oct:Morning: Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary Evening: Travelled to Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary and stayed at Tanshikar's Spice Farm 21 Oct:Morning: Verle area (Netravali WLS) Evening: Travelled to Cotigao WLS, stayed in Forest Dept cottages, Night trail around the eco-tourism complex. 22 Oct:Morning: Tulshimol area (Cotigao WLS) Evening: Spent time at the butterfly garden at Cotigao, went to Galjibag beach 23 Oct:Morning: Travelled back to Nature's Nest Evening: Around Nature's Nest 24 Oct: Relaxed for the day 25 Oct:Morning: Tambdi Surla area (Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary) Evening: Night trail in Bhagwan Mahavir WLS (near Nature's Nest) 26 Oct:Morning: Bondla WLS 27 Oct:Morning: Chorla Ghat, Surla(Mhadei WLS). Evening: Sunset Point Trail at Mollem (Bhagwan Mahavir WLS) 28 Oct:Morning: Travelled to Dandeli 28th Oct Afternoon - 3rd Nov afternoon: Dandeli WLS (also known

continued on page 38 >



Left, Crab spider *Thomisus* sp.; right, Scorpion Jumper *Bavia kairali*, female (Salticidae) with prey. Bottom left, male Banded Phintella Jumper *Phintella vittata*: bottom right, Crab spider (Thomisidae).





*The slow silent stalker
wading among the
fragrant lotus flowers*

■ A Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* hunts among the lotus flowers dotting the wide, still expanse of Carambolim lake.



Left, Crab spider (Thomisidae) on flower with bumblebee prey; center, Lynx spider (Oxyopidae) guarding egg-sac; right, Golden orb web spider *Nephila pilipes* (large female with small male) feeding on butterfly.





■ Giant forest scorpion
Heterometrus sp. on
laterite - the typical surface
rock of the Western Ghats.
Laterites are soil types rich
in iron and aluminium,
formed in hot and wet
tropical areas. Nearly
all laterites are rusty-red
because of iron oxides.



as Anshi-Dandeli Tiger reserve). 3 Nov: Evening: Reached back at Cotigao (stayed at Forest rest house), Spent time at the Butterfly garden at Cotigao. 4 Nov: Morning: Tree top area (Cotigao WLS), Trail around the Eco-tourism complex. Evening: Spent time at the Butterfly garden at Cotigao, Night drive in the sanctuary buffer zone. 5 Nov: Morning: Tulshimol area (Cotigao WLS) Evening: Spent time around the Eco-tourism complex, travelled back to Nature's Nest. 6 Nov: Morning: Bondla WLS 7 Nov: Morning: Boat Safari in Dr.Salim Ali bird sanctuary, visit to Carambolim Lake. 8 Nov: Morning: Visit to Carambolim Lake.

Quite a tour-de-force, wasn't it? And yet - given the gentle, rolling nature of the landscape - we never really exhausted ourselves or felt fatigued, quite the opposite. But what did we actually see and photograph in the mystical forests of the Western Ghats? A detailed species-by-species answer in our next issue... ●

**DON'T MISS THE SECOND
INSTALLMENT OF OUR
WESTERN GHATS STORY –
COMING IN APRIL 2014 ON
ISSUE 14 OF ANIMA MUNDI –
ADVENTURES IN WILDLIFE
PHOTOGRAPHY!**



Far left, Long-spinnered Bark Spider *Hersilia* sp.; left, a highly cryptic *Cyrtarachne* sp. spider (Araneidae).



■ Left, a close-up portrait of the large and exceedingly common Golden orb web spider *Nephila pilipes*; right, a macro portrait of a Fulvous Forest Skimmer dragonfly *Neurothemis fulvia* at rest. The Western Ghats environment offers countless opportunities for macrophotography.





■ Left, a colorful Signature spider *Argiope anasuja*; right, a large specimen of Orb-weaving spider *Parawixia dehaani*. An immense variety of arachnids is represented in the Western Ghats.



*Noisy and ungainly
yet the Hornbill is
undeniably beautiful*



A beautiful Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus* in the forest canopy of the Dandeli reserve, along the Cali river.



■ Top left, White-rumped Shama
Copsychus malabaricus;
 top right, Red-whiskered Bulbul
Pycnonotus jocosus.
 Bottom left, a male
 Scarlet Minivet
Pericrocotus flammeus;
 bottom right, Crimson-backed sunbird
Nectarinia minima.





A large Muger or Indian crocodile *Crocodylus palustris* on a rainy day on the shores of the Cali river, in Dandeli. Muggers can be approached relatively close here.



The Surla waterfall roars in the distance, seen from the Tambdi Surla plateau. Chorla Ghat is located on the intersection of the borders of the States of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra.



Left, Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus* in the Dr. Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary; center, a pair of Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* in Bondla; right, a portrait of the ubiquitous Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* in the Cotigao forest.



*An elegant necklace of shiny scales
uncoiling in the shade of the forest*



Another lucky encounter ■
in the Cotigao Sanctuary,
this time with a large and
beautiful (but sadly rather
uncooperative) Forsten's Cat
snake *Boiga forsteni*.



■ A truly stunning Malabar pit viper *Trimeresurus malabaricus* in its turquoise-mint green color phase, one of the most beautiful among the many different liveries of this venomous and highly variable endemic species of the Western Ghats. We photographed this individual in Chorla Ghat.





■ Far left, caterpillar of Lime butterfly *Papilio* sp. cf. *P. demoleus*; center, caterpillar of Common Palmfly butterfly *Elymnias hypermnestra*; right, Caterpillar of Common Crow butterfly *Euploea core*.



The highly cryptic Hump-nosed pit viper *Hypnale hypnale* is extremely common in the Western Ghats. This is a small but potentially dangerous species.



Left, a forest landscape in the Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary - the open nature of the environment is readily apparent. Right, the endemic Malabar pit viper *Trimeresurus malabaricus* shows to advantage its exceptionally cryptic brown-phase livery.





■ Hazy with dust during the winter dry season and foggy or overcast during the summer rainy season, the open, wide-ranging forest landscapes and vistas of the Ghats are nevertheless always beautiful.

■ An extreme close-up portrait of a Bamboo Pit viper *Trimeresurus gramineus*. This beautiful woodland species is not easily observed thanks to its very efficient cryptic coloration. Notice the deep heat-sensing loreal pit between the nostril and the eye.



Left, snake-mimicking caterpillar of Common Mormon butterfly *Papilio polytes*; center, tree bark-mimic caterpillar of a Lasiocampidae moth; right, snake-mimic caterpillar of Malabar Raven *Papilio dravidarum*.



■ Indian fat-tailed gecko
Eublepharis fuscus in the
rocky escarpments of the
Yoor hills in Sanjay Gandhi
National Park. Located
in the Thane district, this
protected area is easily
accessed and visited
from Mumbai.

*A natural paradise within easy
reach from a crowded metropolis*



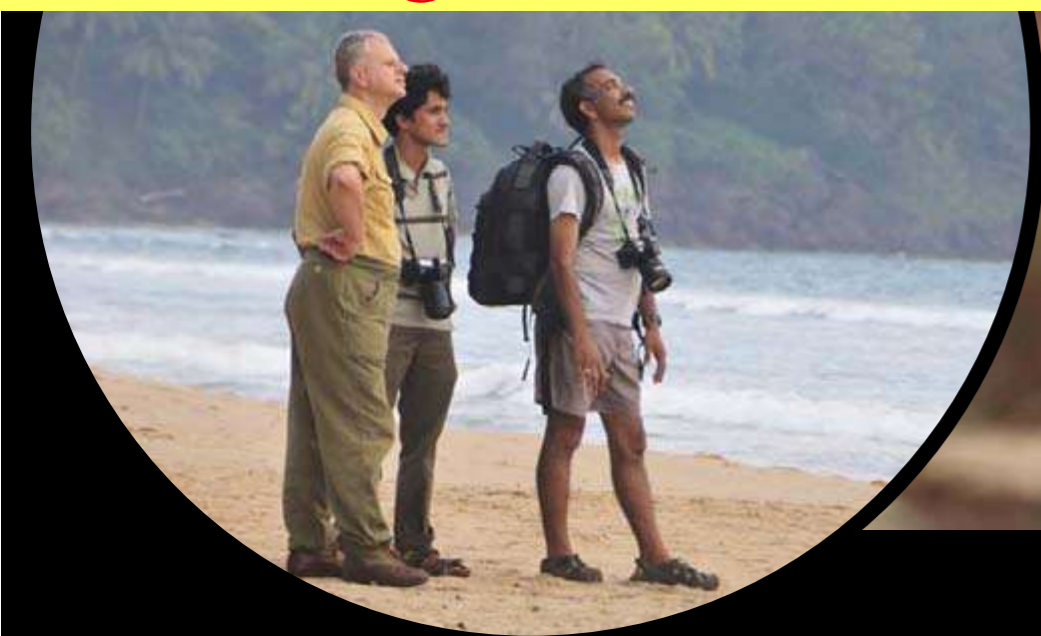


Left, a large and truly beautiful Indian or Spectacled Cobra *Naja naja* rears up in alarm on the rocky, forested slopes of the Yoor hills, near Thane.
Right, a Roux's Forest Calotes or Roux's Forest Lizard *Calotes rouxii*, an endemic species, preys on a cicada in the Cotigao forest.



At-a-glance travel guide

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION: **INDIA**



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: If your international flight lands in Mumbai you'll have to spend - at the very minimum - one night there. From Mumbai one can later fly via domestic airlines to Goa or get there by night train, but both options need to be booked well in advance. Domestic flights are often subject to long delays and sudden cancellations, so the train option might be a bit safer, and it is certainly more colorful. If at all possible, try to land directly in Goa instead - the lodge's staff will be at the airport to pick you up and drive you to destination. Once again, it is well worth repeating that a local organizer or travel agency might prove invaluable to avoid trouble - we secured the help of our photographer friend **Yuwaraj Gurjar**.

MEANS OF TRANSPORT: Forget about renting a car and driving yourself around the Ghats. It's much cheaper - and safer - to be driven around by the lodge's staff and wildlife guides. Daily activities include long, easy walks along well-kept trails inside open forests in several select locations, including a number of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. The local wildlife guides are exceptionally well prepared and will do their utmost to provide you with the sightings you desire. Expect rocky, uneven terrain and the occasionally wet or steep stretch.

CURRENCY: Indian Rupee - it is highly advisable to change Euros or USD well in advance in Goa or

Mumbai as later on you will have little or no possibility to change your money in the local currency.

ACCOMODATION: If chosen with care, lodges in the Ghats are generally basic but exceedingly clean and very well kept, offering safe, tasty local food and providing highly professional wildlife guides. We can certainly and safely recommend **Canopy's Nature Nest**, which is sited in a strategic position near Goa - offering lots of wonderful itineraries in the area and beyond. It is a very simple place (no hot water), but the bungalows are airy and clean, the staff is wonderful and very helpful and the food is excellent (and safe - very important in India!).

A destination which rivals the Amazon in terms of biodiversity



FOOD: India is one of the very few countries in the world whose spectacular food can be compared in variety, taste and complexity to Italian cuisine. It is also a vegetarian's paradise! Staple food items include *dhaal* (lentils), *roti*, *naan* or *chapati* (flat bread), *aloo paratha* (bread filled with potatoes) and of course an enormous variety of curries, from very mild to exceptionally hot. Being close to Goa, resorts in the Ghats can also occasionally offer fish and prawn dishes. Don't be prejudiced and experiment - Indian food is pure heaven!

LANGUAGE: Hindi and a lot of local dialects, but English is commonly spoken anywhere (except in the most remote rural areas).

WORRIES: None worth mentioning, but like in so many other places it's definitely better avoiding late night walks alone, especially if carrying expensive

camera or video equipment. Lone women might be occasionally harassed and petty theft may occur now and then even in the best resorts, so always carry your money and documents with you.

HEALTH: There's only one thing to seriously worry about anywhere in India in our long experience, and that is dysentery (or worse) from tainted water or street food. Always - repeat, always - insist on bottled water (to be opened in front of you), hot, freshly brewed tea or the occasional cold Coke. Hot spicy food can only be good for you - when properly prepared in a clean kitchen. Being in the forest, be also aware of the possibility of getting scorpions or venomous snakes in your bungalow at night.

CLIMATE: Exceedingly wet and humid during the monsoon season from June to September (the best time for reptiles, amphibians...and leeches) and

pleasantly warm/hot, reasonably dry during the dry season. Rains here can be truly, devastatingly torrential - generating huge waterfalls and lush vegetation but also heavy morning fog, possible travel disruptions and a measure of physical discomfort - so the choice is yours. If opting to visit during the monsoon, a raincoat/umbrella and rubber wellingtons will be absolutely mandatory.

BESIDES: With its exotic smells, flavors, sounds and colors India can truly represent an "alien world" to newcomers and cause a real culture shock to westerners - even today. Delays and bureaucracy can drive visitors out of their wits (getting a visa is costly and complicated), but the secret is taking everything as it comes - getting angry won't solve the problem but actually worsen it. This - in fact - is what makes India a traveller's paradise. We have been in love with the place for 25 years - trust us! ●

Experience the wilderness in India's Western Ghats



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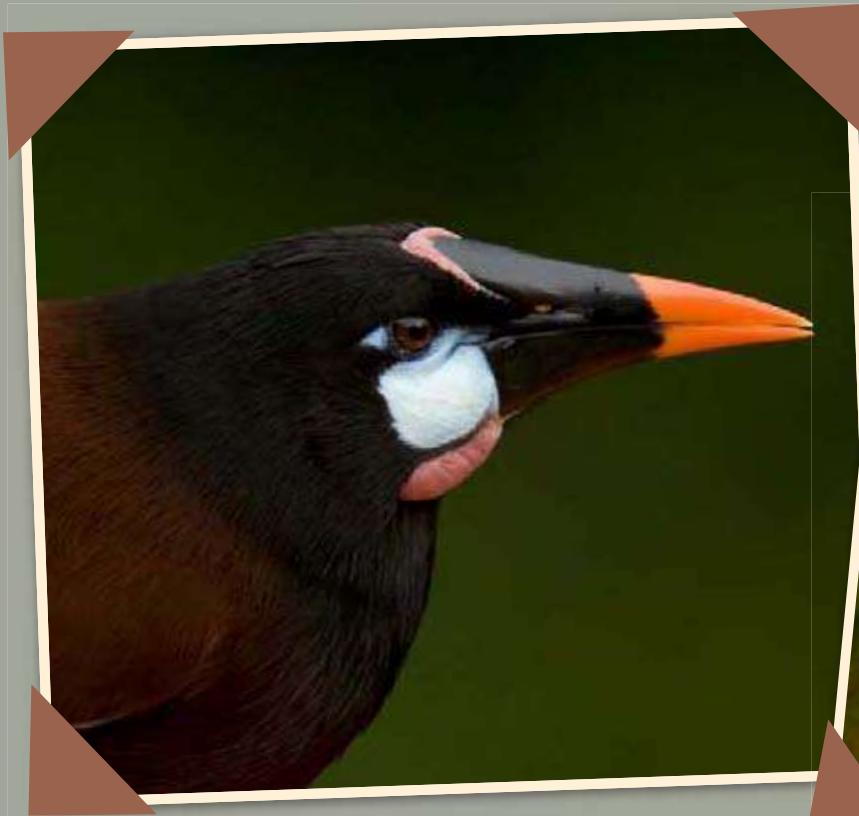
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Beauty of the Beast



A TRIBUTE TO *CARCHARODON CARCHARIAS*

WHITE SHARK, DARK WATER

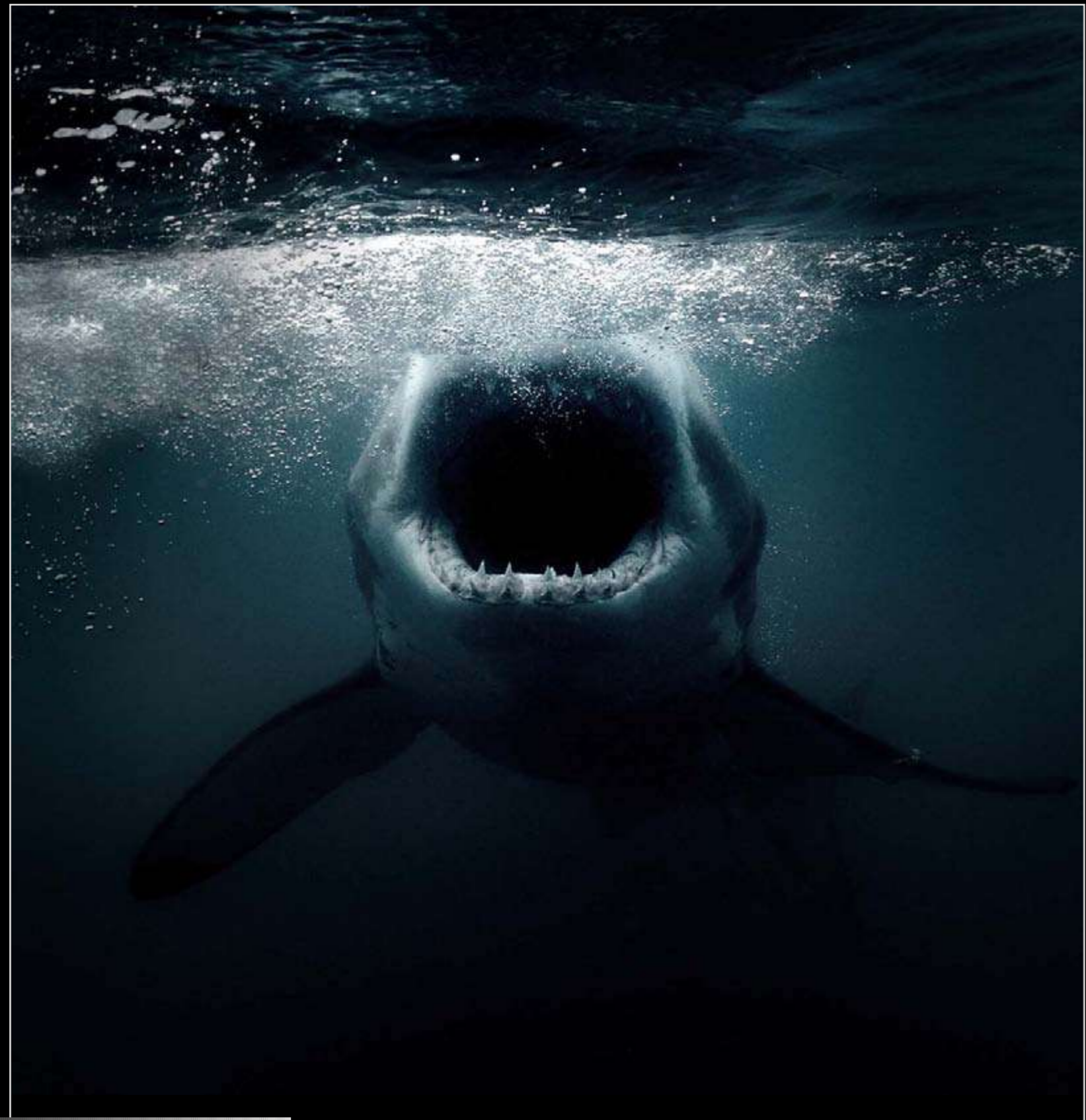
The raw power and exquisite evolutionary adaptation of this marine apex predator shine through a gallery of uniquely mesmerizing photographic portraits



The supreme predator

The Great White Shark *Carcharodon carcharias*, also known as the Great White, White Pointer, White Shark, or White Death, is a species of large lamniform shark which can be found in the coastal surface waters of all the major oceans. This species is arguably the world's largest known extant macropredatory fish, and is one of the primary predators of marine mammals. It is also known to prey upon a variety of other marine animals, including fish and seabirds. It is the only known surviving species of its genus *Carcharodon*, and is ranked first in having the most attacks on humans.

TEXTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY DR. DIRK SCHMIDT



A perfect bite

Great White Sharks, like many other sharks, have rows of serrated teeth behind the main ones, ready to replace any that break off. When the shark bites, it shakes its head side-to-side, helping the teeth saw off large chunks of flesh.

Is there "beauty" in a beast, a predator, one that hunts and devours prey with frightening efficiency? How do we define "beauty", or even a "beast"? Is there more than just the sheer beauty of design and evolutionary efficiency which has shaped the Great White Shark into one of the most awe inspiring creatures, and magnificent marine predators? This ancient predatory "beast" has adapted over millions of years of evolution and fine-tuning to a state, in the authors opinion, of near perfection. Their graceful torpedo-like shapes glide near effortless through the water, armed with sensory abilities able to detect weak electrical currents, movements, and the faint smell of passing prey. Predominantly a mid-water and surface feeder, they can dive to depths of more than 1000m in search of food. Their bodies, able to retain heat generated from their muscles, allow for explosive speed, at times leading to magnificent aerial breaches in the pursuit of prey. Highly selective in their prey selection, Great Whites prefer fish, cetacean and mammalian prey with high calorific values. Despite being found in most oceans around the world, they are considered rare with only a few isolated congregation sites having been identified. Some experts estimate that there are less than 7.500 of these sharks left in our seas, their slow maturity rates, and limited litter sizes has self-regulated these apex predators

over millions of years of evolution to remain in sync with their food sources. This very primordial self-regulation places the species under direct threat of extinction from human exploitation. Despite international protection, they are caught as millions of other sharks are, for their fins, to feed to an insatiable oriental appetite for shark fin soup, or for their jaws and teeth, to make jewellery and other trinkets. Migrating over thousands of miles between continents and along coastlines, they are exposed to the constant peril of fishing, passing millions of long-line hooks and hundreds of miles of nets as they transit along unknown migratory paths, only to return to the exact bay or congregation site months later. The Great White shark has mesmerized mankind for decades. Vilified through an era of *Jaws* movies, labelled as insatiable beasts, these predators remain largely misunderstood. Yet the "beauty" of this magnificent creature does not lie in the label of being a "beast" but in the sheer magnificence of its evolutionary perfection, its reproductive self-regulation in harmony within its environment, its enigmatic behaviour, its very survival and development through the eons of time. The Great White Shark is a magnificent, mysterious and misunderstood predator, and one of the oceans most ancient and beautiful "beasts".

www.whitesharkenigma.com



Surface raider

Great Whites live in almost all coastal and offshore waters which have water temperature between 12 and 24 °C (54 and 75 °F), with greater concentrations in the United States (Atlantic Northeast and California), South Africa, Japan, Oceania, Chile, and the Mediterranean. One of the densest known populations is found around Dyer Island, South Africa, where almost all of the shark research is done. Recent studies suggest the possibility of migrations and interaction between shark populations that were previously thought to have been discrete.



Full power

Male Great Whites reach maturity at 3.5–4.0 m (11–13 ft) long and females at 4.5–5.0 m (15–16 ft) long. Adults are 4–5.2 m (13–17.1 ft) long and have a mass of 680–1,100 kg (1,500–2,400 lb). Females are generally larger than males. This species can reach 6.1 m (20 ft) in length and 1,900 kg (4,200 lb)–2,268 kg (5,000 lb) in weight. It came into existence during the mid-Miocene epoch, as the earliest known fossils of *Carcharodon carcharias* are about 16 million years old. *Carcharodon* comes from the Greek words *karcharos*, which means “sharp” or “jagged”, and *odous*, which means “tooth”.



Unmatched elegance

Great Whites reach maturity around 15 years of age and can have a life span of over 30 years. The IUCN lists it as a vulnerable species included in Appendix II of CITES.



Night stalker

With a single bite a Great White Shark can take in up to 14 kg (31 lb) of flesh, and can also consume several hundred kilograms of food during a single feeding session.



Breaching at dawn

Hunting techniques shown by Great White Sharks vary according to the species of the prey. Off Seal Island, the sharks ambush brown fur seals from below at high speeds, hitting the seal mid-body. They go so fast that they can completely leave the water. The peak burst speed of these sharks is largely accepted in the scientific community to be above 40 kilometres per hour (25 mph). They have also been observed chasing prey after a missed attack. Prey is usually attacked at the surface.



The Look

Carcharodon carcharias is one of only a few sharks known to regularly lift its head above the sea surface to gaze at other objects such as prey. This is known as *spy-hopping*. This behavior has also been seen in at least one group of blacktip reef sharks, but this might have been learned from interaction with humans (sharks may also be able to smell better this way because smell travels through air faster than through water). White Sharks are generally very curious animals, display intelligence and may also turn to socializing if the situation demands it.



Death Loop

Great White Sharks are carnivorous and prey upon fish (tuna, rays, other sharks[]), cetaceans (dolphins, porpoises, whales), pinnipeds (seals, fur seals and sea lions), sea turtles, sea otters, and seabirds. Great whites have also been known to eat objects that they are unable to digest. Upon approaching a length of nearly 4 metres (13 ft), Great Whites begin to target predominately marine mammals for food, preferring prey with a high content of energy-rich fat.



Lunar Beauty

A Great White displays its unmistakable countershading, showing its white underside and grey dorsal area (sometimes in a brown or blue shade) that gives an overall mottled appearance. The coloration makes it difficult for prey to spot the shark because it breaks up the shark's outline when seen from the side. From above, the darker shade blends with the sea and from below it exposes a minimal silhouette against the sunlight.



Attack from below

A breach is the result of a high speed approach to the surface with the resulting momentum taking the shark partially or completely clear of the water. This is a hunting technique employed by Great White Sharks whilst hunting seals. This behavior often takes place on cape fur seals at Seal Island in False Bay, South Africa as sharks launch their predatory attack from the deeper water below. They can reach speeds of up to 40 kilometres per hour (25 mph) and can at times launch themselves more than 10 feet (3.0 m) into the air.



White thrust

Carcharodon carcharias' reputation as a ferocious predator is well-earned, yet they are not (as was once believed) indiscriminate "eating machines". They are ambush hunters, taking prey by surprise from below. Near Seal Island, in South Africa's False Bay, shark attacks most often occur in the morning, within 2 hours after sunrise, when visibility is poor. Their success rate is 55% in the first 2 hours, falling to 40% in late morning after which hunting stops.



Full speed roll

The Great White is an epipelagic fish, observed mostly in the presence of rich game, such as fur seals, sea lions, cetaceans, other sharks and large bony fish species. In the open ocean, it has been recorded at depths as great as 4,000 ft (1,200 m). These findings challenge the traditional notion about the Great White as being a coastal species. A similar study tracked a *Carcharodon carcharias* from South Africa swimming to Australia's northwestern coast and back, a journey of 20,000 km (12,000 miles) in under nine months.



A balance of power

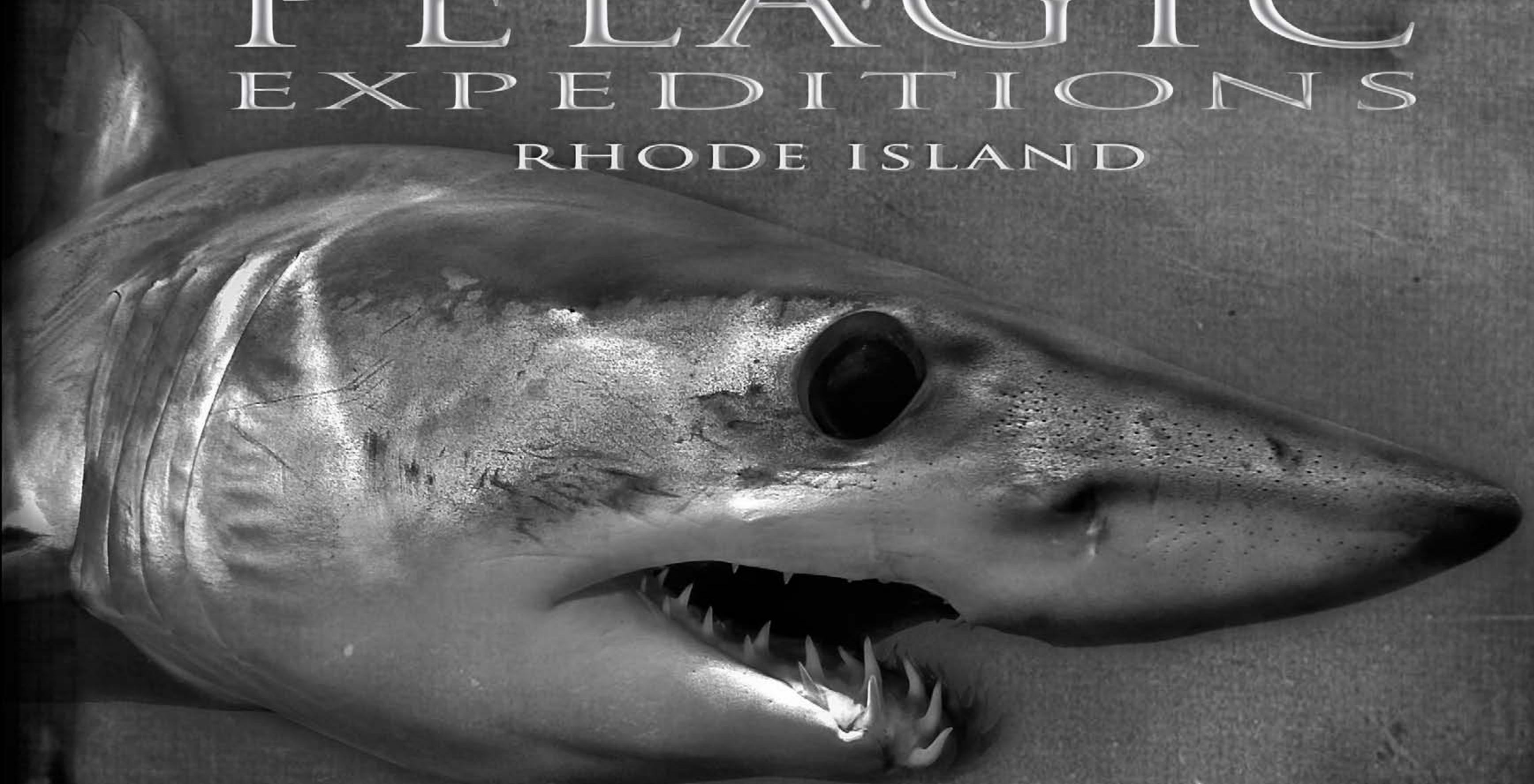
The species' behavior and social structure are not well understood. In South Africa, White Sharks have a dominance hierarchy depending on the size, sex and squatter's rights: females dominate males, larger sharks dominate smaller ones, and residents dominate newcomers. When hunting, they tend to separate and resolve conflicts with rituals and displays. White Sharks rarely resort to combat although some have been found with bite marks that match those of other White Sharks. This suggests that when another shark approaches too closely, they react with a warning bite. Another possibility is that Great Whites bite to show their dominance.



Awed by the breach

Great White Sharks - a relatively small one is seen here breaching - infrequently attack and sometimes even sink boats. Only five of the 108 authenticated unprovoked shark attacks reported from the Pacific Coast during the 20th century involved kayakers, however in a few cases they have attacked boats up to 10 metres (33 ft) in length. They have bumped or knocked people overboard, usually attacking the boat from the stern. In one case in 1936, a large shark leapt completely into the South African fishing boat *Lucky Jim*, knocking a crewman into the sea.

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Markus Braun: A Wildlife Photographer in his own words

My name is Markus Braun, I am 34 years old and I live in the beautiful city of Kehl on the German-French border in southern Germany (Baden-Wuerttemberg).

Since early childhood my interest was focused on insects and spiders, and at the age of 12, I started keeping tarantulas, scorpions and mantids. My passion for macro photography began at the beginning of 2006 when I purchased my first digital compact camera, a Panasonic DMC-FZ20, with which I made the first steps. The world that was opened to me was so fascinating that shortly after I bought a digital SLR, a macro lens and a tripod.

My main photo motives are especially focused on our native insects and spiders as well as plants and landscapes, which always find

their way on my memory card. A hallmark is that all macro shots were taken with natural lighting and have given me the nickname "Makrofetischist". I let my results feed into the local wild life conservation and offer regular photo excursions with workshops. My principles: *"My nature photos are nature documentations which always show the truth. Too much image editing and interventions on an image do not show the truth any more. Also moving an insect for the "perfect" isolation is an intervention in nature and does not show the truth a nature photographer should be obliged to"*.

Currently I use a Canon EOS 7D with Canon 100mm f / 2.8 USM and the Sigma 150mm f / 2.8 HSM on a Manfrotto Tripod with Ball Head.



Backyard Beauties

The elegant simplicity of a German macro photographer's local subjects prove that there is no need to travel to remote, exotic locations when looking for interesting creatures - with some patience and much passion they can be found right here, in our own gardens and meadows

<http://www.fotografie-markus-braun.de>



Parasitic Fly

Canon EOS 7D, 1/40 sec., f/8, ISO-400, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
This parasitic fly *Ectophasia crassipennis* was waiting for the sun to get warm. Kaiserstuhl (BW), Germany.



Marbled White and Green-veined White

Canon EOS 7D, 1/100 sec., f/6.3, ISO-500, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
A Marbled White *Melanargia galathea* and a Green-veined White *Pieris napi* sitting together on a yarrow (*Achillea*). Kehl (BW), Germany.



Chamaesphecia empiformis

Canon EOS 400D, 1/8 sec., f/10, ISO-200, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
A moth *Chamaesphecia empiformis* (Family Sesiidae). Kehl (BW), Germany.

Yellow Dung Fly
Canon EOS 400D, 1/3
sec., f/6.3, ISO-200, Sigma
Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
A Yellow Dung Fly
Scathophaga stercoraria
on a small flower.
Kehl (BW), Germany.





Alderflies mating

Canon EOS 400D, 1/8 sec., f/11, ISO-100, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
Mating Alderflies *Sialis lutaria* in typical mating pose. The male was attracted by scent. Rheinau (BW), Germany.

Banded Demoiselles

Canon EOS 400D, 1/13 sec., f/11, ISO-200,
Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8 + Extension Tubes, Tripod
Two Males of the Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*
chose the same flower to sleep. A rare moment, because
they are territorial. Rheinau (BW), Germany.





Two of a kind...

Canon EOS 7D, 1/80 sec., f/5, ISO-500, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod

These two Chalkhill Blue *Polyommatus coridon* chose the same *Achillea* inflorescence to sleep. Kehl (BW), Germany.

Goldenrod Crab Spider

Canon EOS 400D, 1/30 sec., f/9, ISO-200, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod

A Goldenrod Crab Spider *Misumena vatia* with its catch - a Green-veined White. Kehl (BW), Germany.





Fresh Darter
Canon EOS 400D, 1/15 sec., f/10, ISO-200, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod. Darter (possibly *Sympetrum striolatum*?) emerging as an adult. Kehl (BW), Germany.

Wasp Spider spiderling
Canon EOS 7D, 1/10 sec., f/5.6, ISO-100, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod. A little spiderling of the Wasp Spider *Argiope bruennichi* waiting for its prey. Typical for this species is the zigzag shape called the *stabilimentum* at the center of the web. Kehl (BW), Germany.





Banded Demoiselle

Canon EOS 400D, 1/3 sec., f/11, ISO-200, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod

A male of the Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens* spreading its wings like a helicopter. Kehl (BW), Germany.



Neighborhood

Canon EOS 7D, 1/30 sec.,
f/6.3, ISO-200, Sigma
Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
Seven-Spot Ladybird
Coccinella septempunctata
and a Blue-tailed Damselfly
Ischnura elegans on a young
Poppy. Kehl (BW), Germany.

Ichneumonid Wasp

Canon EOS 7D, 1/20 sec.,
f/10, ISO-400, Sigma
Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
This beautiful Ichneumonid
Wasp *Cosmoconus*
nigriventris I found near
the river Rhein.
Kehl (BW), Germany.



Blue-tailed Damselfly

Canon EOS 400D, 1/200 sec., f/6.3, ISO-200, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
A Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* eating a Caddisfly. Kehl (BW), Germany.



European Praying Mantis

Canon EOS 7D, 1/80 sec.,
f/8, ISO-100, Sigma Macro
150mm 2.8, Tripod
This female of the European
Praying Mantis *Mantis
religiosa* was watching my
steps. This fascinating insect
is very rare in Central
Europe and on the IUCN
Red List of Threatened
Species as a vulnerable
species. Kaiserstuhl (BW),
Germany.

Tachina Fly

Canon EOS 7D, 1/2 sec.,
f/11, ISO-100, Sigma
Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
A Tachina Fly (Family
Tachinidae) sitting on a
Zebrina detrita snail.
Kaiserstuhl (BW), Germany.



Thick-Legged Flower Beetle

Canon EOS 7D, 1 sec., f/6.3, ISO-100, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod
A Thick-Legged Flower Beetle *Oedemera nobilis* is waiting for the sun to dry the dew drops. Only males have the thick legs. Kehl (BW), Germany.





Robber Fly
*Canon EOS 7D, 3.2 sec.,
f/8, ISO-100, Sigma Macro
150mm 2.8 + Extension
Tubes, Tripod.*
Robber Fly (Family *Asilidae*)
with some dew drops on it.
Kehl (BW), Germany.



Mayfly
*Canon EOS 7D, 1/5 sec.,
f/10, ISO-100, Sigma
Macro 150mm 2.8, Tripod*
Mayfly *Ephemera vulgata*
with fine dew drops at
sunset. Kehl (BW), Germany.



Small Heath

Canon EOS 7D, 0.8 sec., f/6.3, ISO-100, Sigma Macro 150mm 2.8 + Extension Tubes, Tripod
A very wet Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* waiting for the sun. Kehl (BW), Germany.



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Trip Report

A PHOTO TREK TO PANGOT AND SAT TAL

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BIRDS OF HIMALAYA

India's Caesar Sengupta travels to the wooded foothills close to Corbett National Park in search of rare avian subjects



Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata*

This species is found in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Opening spread: **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*, a large and imposing raptor of the Himalayan foothills.



Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos hyperythrus*
 Found in the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia, ranging across Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, North Korea, South Korea, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, and Vietnam.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
 BY DR. CAESAR SENGUPTA

I can't recall when I had fallen asleep. Woke up with a few cold raindrops wetting my nose tip. Could feel a gush of cold air as I looked out of the window. The car was adequately speeding on the hilly road. I looked at my watch... it was 6:30 am in the morning and we had reached Kathgodam. The fresh morning air had an earthen smell typically reminding that it rained just sometime back. While the feel was quite intoxicating, it was difficult to avoid the obvious worry of the possibility of the rains spoiling the entire trip because we were on one of our major birding expeditions... Pangot and Sat Tal, for the birds of the Himalayas.

Birding in the forests of the Western Ghats had become almost a routine weekend exercise. Trip reports of Rakesh Dhreshwar and Clement Francis had already created enough inquisitiveness about the Himalayan avian fauna. This exclusive birding expedition was planned almost 2 months back over a cup of coffee while returning from Karjat to Mumbai. Availability of leaves was a challenge for each of us and it wasn't until late we could get a confirmation from all three members. Getting geared up with better gadgets, although was on the books, but wasn't a feasible option at least for me, when the decisions were dwindling. Except for Parag, who was loaded with his brand new 7D and 500 mm prime, the rest two of us,

me and Amit, somehow managed with our existing gadgets and Parag, in a state of elation with his 500 mm was ready to lend his 100 – 400 mm to me for the entire trip and my job was done.

The flight was sufficiently delayed... we were the 9th in the queue on the runway. Sitting inside the aircraft, dreaming about the next few days of absolute bliss, I was feeling dizzy. Woke up with a jerk and realized that we had waited for almost an hour in the runway itself before we actually flew. By the time we reached Delhi airport, it was almost midnight. There weren't any plans to halt for the night. Against all apprehensions, our driver was waiting for us. "Good evening, sir" he greeted. Amit lighted a cigarette. "It would take 8 / 9 hours to reach Pangot" ... our driver declared... a long overnight drive was anticipated. A comfortably spacious Toyota Innova ensured that the luggages were adequately placed at the back and we had enough advantage to fall asleep fast. I didn't realize when I slept and woke up with the few cold raindrops wetting my nose tip... Kathgodam.

Jungle Lore birding camp of Pangot was a surprise package. We could see only a signboard and no resort in the vicinity as the car stopped. Soon I realized that the resort has been constructed nestled in the slope of the hill and one needs to walk

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Scanning the slopes

Bird and wildlife guide Hari Lama checks the wooded valleys of the Himalayan foothills through his binoculars.



Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*

Found in temperate forests and subtropical or tropical moist montane forests in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam.

down for a few steps to reach the reception. As soon as we stepped in, the warm welcome by the staff got added to the list of the feel good factors. I had seen a resort for the very first time, which is exclusively made for birding. The moment I stepped in, I saw the attic. I walked up and checked the attic. It could accommodate two extra people and I decided to have my bed there. The wooden cottage had an elusive internal furnishing which gave a very magical wild feel. A cup of hot coffee added to the magic. By the time the coffee was over, I had already fitted the lens on the body for the next few days. "Good morning sir... we can leave if you are ready" ... someone called from behind. We turned to meet the most highlighted member of the entire trip ... it was Hari Lama, our guide, a complete encyclopedia for the local birds.

Pangot is a small village 15 km from Nainital, 50 km from Kathgodam and 80 km from the very well known Corbett National Park... very picturesque. Lama said – "We shall go to the woodpecker point first" and we started our birding trip of Pangot.

The location where Lama took us was quite interesting. No sooner had I got down from the car and got busy gearing up my gadget mounting on the tripod, I heard Lama passing a loud whisper to us – "Woodpecker ... ekdum Nazdeeg me" (meaning "Woodpecker... very near"). We rushed

towards him and he was pointing towards a tree branch. A beautiful magically coloured Rufous Bellied Woodpecker was sitting on a low branch for the welcome shoot. We shot for more than twenty minutes only to realize that there were so many of them around... and we spread out. The quarrel of the White-throated Laughing Thrushes vibrated all throughout the forest canopy as we moved up the hills. A Great barbet was calling constantly from a distance. A pair of Rufous-bellied Woodpeckers was playing around on the tall tree in front of me. I was watching the pair for quite sometime... suddenly a Verditer flycatcher flew passed to draw my attention. I saw Parag with his camera tracking its movement. I turned towards the woodpeckers... they were gone. I heard some chirping behind... a Brown-fronted Woodpecker was knocking its beak hard against the wood wall of a tree, I hardly could recognize. Clicked a few photographs and it gave me adequate time to place my tripod from at least three different positions. Wasn't sure about the outcome... I had clicked quite a few pictures; the results had made me happy later on.

We had spent quite some time there. Started feeling hungry and had to return to the base camp. After a not so heavy lunch, we were ready again for the evening session of birding and this time we had to drive for quite a distance to reach a sort of open area and the area was studded with Red-billed Blue

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White-throated Laughing Trush *Garrulax albogularis*

Found mainly in the northern regions of the Indian Subcontinent, primarily the Himalayas, and some adjoining and disjunct areas. It ranges across Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Tibet and Vietnam. Its natural habitat is subtropical or tropical moist montane forests.



Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides*
 Found across much of the Indian Subcontinent, all through the Himalayas, the plains and Western Ghats of India in the cold months, and also extends eastwards into Bangladesh, and to Arakan and the Tenasserim Hills in Myanmar.

Magpies. A few Grey bush chats chirping here and there and one or two Himalayan Bulbuls kept us busy till it was dark enough to pack up the camera. So many lifers (as we call it – a bird which you are likely to see only once in your lifetime) on the very first day, was a bit unexpected and we were quite elated while returning to the resort. A chat over an evening cup of hot coffee, creating the bird list for the day one, downloading the images on laptop, trying to find out a free charge point for the battery ... it was dinner time before even we realized.

We were not quite finished with Pangot and next morning we went further ahead... in search of Cheer Pheasant. I don't think even the slightest glimpse that I could get of the elusive Cheer Pheasant would have been possible without Lama. That man has eagle eyes. "Look sir!" he pointed out his fingers. They were difficult to spot even with binoculars but the glimpse was enough to make all of us happy. Whiskered Yuhinas kept coming again and again to the branch on the slope of the elevation we were standing on... and suddenly I saw the long awaited Himalayan Griffon. I always wanted an image of this bird, with the valley in the backdrop and the Griffon in flight... ah a dream shot it could have been. But I shook. ... On the way back, we thought of paying a visit to the woodpeckers again.

We had planned to move to Sat Tal after the

lunch. Pangot is totally disconnected from the rest of the world as there are only a few selected patches where one could find network signal. On the way, we stopped at Nainital. Amit had to withdraw some cash, Parag had to take a few antacids and I had to call home. Lama reminded of the Nainital dumping ground before we proceeded to Sat Tal and to our surprise, the dumping ground gave us ample opportunities to photograph so many Steppe Eagles in flight. Honestly speaking this was my first close shot of a Steppe. By the time we reached Sat Tal, it was already evening. I saw a Lesser Yellow-naped Woodpecker, stilling on the tree trunk just front of me but light conditions weren't sufficiently worth taking the effort of unpacking the gadgets. We reached the Sat Tal birding camp resort. Located at a 4400 feet altitude in the village of Bhakgtura. This was a tent accommodation this time. Interior was quite impressive, with a cozy bed; hot water supply and a modernized shower in side the tent were something that I could not presume at the first glance. Talks, jokes and laughter over high spirit dragged the evening a bit too long. The next day photography started by around 7 am in and around the resort. A Grey tree pie called with its shrilling voice. Lama knew he had to wait... maybe for hours. So did he. He had shown a place in the vicinity, where we spent almost 2 hours and some Bar-tailed Tree Creepers kept us busy while the Black-headed Jays were watching being ignored.

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Himalayan Black-lored Tit *Parus xanthogenys*
 A passerine bird in the tit family *Paridae*, a resident breeder in the Himalayas. It is an active and agile feeder, taking insects and spiders from the canopy.



Mountain Bulbul *Ixos mcclllandii*
 A songbird species in the family *Pycnonotidae* which ranges across the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia, and is not considered a threatened species by the IUCN.



Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*

A resident of the Himalayas and foothills of Northern India, Bangladesh, northern Indochina, Southeast Asia and Japan. It is a very large (41 cm) black and white kingfisher with evenly barred wings and tail.

I am sure they were jealous. We would have spent the whole day there if Lama didn't indicate that there were better places and we proceeded towards Laxman Tal. Although the place didn't look quite impressive in the beginning, we soon realized that we were missing something in life till date. This is the place where I had shot most of my photographs of the Pangot / Sat Tal trip and the most beautiful ones... thanks to Lama for showing me the studio... yes as I call it. We sat silently for almost eight hours and it wasn't tiring ... couldn't have been... as it was a lifetime experience of witnessing more than ten lifers (Ah ! I hope I explained what is lifer) in a single day... next day's agenda was already decided. This place was to be extracted as much as we could. We spent the entire next day too in the same place only to realize that the count of the lifers grew to eighty-one and we had identified 105 species by then. We were coming to an end of the dream journey to the Himalayas. We had our flights back to Mumbai booked for next day from Delhi. Can't recall when I had fallen asleep. Woke up with the loud honking of the TATA Sumo obstructing the way. Could feel a gush of hot air as I looked out of the window. The car was at a standstill. I looked at my watch... it was 11:30 am - we had reached Delhi.

Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica*
Commonly found across the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia.



Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*
Found in Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Tajikistan.



Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*
Has the longest tail of any corvid. It is 65–68 cm (26–27 in) long.



White-crested Laughing Thrush *Garrulax leucolophus*
Found in forest and scrub from the Himalayan foothills to Indochina.



Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*
This large bird is mainly found in mountain rivers and larger rivers in the foothills. It is commonly encountered in Corbett National Park.



Mountain Bulbul *Ixos mcclllandii*
A songbird species in the family *Pycnonotidae* which ranges across the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia.



Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*
This very elegant species is found in Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Tajikistan.



Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera*

Also known as the Blue-winged Siva, it is found in the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia, ranging across Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Tibet, and Vietnam. Its natural habitat is subtropical or tropical moist montane forests.



Yellow-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa flavirostris*
 The species ranges across the northern parts of the Indian Subcontinent including the lower Himalayas, with a disjunct population in Vietnam.



Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata*
 This beautiful species is found in subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests and subtropical or tropical moist montane forests.



Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

A small passerine bird in the white-eye family. It is a resident breeder in open woodland in tropical Asia, east from the Indian Subcontinent to Southeast Asia, extending to Indonesia and Malaysia. They forage in small groups, feeding on nectar and small insects.



Himalayan Woodpecker *Dendrocopos himalayensis*
 Found in the northern regions of the Indian Subcontinent, primarily the Himalayas and some adjoining areas, across Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan.



Lesser Yellow-naped Woodpecker *Picus chlorolophus*
 Widespread in tropical and sub-tropical Asia, primarily the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia.



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"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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The Parting Shot

Nowadays Pygmy Seahorses *Hippocampus bargibanti* are everybody's darlings among underwater photographers worldwide, but fifteen years ago - when we took this photograph - they were much of an unknown quantity. Nobody knew much about them, they were believed to be much rarer than they actually are, and finding one perched among a gorgonian's ramifications indeed made one's day. To be fully honest I've never been too keen on them - I find them rather ungraceful, and I've never liked

their warty, somewhat sickly-looking texture. But when we found this little fellow we were of course predictably very excited - I seem to remember this happened at a dive site called California Dreaming in the Lembeh Strait in Northern Sulawesi - and duly proceeded to do our best with it. These were the times before the joys of digital photography, and one had to be very careful and focused in expending the meagre 36 poses at one's disposal in one's much-loved Fuji Velvia 50 film roll. I took three or four shots

of the exceedingly tiny (about 10mm) subject, and this is the best one of them. By careful framing and probably a lot of luck, it gave the small creature the unmistakable look of a little clown - one can easily imagine two little ears, a puckered, lipstick-smeared mouth and even a little hat standing on its head! In the following years this very much-liked image has been published countless times in books and brochures, always provoking favourable comments - not a bad result for a subject we had little love for! ●

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SELOUS**

A Trip Report
from Tanzania's
celebrated
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The unique mutualism
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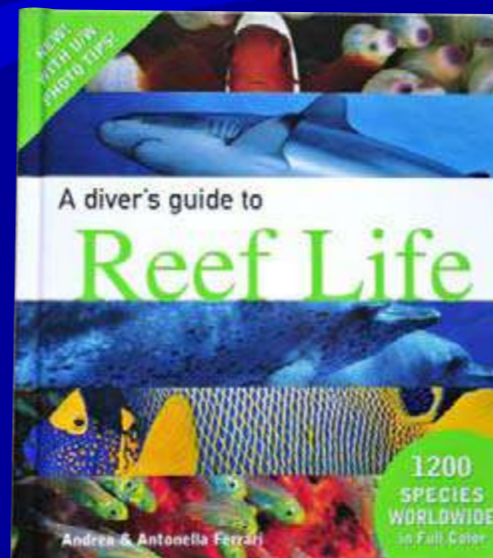


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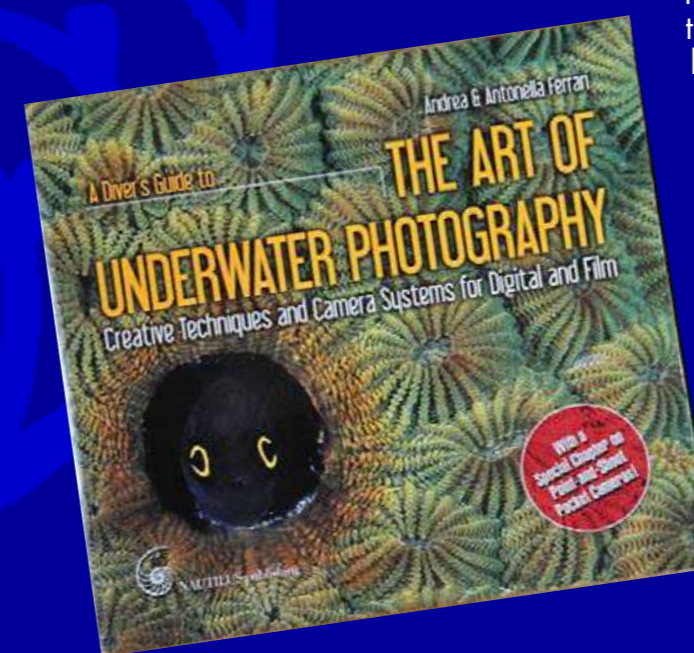
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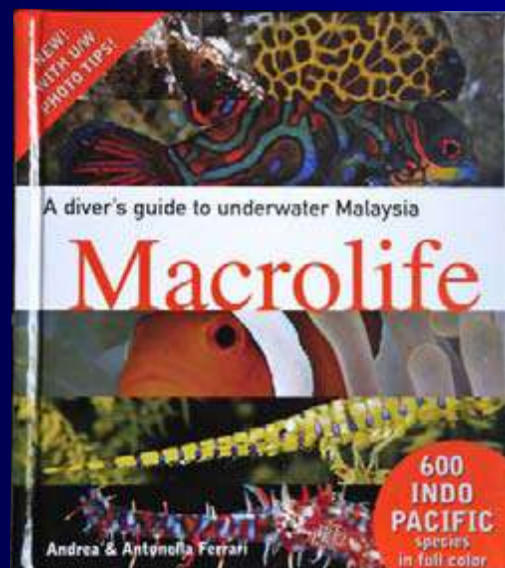
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