



ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

Issue 14, Year 4 - 2nd Quarter, April 2014

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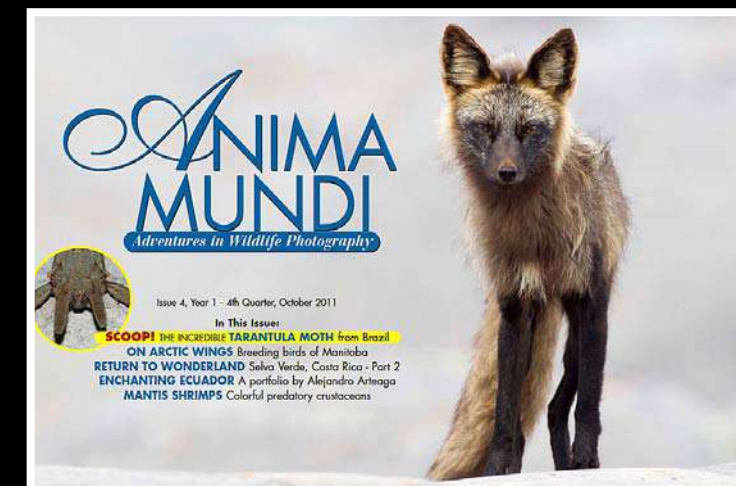
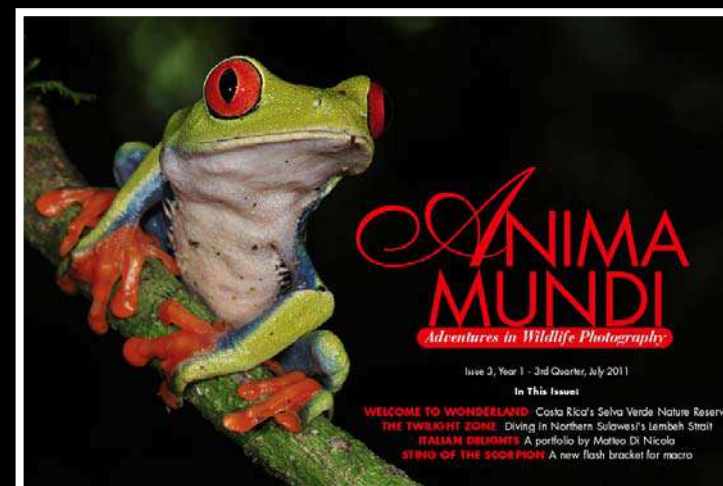
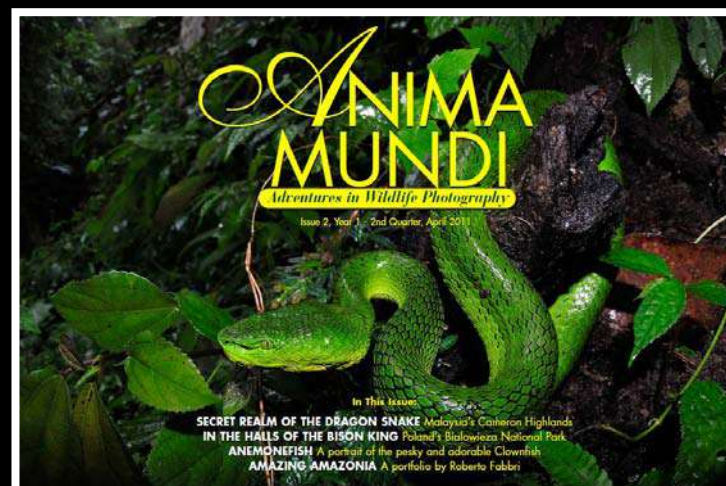
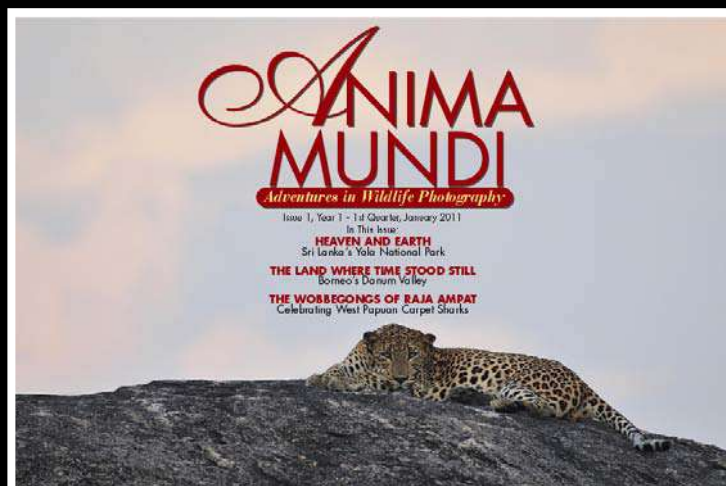
THE SECRET GARDENS - Part 2 India's Western Ghats

GEMS OF THE REEF Coral gobies

SPIDER MAN A Portfolio by Sameeran Nath

STUNNING SELOUS A Photo Trip Report

THE ODD COUPLE The Tarantula and the Frog

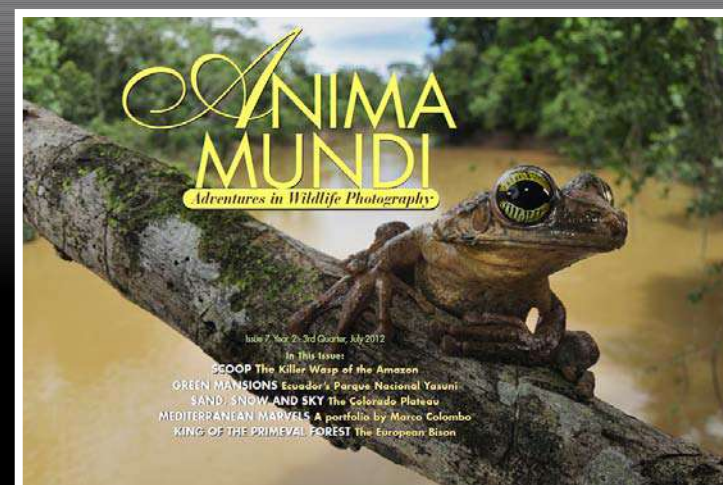
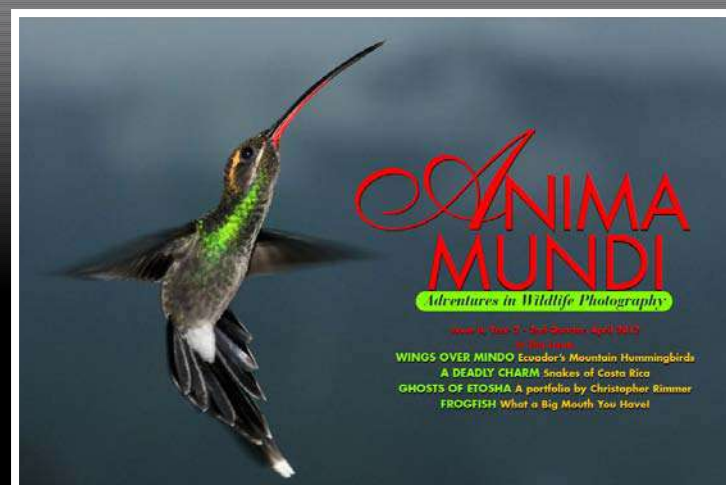


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Dear Andrea & Antonella,

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



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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■ The dazzling colors of this Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* from Tanzania introduce Scott Bennett's beautifully illustrated Trip Report from Selous Game Reserve, starting on page 86 of this issue.



ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

A Sense of Wonder

Welcome to a new amazing issue of ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography*! We are quite sure its fascinating contents will leave you in awe, as they did with us as we were putting it together during a cold, gloomy, wet Northern Italian winter - it's a veritable colorful cornucopia of nature's wonders.

But before you start reading it, let us remind you once again that the new upgraded version of our website at www.animamundimag.com now offers several amazing extra sections - ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography* is now a media partner of several societies, foundations and organizations which are actively involved in conservation, and you can now follow their updates on our home page. Check it out!

So what's in store for you in the following pages? Well, we start with an absolutely spectacular and surprising creature - the minuscule, rare and endangered Cyrano Chameleon *Calumma gallus* from Madagascar. Our thanks to our friends at TanalaHorizon for helping us in locating it and to Alexandra Laube for introducing us to its life history. Meet this enchanting species on page 4.

We then continue on page 11 with the second and final part of our extensive, heavily illustrated trip report from our expedition to the Western Ghats of India - a UNESCO World Heritage Site which is spectacularly rich in beautiful forested landscapes, meandering watercourses and an untold amount of fascinating animal species. The Ghats are still relatively little known as a wildlife photography destination (at least in the West), so we hope to have filled a serious gap here - enjoy our feature and visit them before it's too late.

On page 59 we then follow up with a visual tribute to a favorite underwater subject of ours - little known but spectacularly colorful and stunningly beautiful, the tiny Coral gobies found on

Indo-Pacific reefs make fantastic camera subjects for the discerning underwater photographer. We guarantee you'll be enchanted by their tiny, sequined liveries - and the hypnotic backgrounds we have photographed them on.

It's a big change of environment and habitat in the following pages as we then follow up with Sameeran Nath's Personal Portfolio on page 74 - meet the real Spider Man, as this very young Indian student and amateur macro photographer has a special (and stunningly successful) passion for Jumping spiders. We love his colorful, imaginative portraits!

On page 86 we then feature our second Trip Report from a freelancing contributor - this time it's the turn of Scott Bennett and his brief but fruitful expedition to the celebrated Selous Game Reserve of Tanzania, one of Africa's largest and less visited conservation areas. Not easy (and not cheap!) to get to, but you'll agree with Scott and us that it was definitely worth the trouble.

We finally round up this issue's contents with a truly fascinating, exclusive feature which sees Italian field researchers, wildlife photographers and scientific journalists Emanuele Biggi and Francesco Tomasinelli's first - and hopefully not last - contribution to our pages. It's the mind-boggling story of the oddball mutualistic relationship in the rainforest of South America between a tiny harmless frog and a giant predatory tarantula - still unexplained and absolutely fascinating (but skip it if you're squamish about big hairy spiders!).

So - as usual - there's a little bit of everything for everybody, and we dearly hope you'll enjoy the fruits of our labor. 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 welcome.
Please drop us a line at
editor@animamundimag.com

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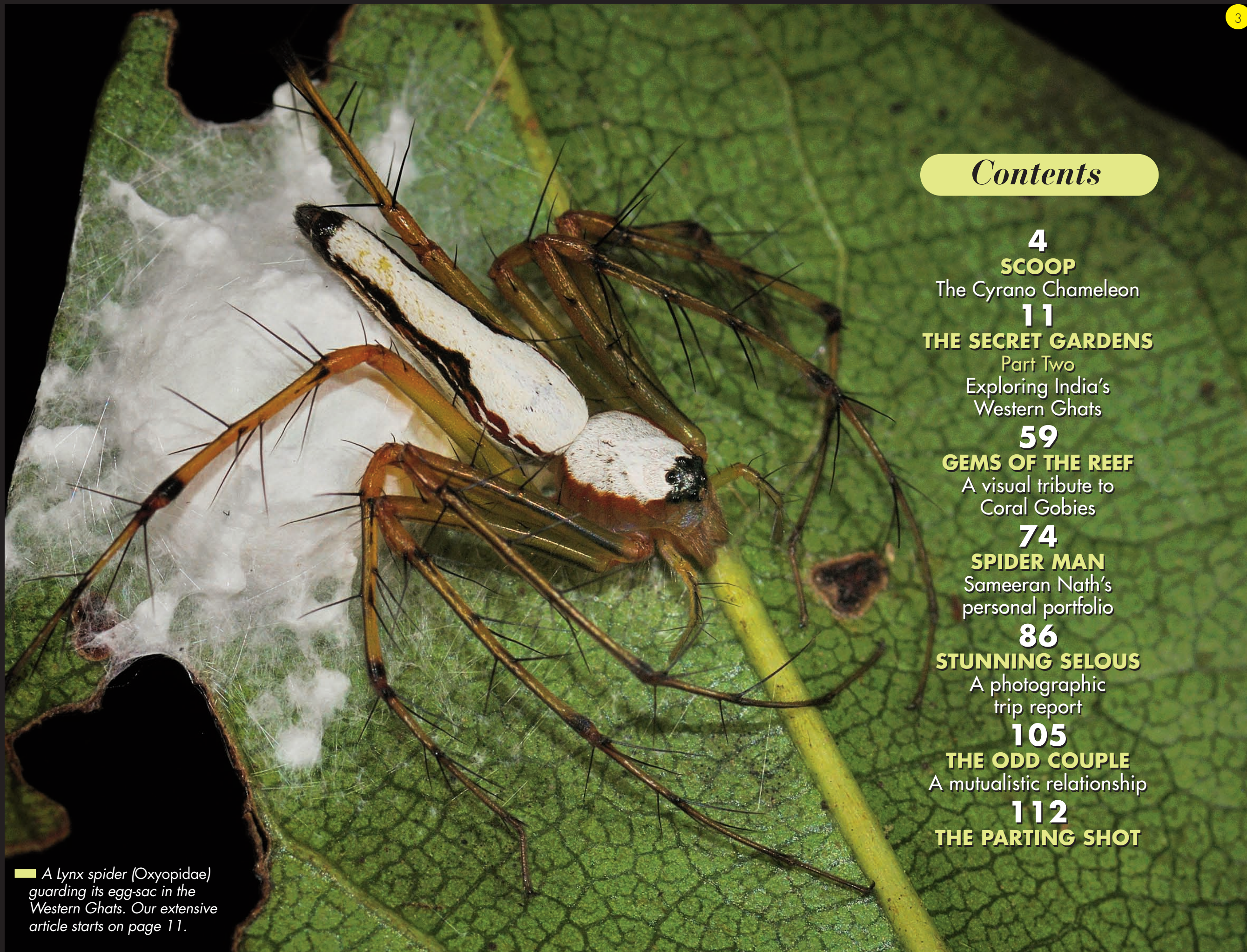
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■ A Lynx spider (Oxyopidae)
guarding its egg-sac in the
Western Ghats. Our extensive
article starts on page 11.

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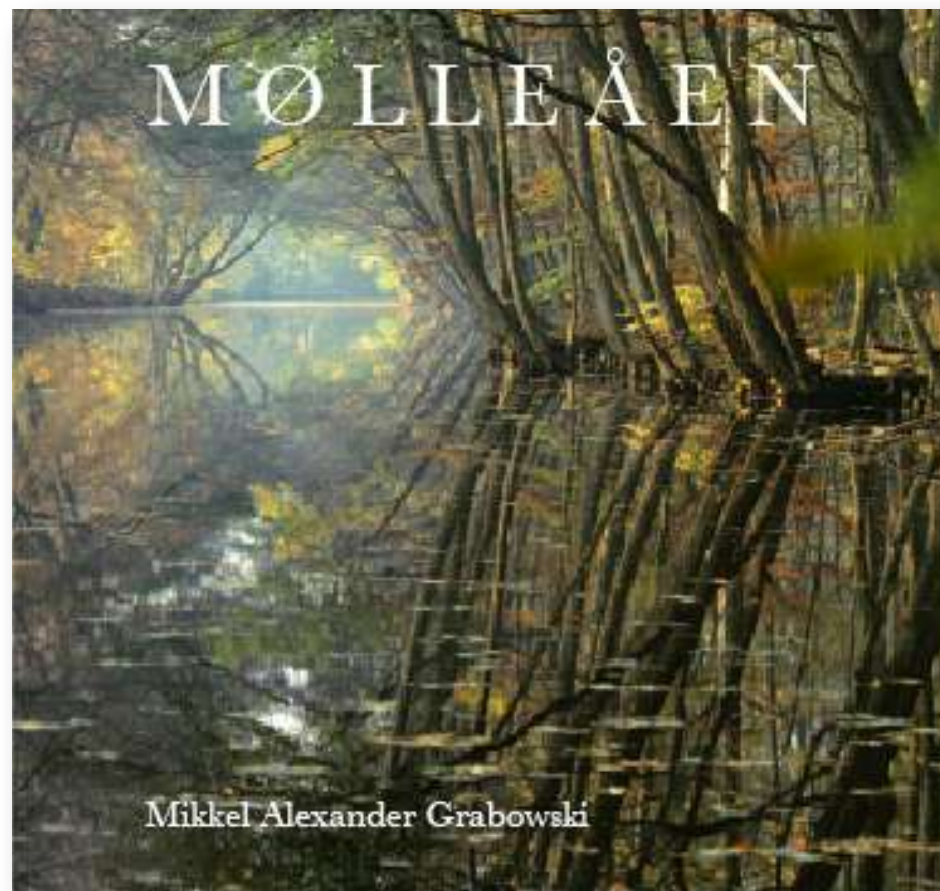
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A magical journey through Denmark's Mill Brook Dale...

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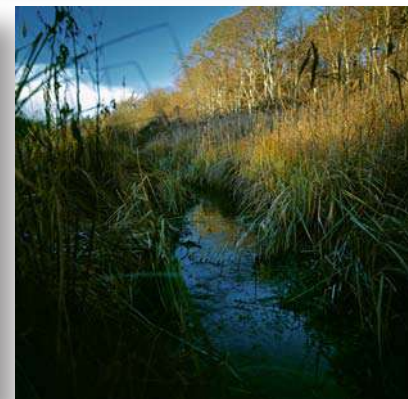
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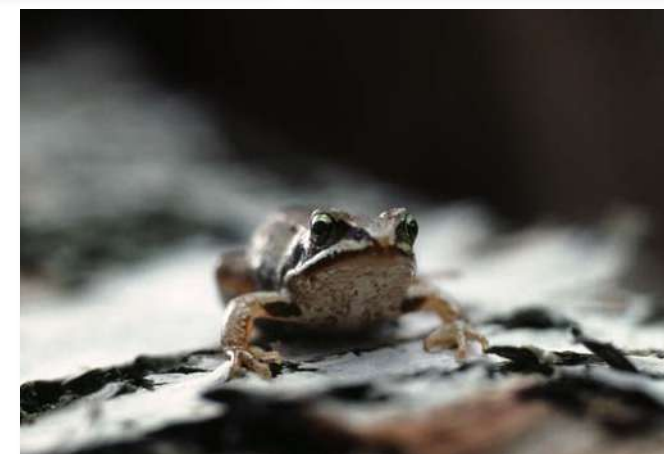
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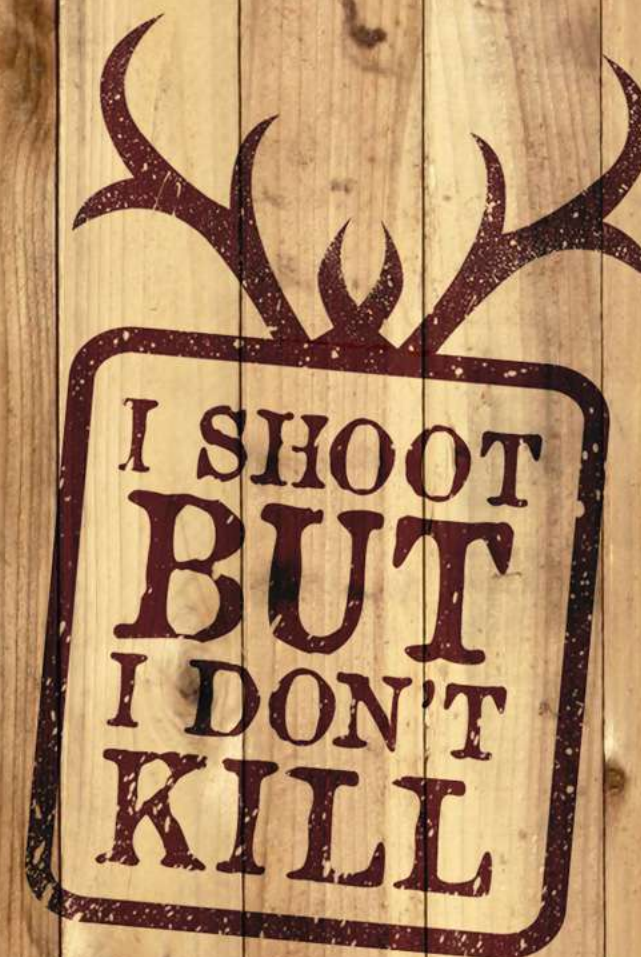


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TO TRAVEL IS TO LEARN.

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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A beautiful *Calumma gallus* male in a relaxed mood. This species has been assessed as Endangered by the IUCN as it inhabits approximately 3,909 square kms in the eastern forests of Madagascar, where there is a continuing decline in the forest habitat due to slash-and-burn agriculture, cattle grazing and timber extraction, and because it occurs as a severely fragmented population.

MADAGASCAR MARVEL **THE CYRANO CHAMELEON**

TINY, RARE AND ENDANGERED
**AN INCREDIBLY
BEAUTIFUL LIZARD**
FROM THE RAINFORESTS
OF THE RED ISLAND




This species is found in eastern Madagascar, in several areas including Ambavaniasy, Ampasimbe, Andekaleka, Betampona, Ile aux Prunes, Karianga, Lokomby, Mahanoro, Manombo, Vohidrazana and Zahamena.

TEXT BY ALEXANDRA LAUBE
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI


In the middle of nowhere in Eastern Madagascar, there lives an amazing tiny chameleon species hiding deep in dense bushes as well as 2 m up on the trees. We were lucky to have some great local guides to show us exactly the right place in late April, at the end of the rainy season, when most chameleon females are already pregnant and males still show their brightest colours. Several small areas in the region of Vohemana, near Andasibe, are home to the Cyrano chameleon *Calumma gallus*, and this is where - with some luck and even more patience - we could finally spot a few individuals of this amazing creature. *Calumma gallus* is a small and endangered chameleon species, which only lives in the mid-altitude rainforests of eastern

Madagascar in small fragmented relicts of its original habitat. When adult, they only reach a body length of 6 cm maximum, but especially males can show a firework of different colours to express their mood and impress us as silent visitors. When spotted, *Calumma gallus* appear mostly just grey or even dark brown – they're in anger. But wait a moment, let them calm down on a small branch and you'll see their real beauty: white with bright blue spots, changing in a few seconds back to a brownish colours seeing a predator or another male. The spear-like rostral appendage of males has a glowing pink tip, some blue dots and a green base colour - probably it's a sign to attract females, but no one really knows yet. Although they partially live inside

official National Parks, *Calumma gallus* is threatened by decline of its habitat. In Madagascar huge areas, even inside the Parks, are being burned down for agricultural land and used for cattle grazing. Another big problem is the illegal market for expensive and rare rainforest timber. And illegal chameleon trade (Madagascar has had a zero quota on export for this species for years) plays a bigger role every year - especially if exact GPS data of habitats were published somewhere (so we are not giving any!). Today, no one really knows how many individuals of this species are left in Madagascar - and for how long they will be able to survive in their small surviving habitats, separated from the rest of the population by insuperable barriers.




A portrait of an adult *Calumma gallus* male clearly shows the small size attained by this endangered species. Rainforest within its range, both intact and degraded, survives only as small isolated patches and is under continuing pressure. The population is therefore considered to be both severely fragmented and declining.




The colorful nose "horn" which has provided *Calumma gallus* with its colloquial nickname Cyrano Chameleon is immediately obvious here, but is only present on mature males.

A comparison
between the male (left
and bottom right photos)
and the female of the
species (top right photo)
clearly demonstrates
the strong sexual
dimorphism shown by
the Cyrano Chameleon
Calumma gallus.





— This species has been found in low elevation rainforest and degraded mid-altitude forest. The low-elevation humid forests and littoral forests this species occupies are at risk from accidental burning, degradation from cattle grazing, timber extraction for fuel, construction and charcoal production. The Cyrano Chameleon is of interest to the international pet trade, but this should not be considered a major threat at this time.



A frontal close-up portrait of the enchanting but highly endangered Cyrano Chameleon *Calumma gallus* showing its quirky, colorful nasal appendage - whose presence in adult males still baffles researchers.



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

The second half of our trip to one of the world's most rewarding "hotspots" for biodiversity - an uncrowded, beautiful, relaxing destination for wildlife and nature photography

■ The endemic
Malabar Pit viper
Trimeresurus malabaricus
in a highly cryptic
brown phase.

*Enchanted forests alive
with the sounds
of countless birds*

■ Golden-fronted Leafbird
Chloropsis aurifrons in
Dandeli, a hotspot for birds.





A quiet brook during the dry season in the hills above Goa. This is the perfect habitat for frogs, pit vipers and - with a lot of luck - King cobras.

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

In the first part of our trip to the Western Ghats report (see *ANIMA MUNDI - Adventures in Wildlife Photography* Issue 13) we have extensively described the environment of this enormous area, the itinerary we have taken across a small section of it and the means to follow in our footsteps for those so inclined. But what about the the actual reason which took us to the Ghats in the first place - ie the wildlife photography options? First of all, for those who are not familiar with several Asian destinations (including India and Sri Lanka) it is important to stress the fact that a great number of beautiful species - mostly reptiles, amphibians, birds and insects - can be readily observed and often photographed in most rural areas and close to human settlements. The scourge of "recreational hunting" as we sadly have to endure it in Europe and the USA is mostly unknown (and actually often forbidden) in most of India, and local cultures and traditions tend to protect or at least tolerate other living beings, especially outside of big cities. India and Sri Lanka - with their long-lived Hindu and Buddhist cultural ties to all forms of life in general - are particularly to be commended in this respect. Large mammals are perforce more difficult to see close to human settlements in rural areas - bears, leopards, tigers and elephants can be extremely dangerous and often become a source of problems to those living in their vicinity - but several species (think of Hanuman monkeys and macaques) can co-exist with humans and actually make a pest of themselves. This frequent proximity of wildlife - and the fact that protected areas and human settlements are intimately and inextricably linked in most of India, and especially so in the Western Ghats - is a great bonus for wildlife photographers, as one often does not even need to venture beyond a lodge's flower garden to find spectacular subjects. Another aspect of

continued on page 16 ➤

Indian Lorikeet
or Vernal Hanging Parrot
Loriculus vernalis.

■ The endemic
Malabar
Pit viper
*Trimeresurus
malabaricus* can
be encountered
in several color
phases - here
it can be seen
in a rather
uncommon
purple, grey -
green and
yellow livery.



*Spectacular species
still surviving
in today's India*

the Western Ghats wilderness is that most of the exploring is done on foot. Vehicles are exclusively utilized to reach a Wildlife Sanctuary's gate or to move from a protected area to the next, but to wander in search of interesting camera subjects one has to walk. Luckily most of the Ghat's forests we have visited have been very open and seasonally dry, much more so than actual rainforests - but one has to keep in mind that the matter changes completely during the photographically

fruitful monsoon season, when forest rivulets become raging streams, rocky trails become muddy and slippery and incredibly powerful downpours raise the humidity to stupendous levels in a matter of minutes. Most of the trails we have walked in our exploration of the Western Ghats have however proven - at least during the dry season - to be very easy, well-maintained and easily manageable by any reasonably fit person, and the local guides are not only highly responsible but also well-

■ A large Mugger or Marsh Crocodile
Crocodylus palustris rests on a sandbank
in the Cali (or Kali) river near Dandeli.

versed in scientific lore, which is a huge and unusual bonus. Given the nature of the environment - forested hills crisscrossed with rocky streams and rivulets, sun-baked, pebbly laterite plateaus, sluggish rivers and coastal marshland - a great variety of wildlife is to be expected, even when not easily photographed. Insect, spider and other arthropod life is exceptionally plentiful, both by day and by night - an easy stroll along a forested trail or road by night will provide great opportunities for large scorpions and spiders, and the gardens of the Forest Department

continued on page 20 ➤



■ *Indian Trinket snake*
Coelognathus helena
by a rock pool in the Yeoor
hills, a short distance
from Mumbai.



The forests of the Western Ghats at dawn (left) offer beautiful, atmospheric vistas. Top right, one of their wariest denizens, the Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*; bottom right, a Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*.



An impressive Dhaman
or Indian Ratsnake *Ptyas mucosus*
in the Yeoor hills
of Sanjay Gandhi
National Park





■ The Green Vine snake *Ahaetulla nasuta* is a harmless and extremely common species of the Western Ghats forest environment.

bungalows in Cotigao harbour a stunning variety of butterflies, caterpillars and praying mantids. Frogs - outside of the monsoon season - tend to stay close to wet, low-lying areas, and several interesting species can be easily found near clear forest streams. Snakes - normally exceptionally difficult to encounter elsewhere, even in the tropics - are surprisingly abundant and remarkably easy to find here, even during the day - barely a day passed without us encountering one or two Green Vine snakes *Ahaetulla nasuta* lying camouflaged among the low vegetation by the forest trails. Other species - such as cobras or pit vipers - may require more patience and a bit of luck, or the experience of a local guide. The region of Agumbe - which we plan to explore in the near future - is supposed to be very good for King Cobras *Ophiophagus hannah*

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Left, a wild Grey Langur *Semnopithecus dussumieri* - when not habituated to humans this species can be difficult to approach. Right, a surprise encounter on a forest trail with a Indian Jackal *Canis aureus indicus*, another common but very wary species.



*A deadly danger superbly
camouflaged among the rocks*

A large Russell's
Viper *Daboia russelii*,
one of the very few truly
dangerous species of the
Western Ghats.





■ Far left, an Oriental Garden Lizard - also known as Eastern Garden Lizard or Changeable Lizard - *Calotes versicolor* in the gardens of the Forest Department Bungalows in Cotigao; left, a rare find - the highly arboreal Ornate Flying snake *Chrysopelea ornata*.

encounters, as many stunning photos taken there can readily attest. Birds are exceptionally numerous too, with several spectacular species such as hornbills, sunbirds, trogons and parakeets: the Bondla road and the surroundings of the Old Magazine House in Dandeli stand out among many other similar sites regarding birdwatching and bird photography. Leisurely walks along the shores of lotus-filled Carambolim lake and a boat trip among the mangroves of the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary can also prove extremely satisfactory with good observations of ducks, egrets, herons, kingfishers, ospreys, darters and bee-eaters. Large mammals, as usual, can be much more difficult subjects. This is not the ideal place to look for Indian elephants, bears, tigers or leopards - some species are locally plentiful, but the thickly forested habitat and the occasional man-wildlife conflict make good sightings and photography outside of National Parks rather difficult. We had a huge leopard male by the side of the road one night, but it was gone in a split second - even before we could apply the brakes. Drives in Dandeli brought better luck with good sightings of Gaur *Bos gaurus* and Chital deer *Axis axis* - with some luck one has good chances to see also

continued on page 28 ➤



A male Common Mormon butterfly *Papilio polytes* in the gardens of the Forest Department bungalows in Cotigao.

*Endemic, highly
variable and
always beautiful*



A portrait
of a stunning Malabar Pit
viper *Trimeresurus malabaricus*
in a rare turquoise color phase.



Top left, Giant forest scorpion *Heterometrus* sp. in its burrow; top right, Forest crab, family *Gecarcinucidae*; bottom right, Indian Violet Tarantula *Chilobrachys fimbriatus*; bottom left, Indian Whip scorpion or Vinegaroon *Typopeltis* sp.





■ A sleeping Roux's Forest
Lizard *Calotes rouxii*,
an endemic species
of the Western Ghats.



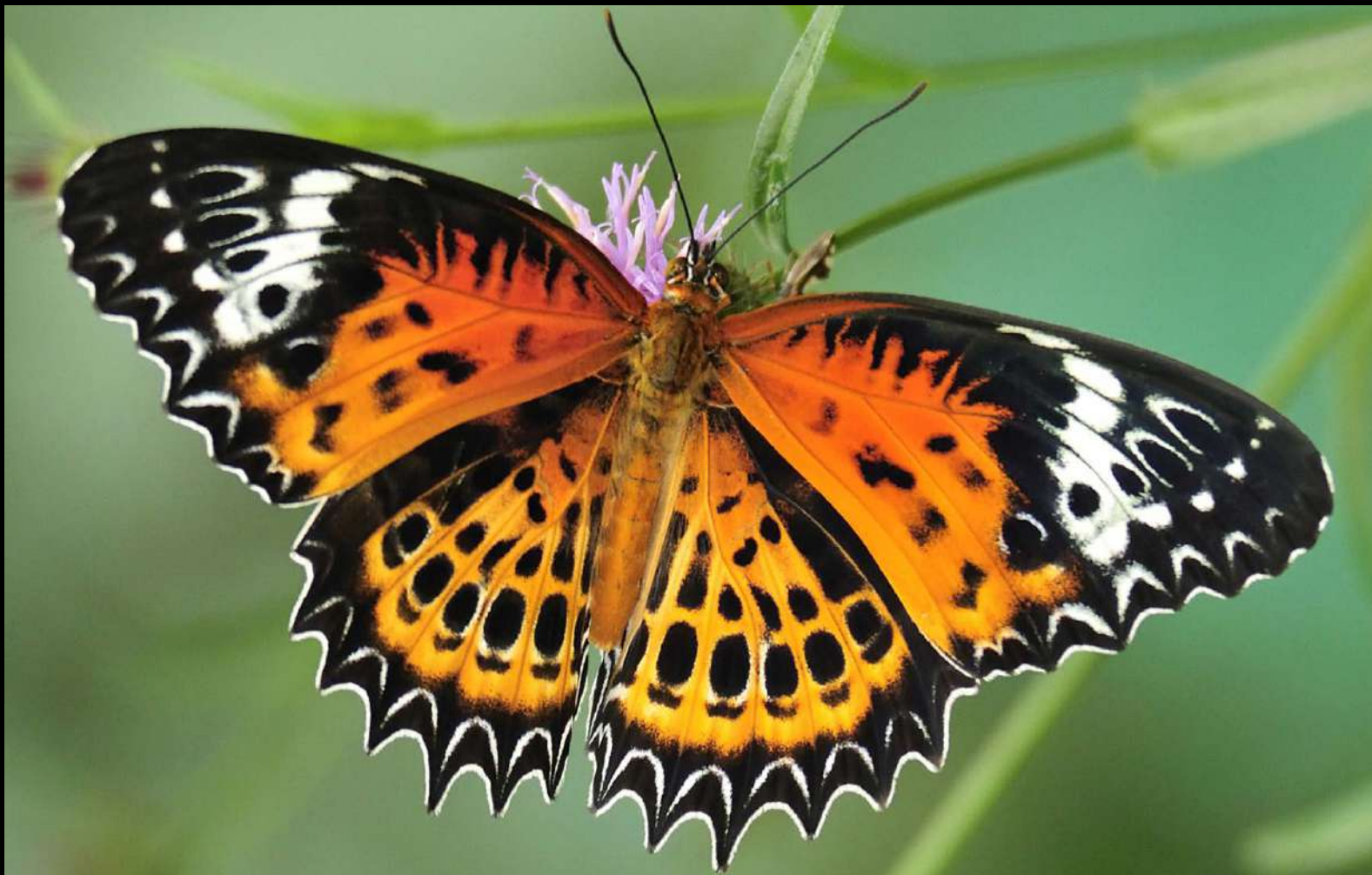
Black panthers (ie melanistic leopards) here. Langur and macaques will often approach the wildlife camps and lodges - the latter looking for tidbits - and smaller mammals such as the impressive Malabar Giant squirrel or the Common mongoose are commonly seen. Staying at the Kali Adventure Camp in Dandeli - as we did - also offers the possibility of brief but satisfying coracle (a round, leather-and-bamboo canoe) joyrides, with great opportunities for hornbills and large Marsh crocodiles (if one doesn't mind the atrocious amount of rubbish floating everywhere on the Cali/Kali river).

A THREATENED ECOSYSTEM

Sadly, the Western Ghats suffer from many environmental threats - logging, industrial development, damming and political meddling. Quoting from Wikipedia: *"Historically the Western Ghats were well-covered in dense forests that provided wild foods and natural habitats for native tribal people. Its inaccessibility made it difficult for people from the plains to cultivate the land and build settlements. After the arrival of the British in the area, large swathes of territory were cleared for agricultural plantations and timber. The forest in the Western Ghats has been*


continued on page 31 ➤

Close-up portrait of a Russell's viper *Daboia russelii*, a very large, dangerous and highly venomous snake which is very common and quick to bite.



■ Top left, Tamil Lacewing
Cethosia nietneri;
top right, Moth *Eumelea* sp.
cf. *ludovicata*. Bottom right,
Common Jezebel *Delias*
eucharis; bottom left, Plain
Tiger *Danaus chrysippus*.



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



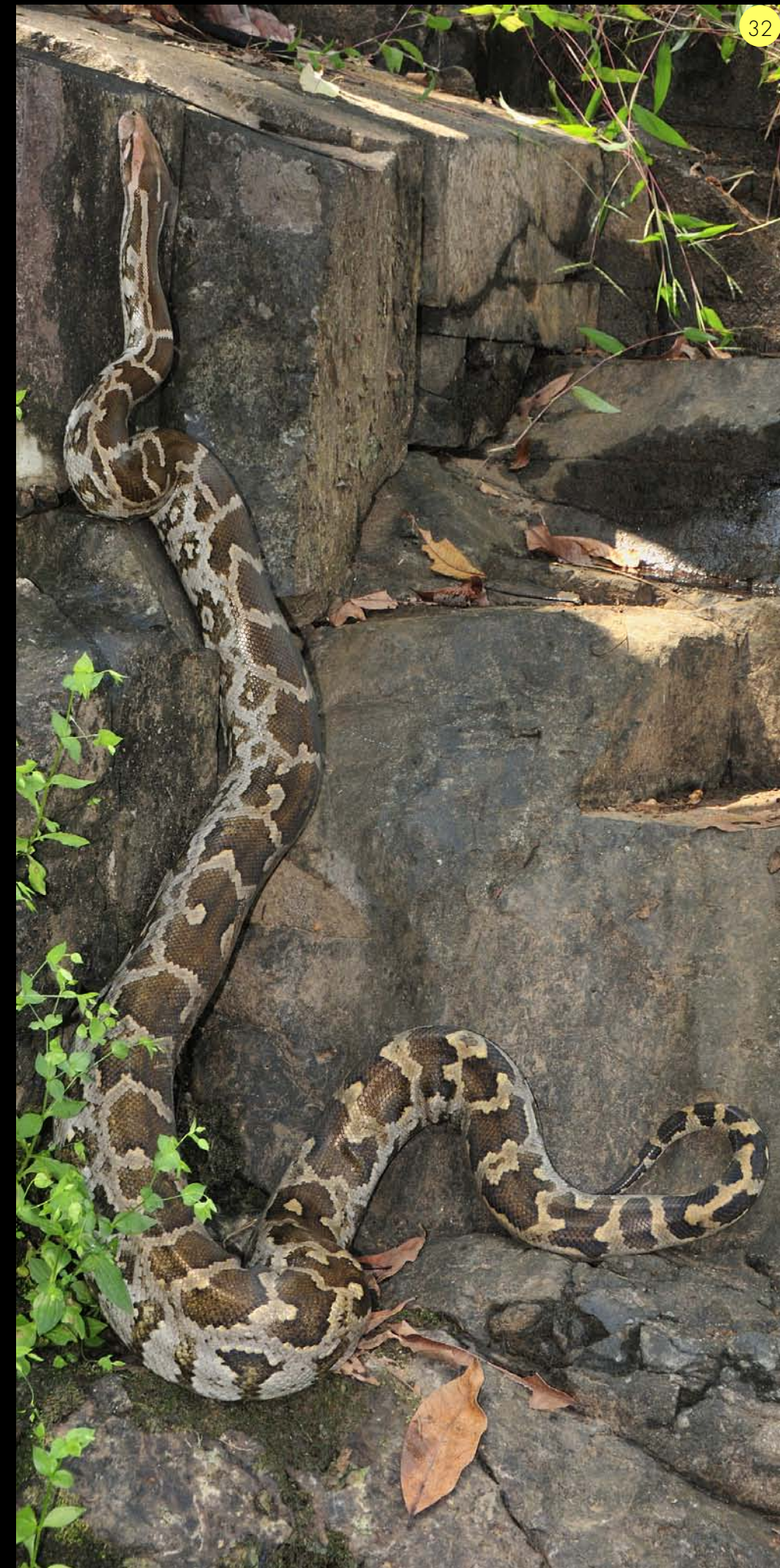
severely fragmented due to human activities, especially clear felling for tea, coffee, and teak plantations during 1860 to 1950. Species that are rare, endemic and habitat specialists are more adversely affected and tend to be lost faster than other species. Complex and species-rich habitats like the tropical rainforest are much more adversely affected than other habitats. The area is ecologically sensitive to development and was declared an ecological hotspot in 1988 through the efforts of ecologist Norman Myers. Though this area covers barely five percent of India's land, 27% of all species of higher plants in India (4,000 of 15,000 species) are found here. Almost 1,800 of these are endemic to the region. The range is home to at least 84 amphibian species, 16 bird species, seven mammals, and 1,600 flowering plants which are not found elsewhere in the world. The Government of India established many

continued on page 35 ➤

■ Dainty, delicate and deadly
- an Indian Flower Mantis
Creobroter gemmatus.
This individual is missing
its left front raptorial claw.




A cryptic tryptic! ■
 Left, Hump-nosed pit viper
Hypnale hypnale;
 center, Malabar Pit viper
Trimeresurus malabaricus;
 right, Indian Rock python
Python molurus.





The harmless but quick-to-bite Rough-scaled Sand boa *Gongylophis conicus* is a mimic of the highly venomous Russell's Viper *Daboia russelii* which shares its habitat.



Left,  Bonnet macaque
Macaca radiata;
right, Grey Langur
Semnopithecus
dussumieri.
Both species are
common in the
Western Ghats
but can be difficult
to approach when
not habituated to
human presence.





protected areas including 2 Biosphere Reserves, 13 National Parks to restrict human access, several Wildlife Sanctuaries to protect specific endangered species and many Reserve Forests, which are all managed by the forest departments of their respective State to preserve some of the ecoregions still undeveloped. Many National Parks were initially Wildlife Sanctuaries. The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve - comprising 5500 sqkm of the evergreen forests of Nagarahole, deciduous forests of Bandipur National Park and Nugu in Karnataka and adjoining regions of Wayanad, Mudumalai National Park and Mukurthi National Park in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu - forms the largest contiguous protected area in the Western Ghats. The Western Ghats is home to numerous serene hill stations like Munnar, Ponmudi and Waynad. The Silent Valley National Park in Kerala is among the last tracts of virgin tropical evergreen forest in India. Regarding the Western Ghats, in November 2009, the then Minister of Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh said: "The Western Ghats has to be made an ecologically sensitive

continued on page 39 ➤

■ A glittering jewel of the Western Ghats - male Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica* (formerly *Nectarinia zeylonica*).



Top left, Spiny-back orbweaver spider *Gasteracantha dalyi*; top right, Hooded Leaf grasshopper *Phyllochoreia* sp.; bottom left, Leaf-mimic katydid *Ducetia* sp.; bottom right, Giant pill millipede (*Glomerida*, *Oniscomorpha*).



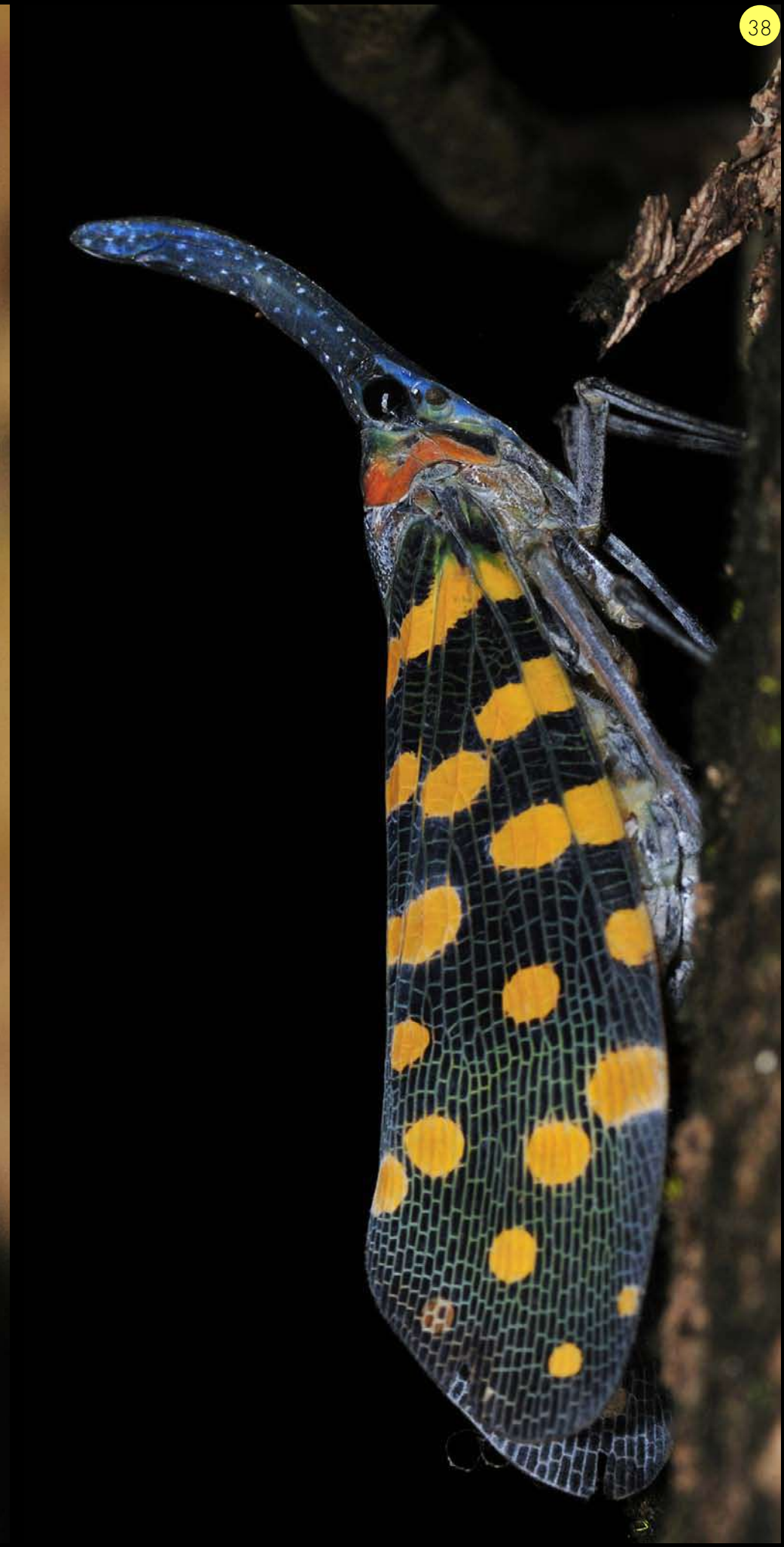


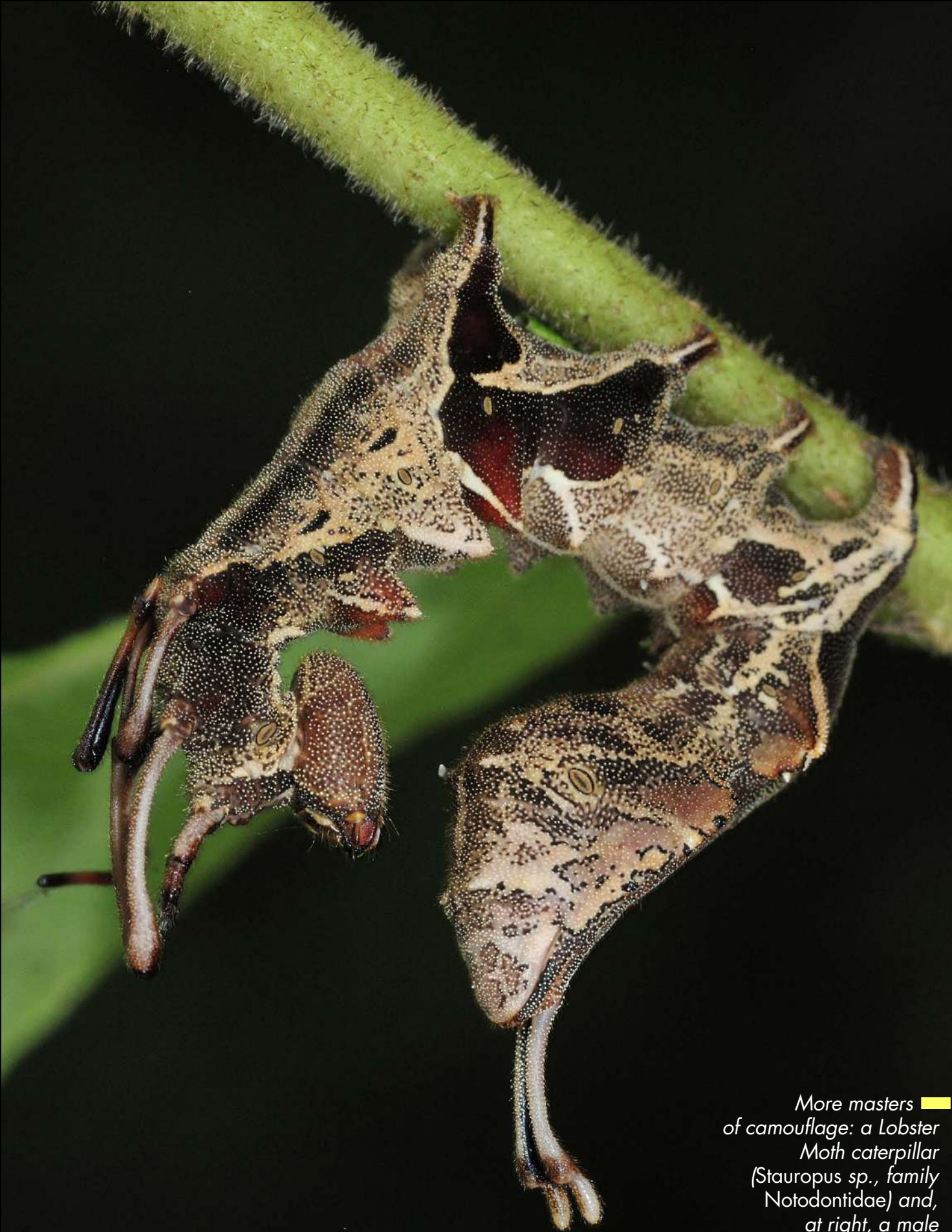
Fierce-looking but totally harmless, the peaceful dragon of Indian gardens

■ Oriental Garden Lizard -
also known as Eastern
Garden Lizard or
Changeable Lizard -
Calotes versicolor,
a very common species.



Left, a rare and still undescribed planthopper, possibly *Polydictya* sp., (Fulgoridae); center, Wandering Violin Mantis *Gongylus gongylodes*; right, *Pyrops delesserti*, a fulgorid lantern bug.





More masters
of camouflage: a Lobster
Moth caterpillar
(*Stauropus* sp., family
Notodontidae) and,
at right, a male
Southern Flying Lizard
Draco dussumieri.

zone. It is as important as the ecological system of the Himalayas for protection of the environment and climate of the Country. The Central Government will not give sanction for mining and hydroelectric projects proposed by the State Governments of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa that will destroy the Western Ghats ecosystem". In a letter dated 20 June 2009, Mr. Ramesh added: "The proposed 200-MW Gundia hydel project of Karnataka Power Corporation in Hassan district would drown almost 1,900 acres (7.7 km²) of thick forest in the already endangered Western Ghats along with all its fauna. This is something that both Karnataka and our Country can ill-afford. Power generation should not happen at the cost of ecological security". The Expert Appraisal Committee appointed by Union Government also said that the project should not be taken up. In August, 2011, the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) designated the entire Western Ghats as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) and, assigned three levels of Ecological Sensitivity to its different regions. We can only hope, then, that India's new environmental awareness will contribute to the preservation of this truly unique environment. ●





■ The foothills and coastline of the Western Ghats are rich in wetlands and watercourses. Left, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*; right, Mugger or Indian crocodile *Crocodylus palustris* basking on a sandbank in the Cali river.



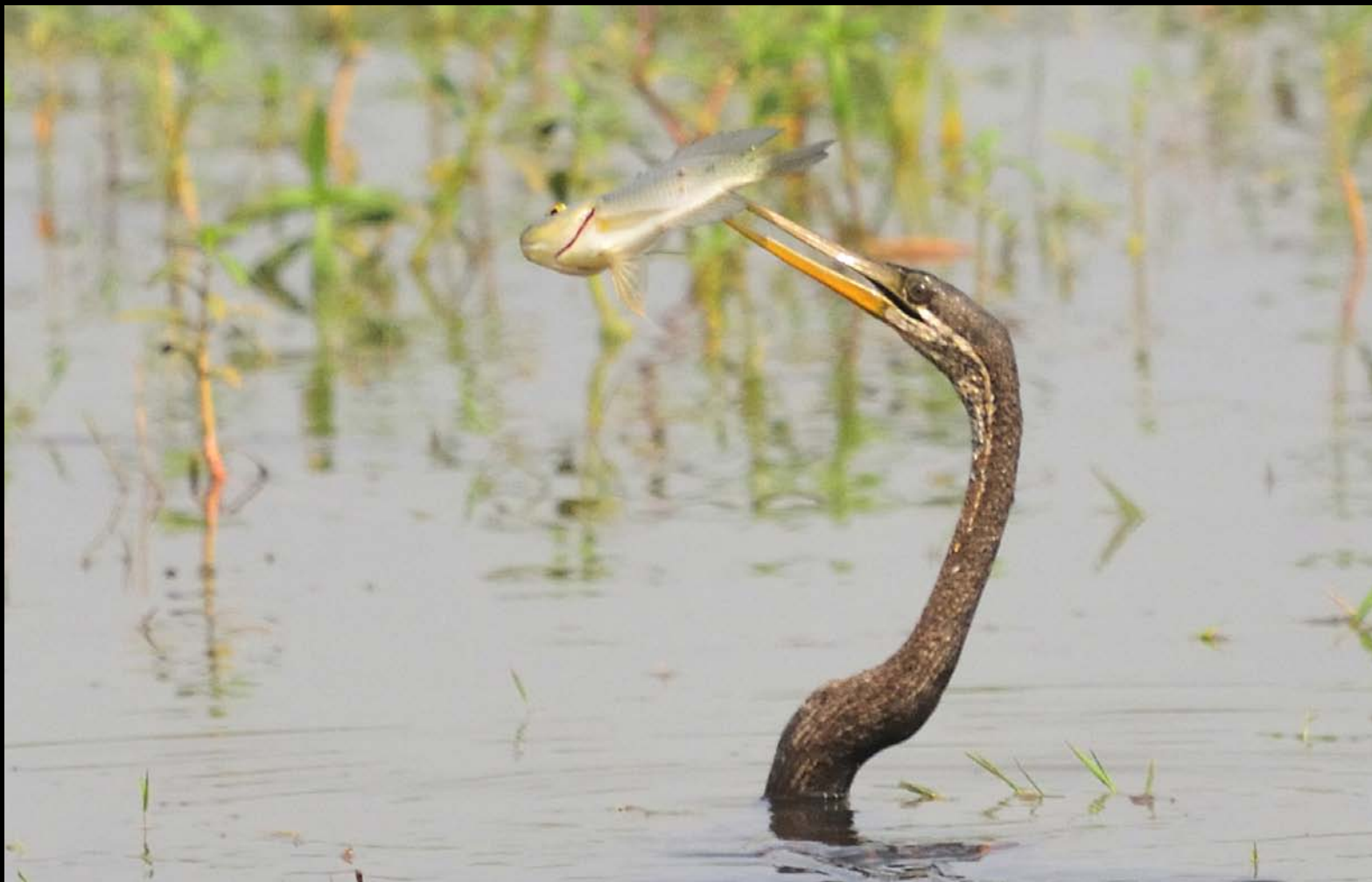


Left, an iconic (and very dangerous) Indian species - the Spectacled Cobra *Naja naja*; right, an equally elegant but harmless species often found in the Western Ghats, the Green Vine snake *Ahaetulla nasuta*. Both are relatively common in undisturbed areas.



A Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* takes off from the brackish marshlands of the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary.

*Pure white egrets
dotting the coastline
like tropical snowflakes*



Top left, Oriental Darter
or Indian Darter
Anhinga melanogaster with
fish prey; top right,
White-throated
Kingfisher
Halcyon smyrnensis;
bottom right, Pond
heron or Paddybird
Ardeola grayii;
bottom left, Osprey
Pandion haliaetus.





■ A large Mugger or Indian crocodile *Crocodylus palustris* basking on the shores of the Cali river, in Dandeli. Muggers can be approached relatively close here.

The Western Ghats
are home to some truly
beautiful insect life - this is a
Clearwinged Forest Glory
Vestalis gracilis,
a damselfly.





Left, caterpillar of Indian Moon Moth or Indian Luna Moth *Actias selene*; right, Caterpillar of Golden Emperor Moth *Loepa katinka*.

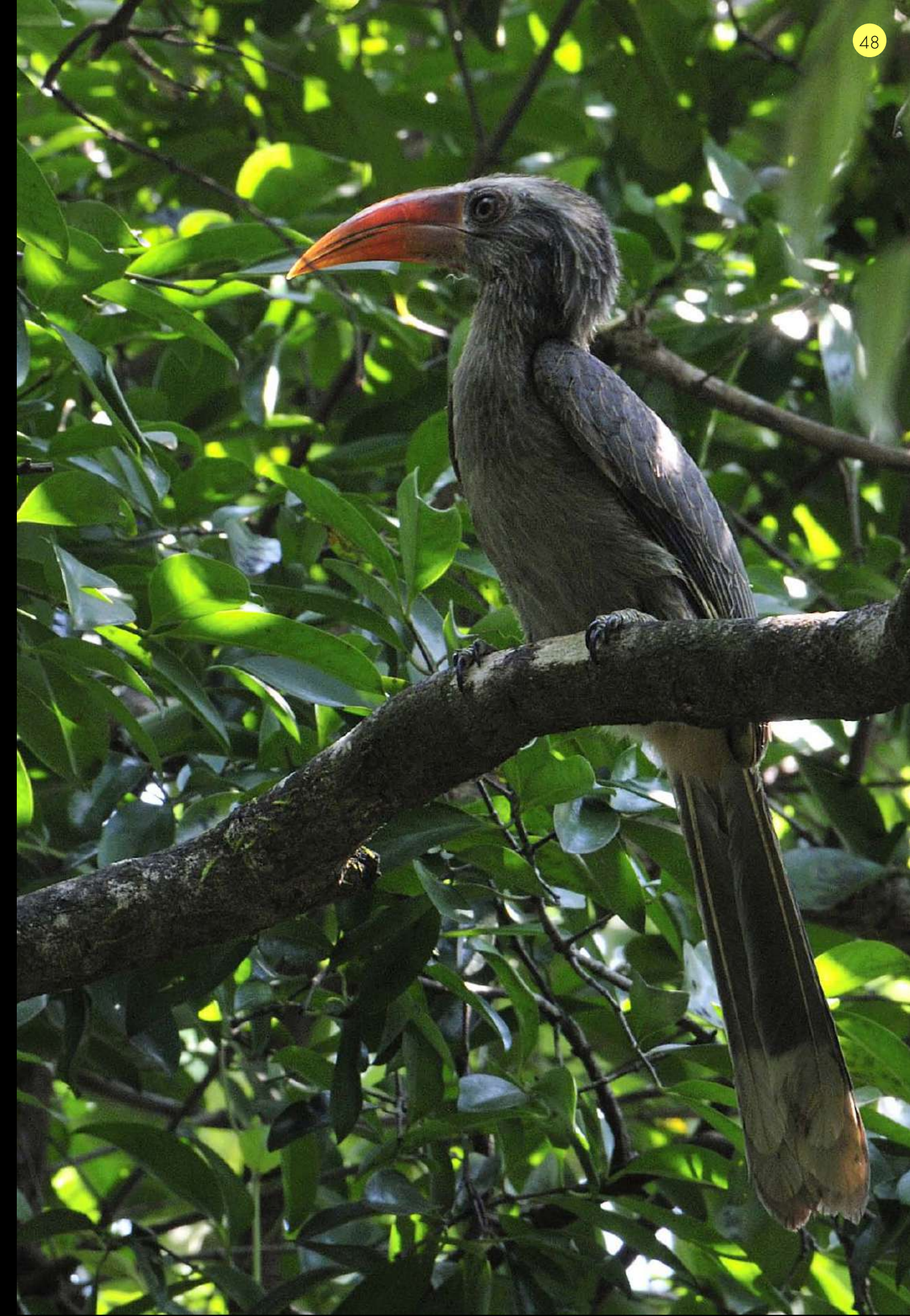


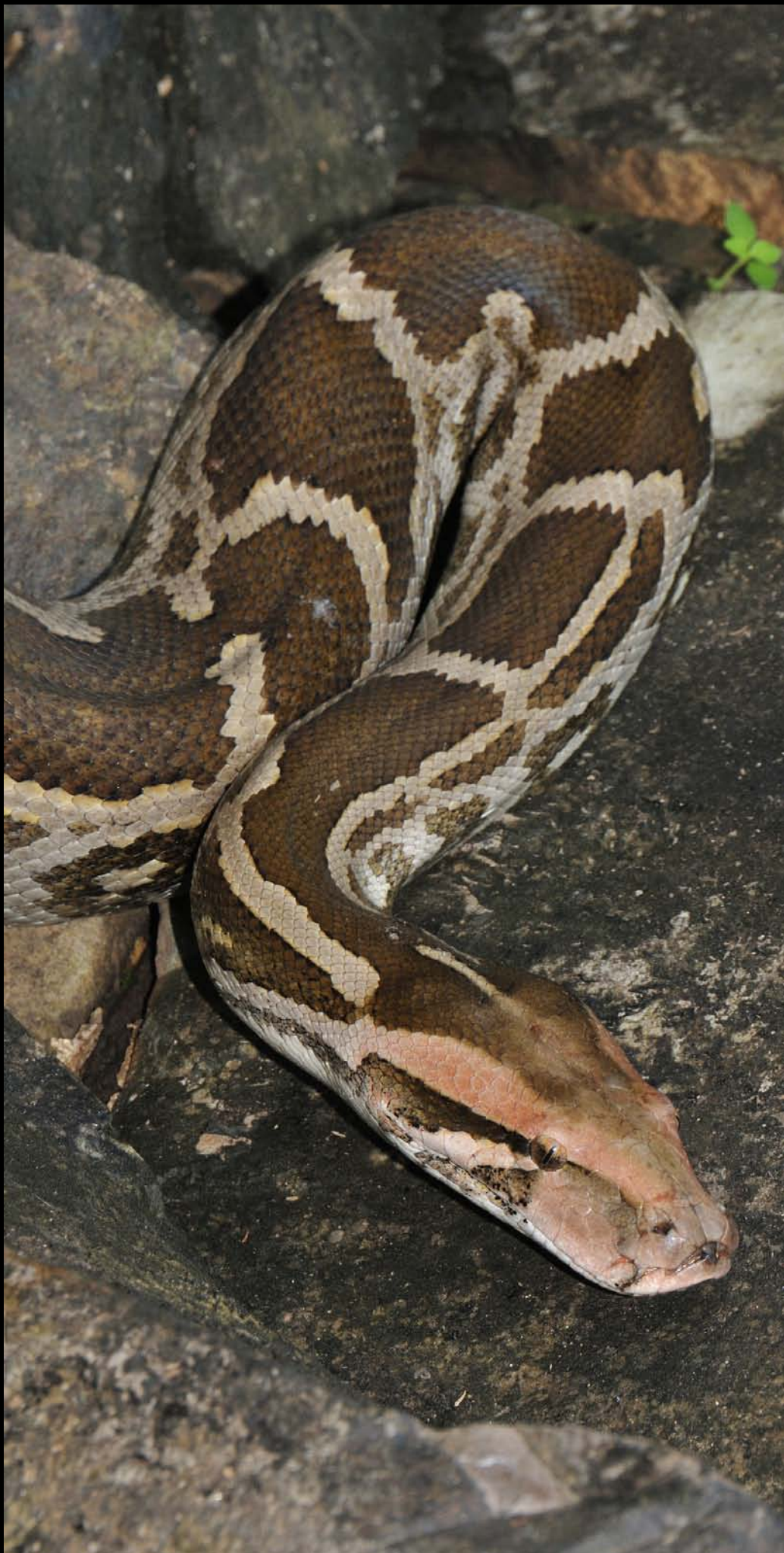
*Danger to the unwary lurks among
the dead leaves on the forest floor*

A well-fed Hump-nosed
Pit viper *Hypnale hypnale*
lies by a trail, perfectly
camouflaged among
the dead leaves littering
the forest floor.



Bird life in the Western Ghats is both spectacular and plentiful. Left, a pair of Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus* in the mangroves of the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary; right, the endemic and forest-dwelling Malabar Grey Hornbill *Ocyeros griseus*.





■ Left, Indian Rock Python *Python molurus*; center, Indian fat-tailed gecko *Eublepharis fuscus*; right, Green Vine snake *Ahaetulla nasuta* in threat display.

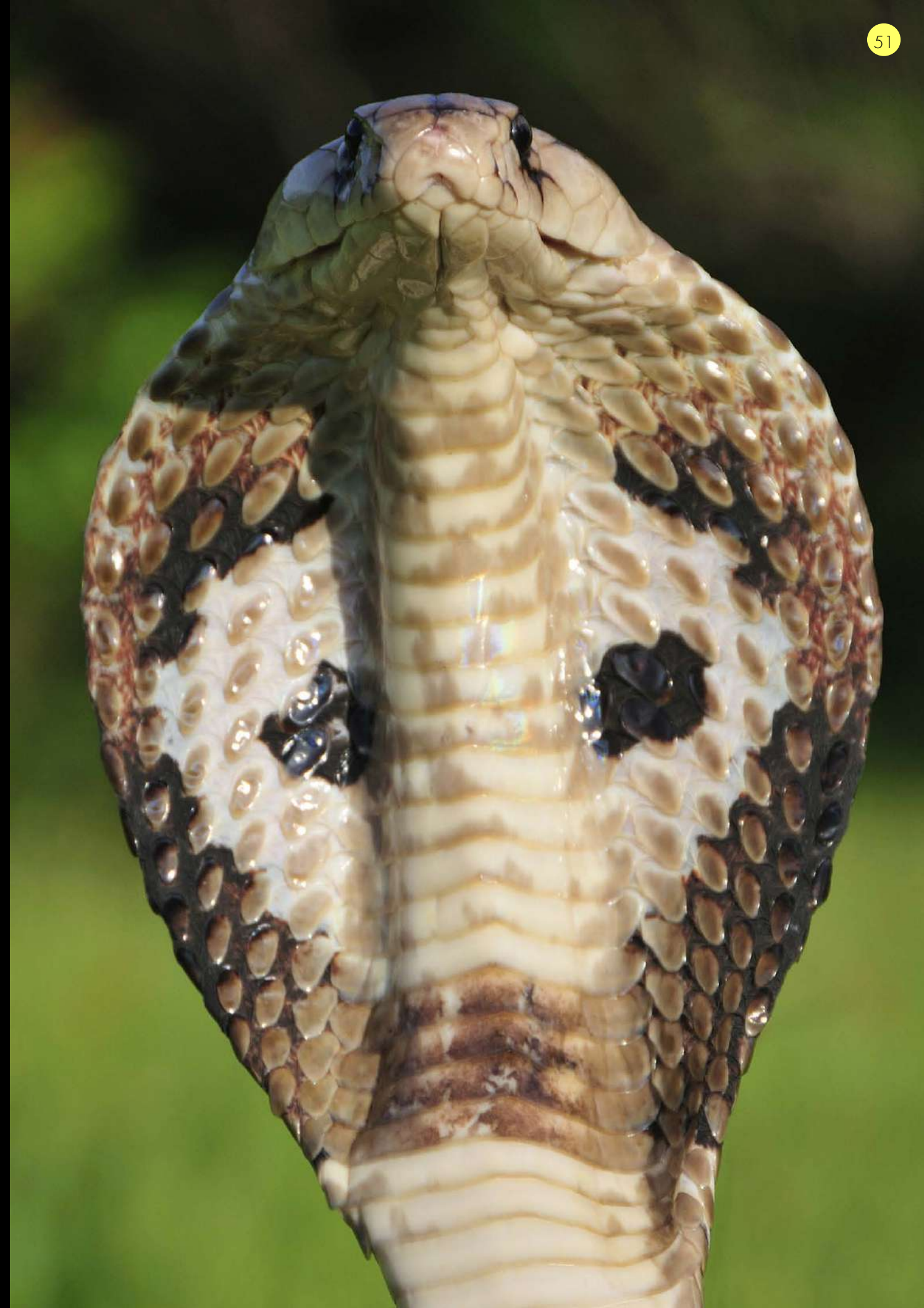



Lesser Whistling Duck ■
Dendrocygna javanica
in the lotus-dotted waters
of Carambolim lake.



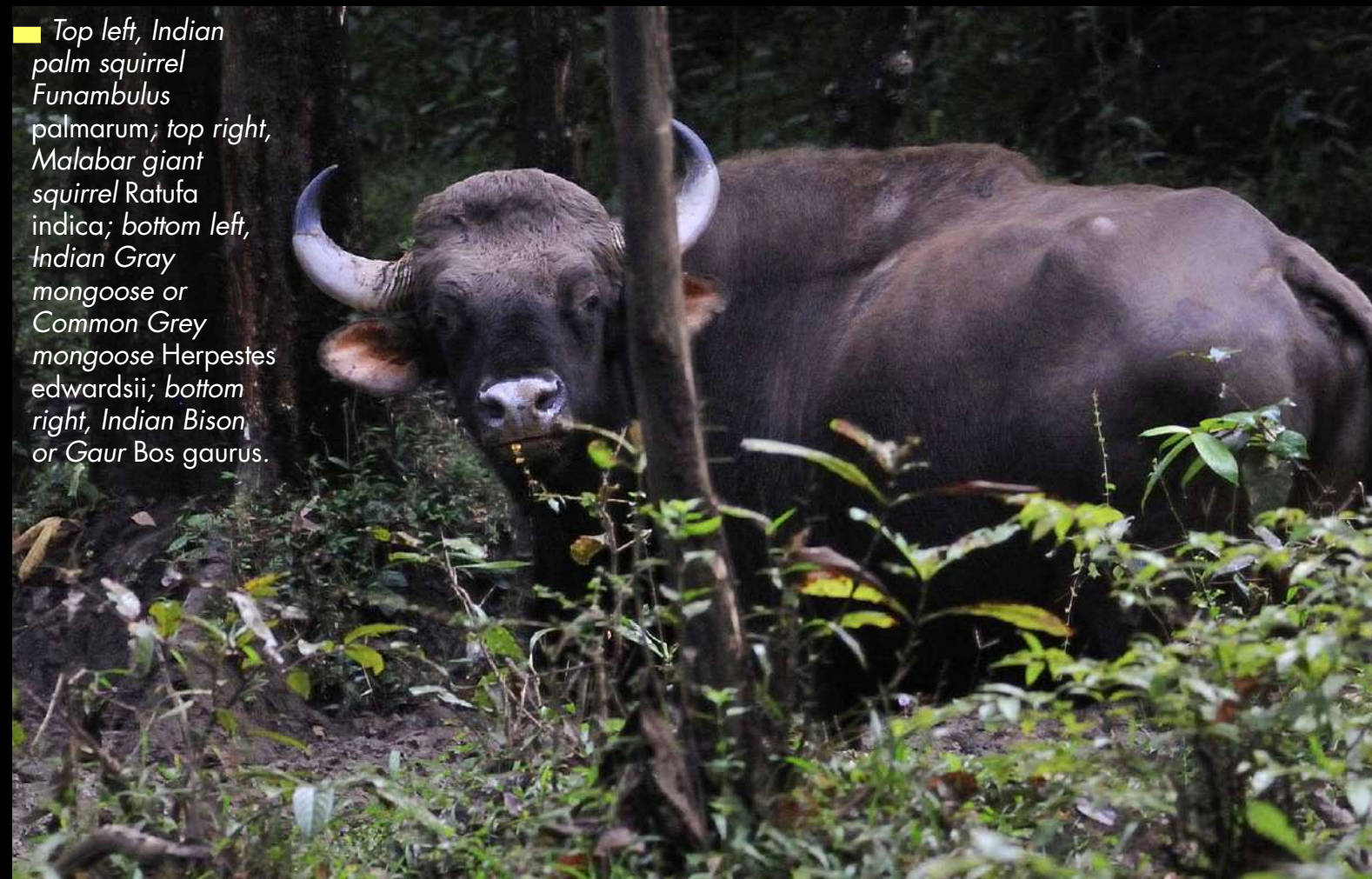


Left, the enchanted light of a forest landscape in the Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary at dawn. Right, the unmistakable threat display of the Indian or Spectacled Cobra *Naja naja* - a truly impressive sight, particularly so when faced in the wilderness.





Another very striking (and extremely effective!) threat display - these rather impressive fangs belong to a large Indian Violet Tarantula *Chilobrachys fimbriatus*.




■ Top left, Indian palm squirrel *Funambulus palmarum*; top right, Malabar giant squirrel *Ratufa indica*; bottom left, Indian Gray mongoose or Common Grey mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*; bottom right, Indian Bison, or Gaur *Bos gaurus*.

■ An extreme close-up portrait of a Malabar Pit viper *Trimeresurus malabaricus*. The heat-sensing loreal pit sited between the nostril and the eye is clearly visible.





Left,  a Green Bee-eater
Merops orientalis
 sitting in the rain by
 the Cali river
 in Dandeli;
 right, an Indian
 Lorikeet or Vernal
 Hanging Parrot
Loriculus vernalis
 feeding on flowers
 in the garden
 of Nature's Nest
 Resort in Goa.



■ A juvenile Russell's Viper *Daboia russelii* lies in ambush among the pebbles of a dry riverbed in the Yoor hills, perfectly confident in the efficacy of its cryptic livery. This species is a major cause of snakebite in rural India, often with fatal or very serious results.

*Beautiful but deadly,
the viper lies in patient wait*



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 healthfulness 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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Pleurosicya mossambica

One of the most commonly observed species in the Central Indo-Pacific Coral Triangle. The brightly colored and ringed eyes stand out sharply on a semi-transparent body. As with most coral gobies, framing the subject from directly above allows wonderful compositions with the sharply patterned coral cups in the background.

TEXTS BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI



Helcogramma gymnauchen

Another very common species on Indo-Pacific reefs. A careful, slow approach will allow extreme macro close-ups - here a Nikon 105mm was used on a DX body for further magnification.

There seems to be an obsession with today's scuba divers - or maybe it's just a contemporary fashionable fad - with large and possibly dangerous animals. Dive operators worldwide actively promote very expensive trips to hopefully photograph anything with big teeth and a fearsome reputation, from Great White sharks to Leopard seals and from Brazilian Anacondas to Nile crocodiles. Well, nothing wrong with that of course - but I occasionally think people are losing their sense of perspective, and risk missing a grander view of things. We, the Ferraris, have always found instead immense satisfaction in the careful observation of the small, the tiny and the minuscule during our diving days. We certainly enjoyed the sight of huge mantas gliding by, of great sharks rising from the darkness of the deep, of shining silver-and-steel walls of jacks and barracudas; yet, our source of wonder always lies in the nooks and crannies of that impossibly colorful labyrinth, the coral reef. And among its countless denizens, coral gobies reign supreme. Ignored by most, invisible to many, their number is legion - absurdly colorful, their semitransparent body flecked in iridescent, rainbow-hued scales - they stake fiercely defended ranges and territories which they survey, hawk-like, from the top of their miniature mountaintops. Despite their diminutive size - most species are less than 2cm long - they are blessed with high-

sounding, exotic names: *Helcogramma*, *Trimma*, *Pleurosicya*, *Bryaninops*, and offer interesting habits to those who have enough patience to pause and observe. Most species are to be found in shallow, sunlit reef areas blessed with a healthy coral growth - typical Indo-Pacific dive sites of the "Coral Triangle" are ideal to observe most species. Adults will select a territory - usually a couple of square feet atop a coral mound, a brain coral, or a flat coral table - and perch at a vantage point, always on the look-out for trespassing rivals and permanently ready to quickly rise for a few feet in the water column right above to snatch a tasty plankton morsel. Their dazzling liveries - which appear to be sequined in glitter - and their perches of choice make, in fact, stupendous subjects for discerning underwater photographers, those who have eyes and know how to use them. The endless combinations offered by the colorful liveries of these miniature subjects and the geometric, hypnotically repeating pattern of the coral cups on which they perch can be rivalled by very few other marine sights.

Other species - more sedate in habits and dress - are to be found instead, exquisitely camouflaged, on the fleshy, rubbery, water-filled ramifications of *Dendronephthya* soft corals. These are more to be admired for the excellence of their cryptic qualities rather than for the gaudiness of their livery, and yet they too make wonderful subjects. ●



Helcogramma gymnauchen

What makes spectacular photographic subjects of many coral gobies species is their sequined, iridescent livery, which greatly contrasts with the colors and patterns of the coral heads or large sponges on which they are usually observed.



Helcogramma striata

Possibly the most commonly observed coral goby species on Indo-Pacific reefs, often found in small groups. The body is in metallic red with white longitudinal stripes.



Helcogramma gymnauchen

A very colorful species, identified by a semi-transparent body flecked in countless tiny brilliant, metallic spots. Red, green and gold are prevalent on most individuals.



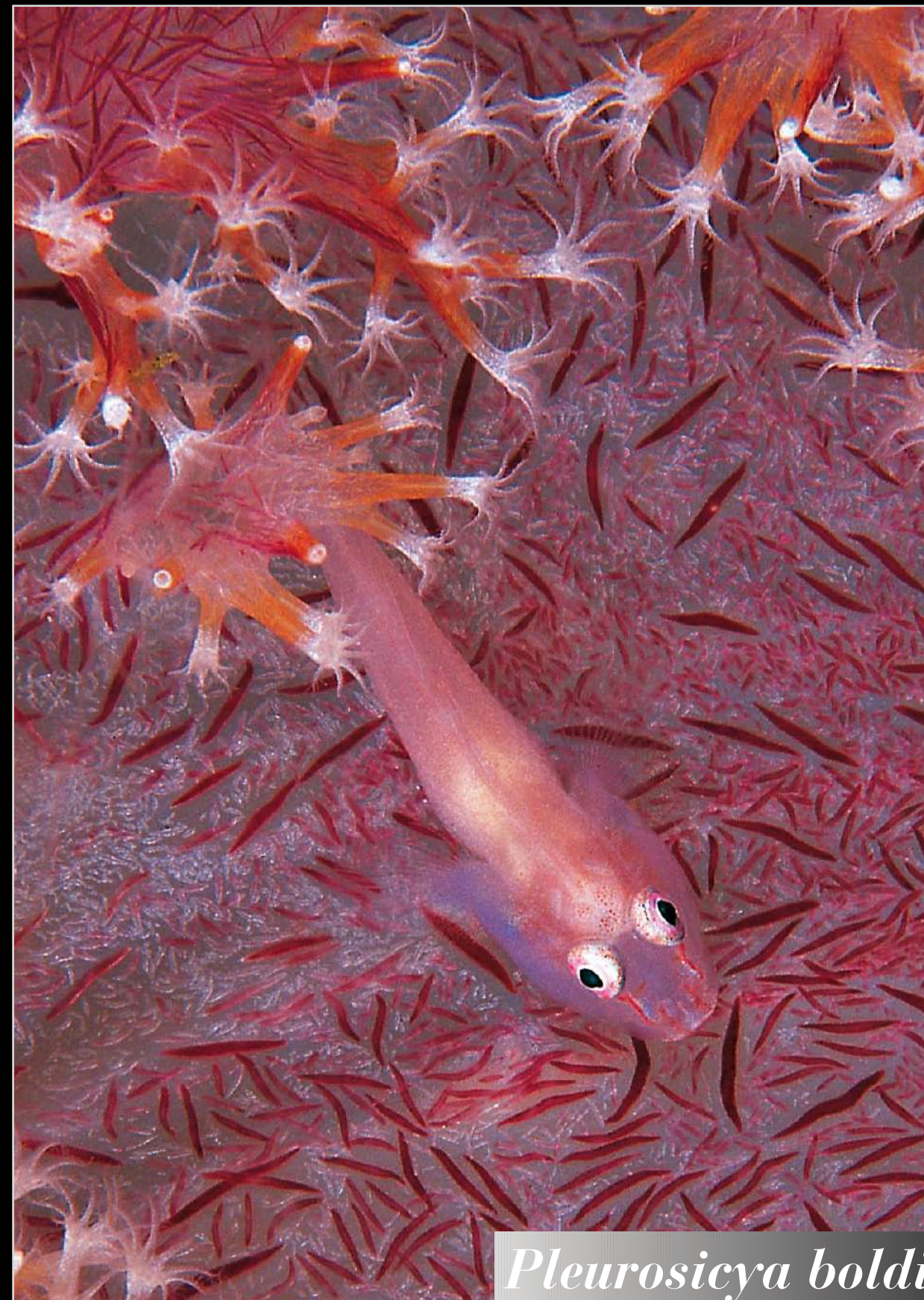
Helcogramma striata

Side portraits of most coral gobies - not easily attained given their choice of habitat - evidence the jutting lower jaw and the habit of perching on the pectoral fins displayed by most species. Coral gobies can disappear in an instant if disturbed, but will usually return to their usual perch - a bit like dragonflies.



Helcogramma gymnauchen

Portraits from directly above can be quite striking when the goby is found perching on a suitable substrate. Mound and brain corals make excellent backgrounds.



Pleurosicya boldinghi

Gobies living on soft corals are usually very cryptic, showing delicately-hued or even completely transparent liveries, but make great photographic subjects.



Helcogramma gymnauchen

A fitting example of the photographic qualities offered by several coral gobies species when framed from directly above - here the technicolored flecking of the fish and the wavy corrugations of the coral head in the background complement each other perfectly.



Helcogramma gymnauchen

Another example of the same technique, utilized here with a subject of the same species but on this occasion on a completely different, more delicately patterned coral background. Shallow depth of field is not a serious drawback when shooting from directly above as here.



Bryaninops erythrops

Correct identification of many central Indo-Pacific coral gobies species can be difficult - this individual could actually also be *Pleurosicya mossambica*.



Trimma sp.

Many other species - several extraordinarily colorful and beautifully patterned but somewhat less common - are still waiting to be scientifically described.



Helcogramma striata

Besides the classical portrait from directly above, several coral goby species can offer pleasant photographic results if framed in extreme close-up from directly ahead. Depth of field is minimal here, so sharply focusing on the eyes of the minuscule subject is of paramount importance.



Pleurosicya boldinghi

Delicately-hued or even completely transparent, the coral gobies living on soft *Dendronephthya* colonies are fun to find and can provide excellent images thanks to the finely patterned background. Notice the calcareous spicules embedded in the tissues of the soft coral.



Pleurosicya mossambica

Several extremely small species or individuals - usually less than 1cm long - can be occasionally observed on bubble corals *Plerogyra sinuosa*, which make truly spectacular, alien-looking backgrounds. The "bubbles" in the photo are not bigger than a small grape.



Trimma flammeum

A rarer but spectacularly-marked Indo-Pacific species. Notice how the red-spotted livery of the goby is enhanced by the blue sponge it was perching on.



Helcogramma striata

Another great example of the importance of the background - here the striped livery of the goby complements to perfection the sinuous stripes of the purple sponge.



Trimma anaima

Another less-frequently observed species - here the rather bland livery of the specimen actually enhances the brightly patterned and highly textured shapes of the coral cups it is perching on. This is one aspect of coral gobies photography which never disappoints - be it their livery or the coral background, there's always something in the end to make the picture special.

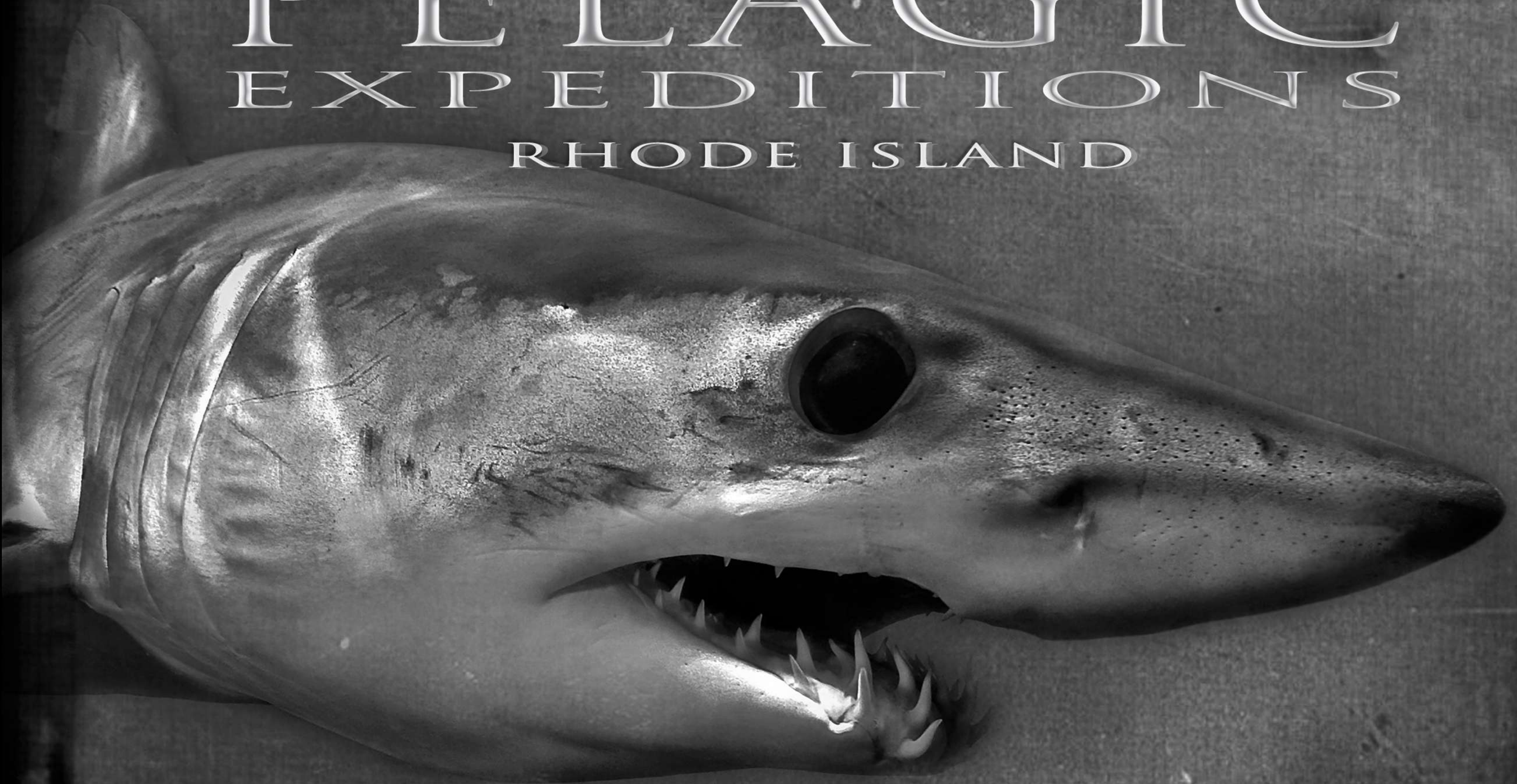


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A d v e r t i s e m e n t

Here Comes the Spider Man

Sameeran Nath – A Wildlife Photographer in His Own Words

A young Indian student of literature from the shores of the Brahmaputra gives life to spectacularly colorful, imaginative macro portraits - with a simple camera set, much passion and a lot of creativity

I am Sameeran Nath, a student of literature. I am 21 years old and I reside in Guwahati, a city on the bank of river Brahmaputra and the biggest in the North-Eastern part of India. I chose photography as my hobby. I love to experiment with my camera, learning new techniques and discovering new ways of photographing something. Photography is a form of art, its a passion within you. After getting my first SLR I was amazed with the number of amazing things one can do with a little bit of imagination and creativity. Out of all the genres in photography, a particular genre tempted me to a great extent. It was macro photography. The macro world has always been fascinated me. The tiny little eyes of my subjects hold true intricate details which we barely even notice with our naked

eyes. To be honest I never even cared about them before - but when I took my first macro photograph of an arthropod last summer I started noticing details that nature holds in this tiny little creatures. And the details were pretty amazing. I like all kind of arthropods, jumping spiders (*Salticidae*) in particular being my favourite. They are some of the most beautiful and intelligent specimens of nature. And now about my gear....I don't have the greatest and latest piece of equipment. I mostly shoot with a reverse prime of 28mm FL or the most popular "nifty fifty" 50mm f/1.8 + a set of MET. I do have a 100mm macro lens but I rarely use it. I am still an amateur and learn new things every day. And the best thing I ever learned is that...it's not your equipment that matters, it's your vision that matters the most. ●

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sameeran-india/>



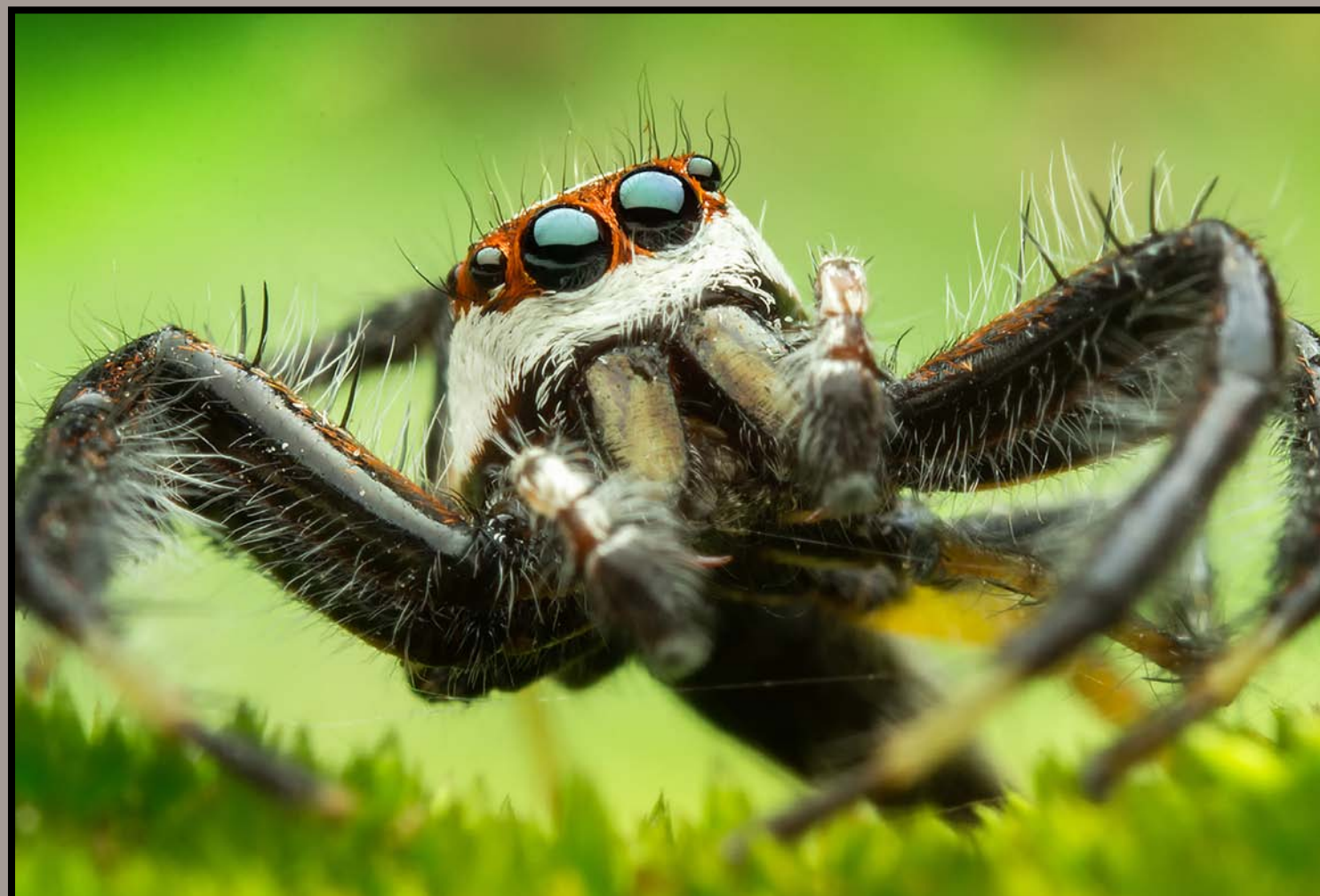
**Jumping Spider
with Water Droplet
- Salticidae**

*Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, Flash,
ISO 200, Canon 50mm f1.8*



Jumping Spider - Salticidae

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8



Jumping Spider - Salticidae

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8

**Jumping spider -
Salticidae**

Canon EOS 600D, 1/160,
Flash, ISO 200,
Canon 50mm f1.8





Jumping Spider - Salticidae

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, f/11, Flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8

Jumping Spider - Salticidae

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200,
flash, ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8





Jumping Spider - Salticidae
*Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, Flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8*

House Spider

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, f/11, Flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8



Jumping Spider - Salticidae

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, Flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8



**Jumping Spider -
Salticidae**

Canon EOS 600D,
1/200, Flash, ISO 200,
Canon 50mm f1.8

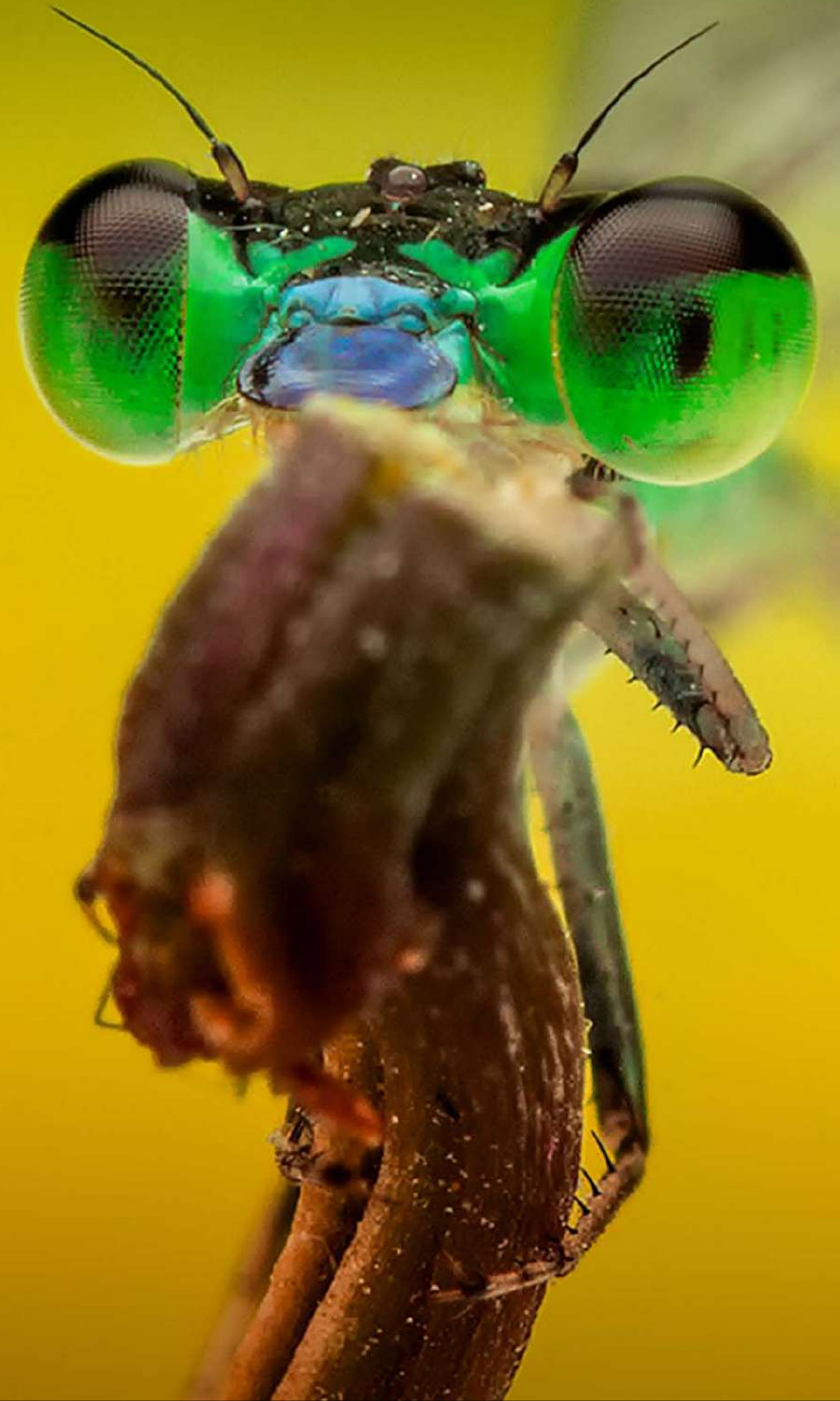
Damselfly

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, Flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8



Carpenter Ant

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, Flash,
ISO 200, Canon 50mm f1.8



Jumping spider -
Salticidae

Canon EOS 600D,
1/200, Flash, ISO 100,
Canon 50mm f1.8



Ant with Sugar Crystals
Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, Flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8



Jumping Spider - Salticidae
Canon EOS 600D, 1/200,
Flash, ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8



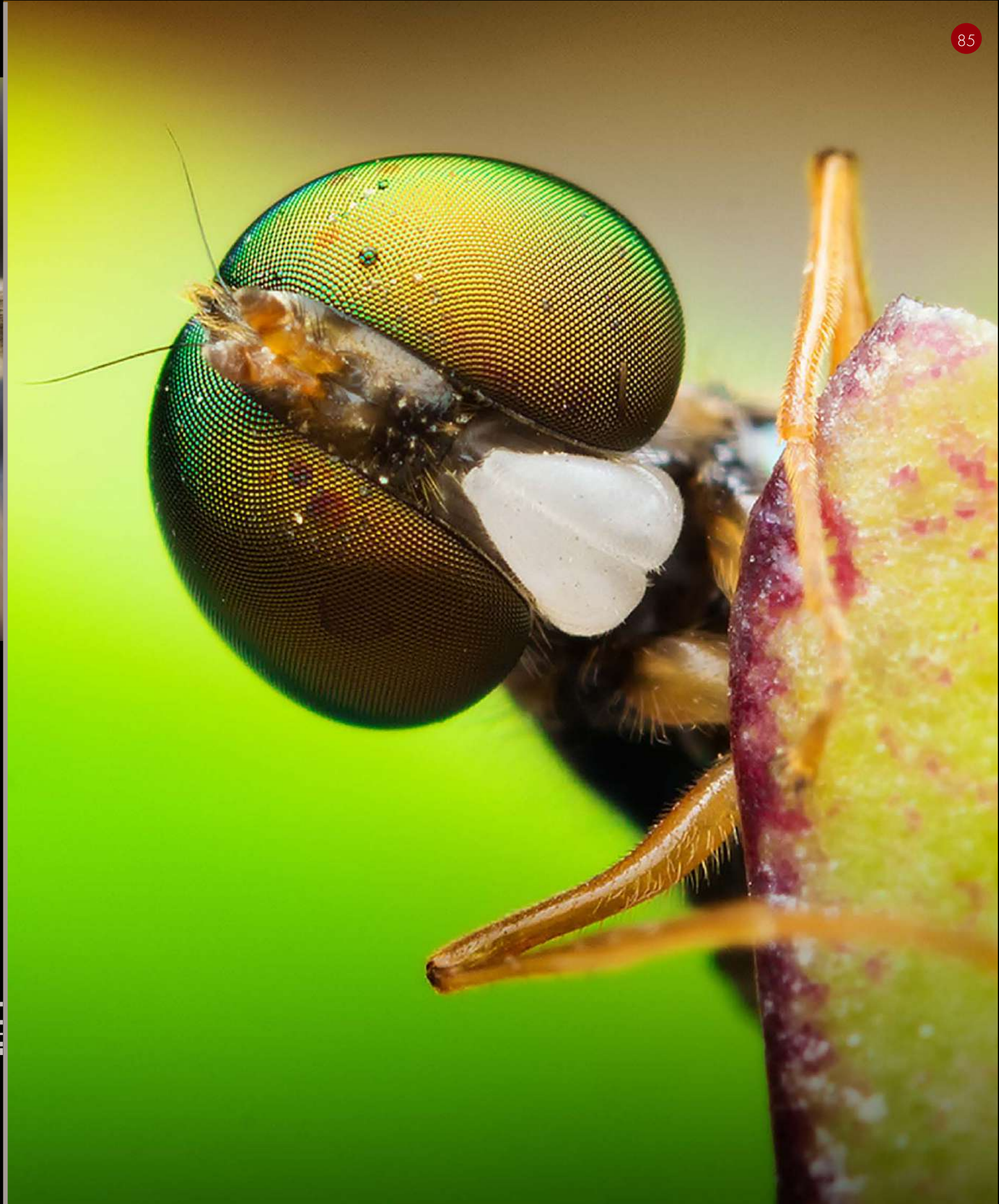


Wolf Spider - Lycosidae

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, Flash,
ISO 100, Canon 50mm f1.8

Common House Fly

Canon EOS 600D, 1/200, Flash,
ISO 200, Canon 50mm f1.8



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TANZANIA'S LEGENDARY GAME RESERVE

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STUNNING SELOUS

A brief but highly productive visit to a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one of Africa's most hauntingly beautiful - and largest - wildlife sanctuaries



African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*

The Selous Game Reserve is one of the largest faunal reserves in the world, located in the south of Tanzania. It was named after Englishman Sir Frederick Selous, a famous big game hunter and early conservationist, who died at Beho Beho in this territory in 1917 while fighting against the Germans during World War I.



Channel View

The Selous Game Reserve was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 due to the diversity of its wildlife and undisturbed nature.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY SCOTT BENNETT

There's just something about Africa. Ever since my first visit, it has forged an indelible imprint on my psyche. It has that special something; a feeling of timeless wilderness and raw beauty that is difficult to encapsulate into mere words. Having just finished a few underwater photo assignments in Tanzania, I was eager for a safari. Having previously experienced the northern safari circuit, I was eager to try somewhere new. Situated in the southern part of the country, the Selous Game Reserve proved to be just the ticket.

Bigger than Wales and four times the size of the Serengeti, the Selous is the largest game reserve in all of Africa. Covering approximately 50,000 km², it boasts panoply of habitats, from lakes and hot springs to acacia woodlands, riverine forest and open grassland, all boasting an incredible array of wildlife. Compared to the northern parks, it receives a fraction of the visitors due to its more remote location and fewer accommodation options. Tourism is confined to the region north of the Ruaha and Rufiji rivers, which comprises 12% of the park's total area.

My accommodation was the Lake Manze Adventure Camp, a relatively new camp operated by Coastal Aviation. My 4-day trip was booked online at the last minute and coincided with the arrival of the rainy season. While most people visit during the

height of the dry when game is crowded around the diminishing water supplies, the rainy season offers its own unique rewards. Although game is more widely dispersed, the landscape is verdant and birdlife abundant. Best of all, the crowds are absent, ensuring that a safari experience doesn't entail a squadron of vehicles parked around a hapless lion. With just under two weeks to go before closing for the rainy season, I would have the camp virtually to myself.

From Dar es Salaam's domestic terminal, the flight was under an hour, including stops at the park's other two airstrips. Dar's urban sprawl quickly gave way to endless miombo woodland, with an occasional road the only sign of human habitation. Making our final descent, wildlife was already apparent. Hippos frolicked in cola-brown water while zebra, giraffe and impala bolted for the safety of the trees. The lonely airstrip buzzed with activity, with several vehicles and a crowd of people waiting for the return flight. Patiently waiting to meet me was guide Victor and driver Ally, who promptly loaded my gear into the open-sided safari vehicle. I discovered the drive to camp would take an hour. It certainly didn't take long to find some photo subjects. As the Selous is a Game Reserve, off road driving is allowed, unlike in Tanzania's national parks. When Victor spotted some giraffe, zebra, waterbuck

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**Aerial View**

The Selous Game Reserve covers a total area of 54,600 km² (21,100 sq mi) and has additional buffer zones. Within the reserve no permanent human habitation or permanent structures are permitted. All human entry and exit is carefully controlled by the Wildlife Division of the Tanzanian Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism.



Fighting Hippos *Hippopotamus amphibius*

Some of the typical species of the bush (elephants, hippos, African Wild Dog, Cape buffalo, crocodiles) can be found here in larger numbers than in any other African game reserve or National Park. However the reserve is large, and densities of animals are lower than in the more regularly visited northern tourist circuit of Tanzania.



Palmyra Palm *Borassus aethiopum*

The area was first designated a protected area in 1896 by the German Governor Hermann von Wissmann and finally became a hunting reserve in 1905.

and greater kudu way off in a clearing, we set out after them cross-country. Shortly afterwards, the road was blocked by a convention of marabou storks. A large bird with a vaguely sinister appearance, the marabou boasts a wingspan of at least 3.5m, one of the largest of any land bird. A frequent scavenger, it eats mainly carrion, but will also take fish, frogs, eggs, small mammals and reptiles. With over twenty birds to choose from, it made photography a challenge. A sign soon proclaimed the turnoff to the camp. Enroute, we stopped alongside the lake itself. Like ghostly sentinels, dead trees rose from the placid waters, their tangle of spreading branches bare against the clear blue sky. A shrill cry announced the presence of an African fish eagle perched atop one of the highest branches. A small crocodile deftly snapped up a fish as sacred ibis, blacksmith plovers and yellow-billed storks patrolled the shallows. An African pied kingfisher, Africa's largest, hovered high above the water like a miniature helicopter before plummeting to the surface to spear an unwary fish. All this and I hadn't even unpacked my bags yet!

Arriving at the camp, I was warmly greeted by resort manager Sarah Gigli. Hailing from Italy, she was the sole woman in a staff of fifty. Manze's communal area consists of an expansive thatched roof spreading above a sand floor, with armchairs and sofas to observe the animals come and go. Although initially dismayed to discover the tents lacked electricity, I was relieved to

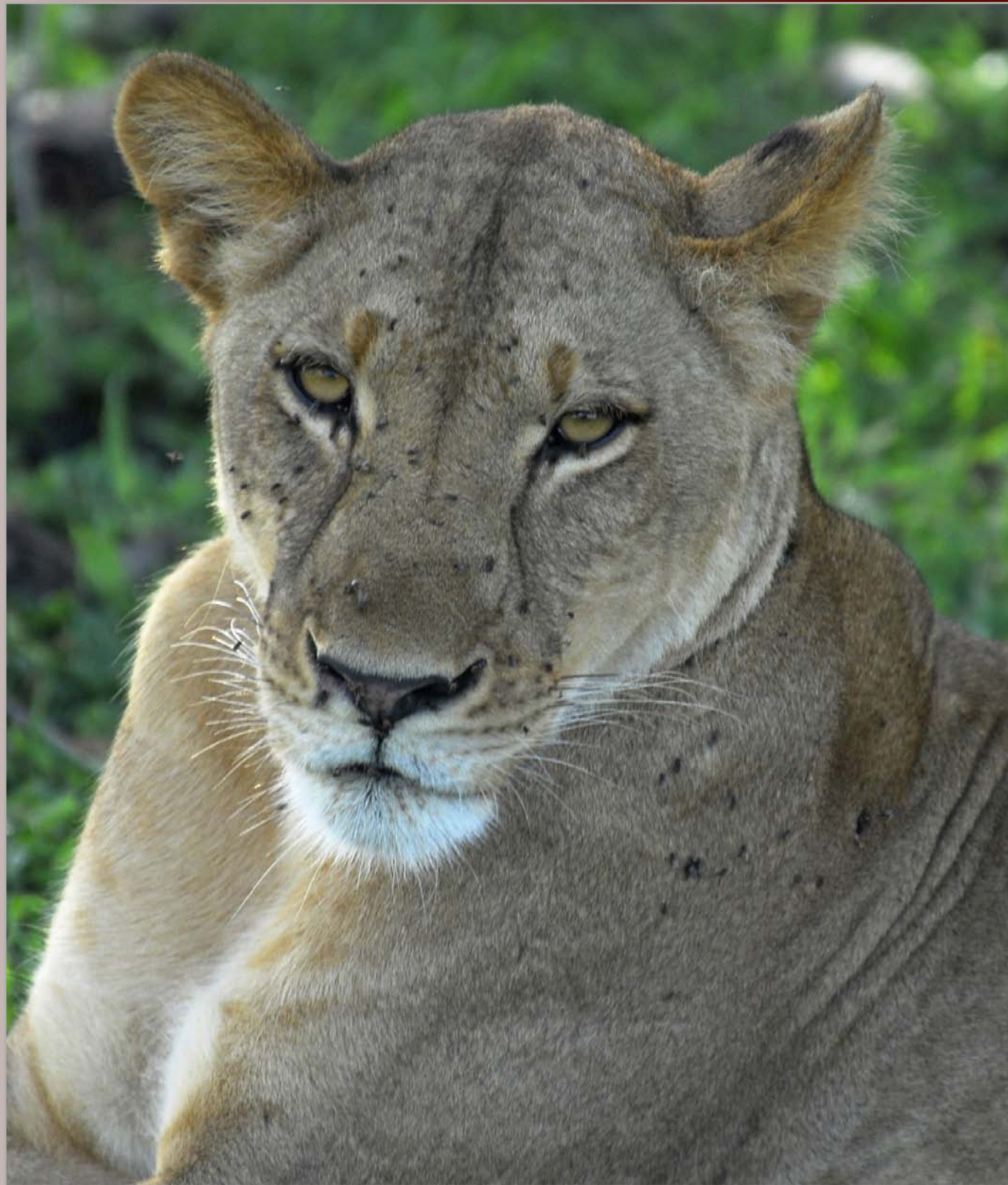
discover an extensive bank of outlets at the bar for charging camera batteries and my laptop. During my briefing, a loud trumpeting caused my eyes to widen, much to Sarah's amusement. "Was that an elephant?" I queried, with a smidgeon of nervousness creeping into my voice. "Yes, they come through the camp all the time" she responded nonchalantly. At that moment, civilization seemed very distant indeed! With the sun creeping towards the horizon, Sarah informed me an escort back to my tent was required. Waiting dutifully at the path was one of the resort's staff of Masai. Colourfully garbed in striking crimson robes, his weaponry consisted of a slender wooden staff with a conspicuous lack of sharp points. I didn't want to contemplate how he would deal with a rampaging elephant. Then again, with generations of experience dealing with Africa's megafauna, I knew I was in good hands. My accommodation was a Meru-style canvas tent complete with windows, washroom, outdoor shower and a covered verandah. Candles and kerosene lamps provided lighting. Simple yet comfortable, I felt like I'd been transported back to the safari days of old. All I was missing was the pith helmet! With just over an hour before being collected for dinner, I stretched for a snooze. I had barely drifted off when a colossal trumpeting propelled me into mid-air. Senses on high alert, I waited for a repeat. Fumbling for my torch, I looked to the tent flap, where I half-expected to see an elephant's face peering through the mesh.

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Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus*

Most of the Selous Reserve - one of the largest remaining wilderness areas in Africa today - remains set aside for game hunting through a number of privately leased hunting concessions, but a section of the northern Park along the Rufiji River has been designated a photographic zone and is a popular tourist destination.



Lioness *Panthera leo*

Lions live for 10–14 years in the wild, while in captivity they can live longer than 20 years. They inhabit savanna and grassland, but they may take to bush and forest.

I was soon grateful for my escort as my guide's torch beam illuminated the ghostly silhouette of an elephant lumbering across the path. Near the reception area, we made a slight deviation. Sitting at the base of a tree, a large puff adder sat motionless, waiting for prey to come within striking distance. Apparently, it had already been there for two days. Before dinner, Sarah asked what activities I'd like to do during my stay. On offer was a walking safari, game drives and a choice of boat cruises. Although fun, I have found walking safaris not to be particularly conducive to photography. Instead, I opted for a boat cruise in the morning followed by an afternoon game drive. After a delicious dinner under the stars, I ventured back to my tent to prepare camera gear for the next morning.

Sunrise was heralded by a cacophony of white-browed sparrow weavers residing in the tree beside my tent. A jumbled medley of birdsong soon punctuated the morning air, with ring-necked dove, red-billed hornbill and go-away birds contributing to the chorus. Stepping outside, I stopped dead in my tracks. A short distance away, a buffalo stared menacingly. Needless to say, I didn't venture past the verandah until my Masai escort showed up.

After a coffee, I boarded the truck by 7:00. A short drive brought us to a channel leading to Lake Manze. In a continent where the pendulum swings tempestuously between wet and dry, the area's permanent water supply is a welcome relief to the local

wildlife. Although we would concentrate on the channels, we started with a short detour into Lake Manze itself. The early morning light was glorious. Ahead, a flotilla of bobbing heads indicated the presence of hippos. Piled atop one another, snorting and squabbling, there's just something about hippos that I find inherently amusing. Their comical appearance belies the reality however, as they kill more people in Africa every year than all other animals combined. Fortunately, the first pod possessed a benign temperament and we were able to approach reasonably close.

The myriad of channels proved to be a bird photographer's delight. Numerous yellow-billed storks flanked the waters' edge, along with open-billed storks, African jacana's, goliath herons, Egyptian geese and white-faced whistling ducks. Crafty hunters, black egrets spread their wings over the water, generating shade to lure unsuspecting fish right to their feet. Reeds fringing the shore were home to Africa golden weavers, whose basket-shaped nests dangled precariously above the waterline. Jewel-like malachite kingfishers were everywhere and were exceedingly tolerant. More than once, we actually got closer than my lens' closest focusing distance and had to back up! Motoring around a bend in the channel, we happened upon a lone buffalo foraging at the water's edge. Gently drifting right up to the enormous beast, it glared at us, eyes imbued with brooding malevolence. Daintily perched atop its head, a cattle egret completed the picture. Before long, it

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African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*

Habitats found in the Selous Game Reserve include grassland, typical *Acacia* savanna, wetlands and extensive Miombo woodlands.



Black Egret *Egretta ardesiaca*

Walking safaris are permitted in the Selous, and boat trips on the Rufiji - offering excellent photographic opportunities - are a popular activity.



Lion cub *Panthera leo*

The lion is a vulnerable species, with a major population decline in its African range of 30–50% per two decades during the second half of the 20th century. Although the cause of the decline is not fully understood, habitat loss and conflicts with humans are the greatest causes of concern.

was time to head back to the camp, where a delicious full breakfast was waiting. Even in the dining area, wildlife was never far away. Sparrow weavers hopped about my feet while a crested barbet waited patiently for errant crumb atop a nearby chair. I stopped to see if the puff adder was still there. It hadn't budged, so I quickly returned to my tent to grab my tripod and get a few shots. After uploading my photos and a change of memory cards, it was time for the afternoon game drive. Despite being on the cusp of the green season, wildlife was abundant and easy to spot. Impalas were virtually everywhere. Giraffe were equally plentiful; so much so that I soon stopped taking photos of them unless they were in exceptional light or striking a unique pose. To cap off a stunning drive, we were rewarded with a pride of lions, including a male, five females and a bevy of restless cubs. Stopping within a few metres of them, I spent a very pleasant half hour photographing to my heart's content. During the entire drive, I don't think I saw more than one other vehicle.

The ensuing two days yielded a never-ending array of photo ops. On an early morning drive, a young male elephant, clearly miffed by our presence, decided to show us to show us who was boss. With ears flapping like giant leathery umbrellas, he charged, halting a scant few metres from our front bumper. I turned to my guide Emanuel. "Is it wise for us to be this close?" I queried, my voice quavering with alarm. "He's just trying to scare us" was the

Spotted Hyena *Crocuta crocuta*

A highly successful animal, being the most common large carnivore in Africa.



White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

A highly gregarious species, with flocks of a thousand or more birds.

nonchalant response. I couldn't help but think that he was succeeding! After a minute of bluster, the belligerent teenager retreated and resumed feeding. As the heat subsided by late afternoon, hippos started moving ashore. One large bull, flanks criss-crossed with a bevy of scars, lunged towards a female with a calf resulting in an open-mouthed standoff. Fortunately, no damage was done and the quarrelsome male melted into the dense vegetation.

There was still one bird I was eager to see. Despite having observed both little and white-fronted bee-eaters, one colourful relative had thus far remained elusive: the carmine bee-eater. Motoring across the lake to an island of vegetation, we came across not one, but an entire garrulous colony! With nothing to rest my lens on, I was forced to shoot at a higher ISO to compensate for the rapidly waning light. Thank goodness for the VR function!

Alas, my visit flew by all too quickly and my final morning drive had arrived. We would do a game drive enroute to the airstrip, stopping for a full-on bush breakfast. Ironically, carmine bee-eaters now seemed to be everywhere. Out on the savannah, they were easy to spot, perching on the upward spreading limbs of fallen trees. Stopping to observe one specimen, it swooped off, only to return moments later with a bee firmly clasped in its slender bill. Focusing on its preferred perch, I was able to get a number of

images as the bird made several forays, returning to exactly the same spot. Strikingly attired lilac-breasted rollers also proved cooperative, as we were able to come right up to them as they perched on roadside shrubs.

My stay at Selous, albeit brief, was simply incredible. Although the mammal photography was superb, it was the birds that I especially enjoyed. In the Selous, full frame images could be easily produced without hauling around a monster lens. Yet, despite seeing so much, I barely scratched the surface of what the park had to offer.

When travelling in Africa, wildlife photographers wielding a mountain of gear had better brace themselves. Due to the small planes being utilized on the domestic routes, local airlines are exceptionally stringent when it comes to baggage weight. As both you and your baggage will be weighed at check-in, bring only what you absolutely need. To help minimize gear, zoom lenses are a good bet. My gear consisted of a pair of Nikon D200 bodies with an 80-400mmVR and 17-70mm lenses, a wireless flash and a polarizer. As the vast majority of shooting is done in a boat or vehicle, tripods are pretty much impractical. A beanbag is a much better option. On a final note, try to wear as many of your clothes as possible on your departure day. You may broil, but it's definitely worth it. Finally, keep a pair of cameras at the ready at all times. Always expect the unexpected!



Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus*

Carmine Bee-eaters nest in large colonies in cliffs, usually near river banks, where they use their bills to dig long horizontal nesting tunnels, often eight feet or more in length. The main hunting strategy of bee-eater is to keep watch for flying insects from a perch, and then snatch them out of the air using their beaks, before returning to the perch.



Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*

The world's largest heron. The height is 120–152 cm (47–60 in), the wingspan is 185–230 cm (73–91 in) and the weight is 4–5 kg (8.8–11 lbs).



Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus*

The Bee-eaters' diet is made up primarily of bees and other flying insects, such as grasshoppers and locusts.



African or Cape Buffalo *Syncerus caffer*

This species is not closely related to the wild Asian water buffalo, and its ancestry remains unclear. The African buffalo is not the ancestor of domestic cattle, and is only distantly related to other larger bovines. Owing to its unpredictable nature, which makes it highly dangerous to humans, the African buffalo has never been domesticated.



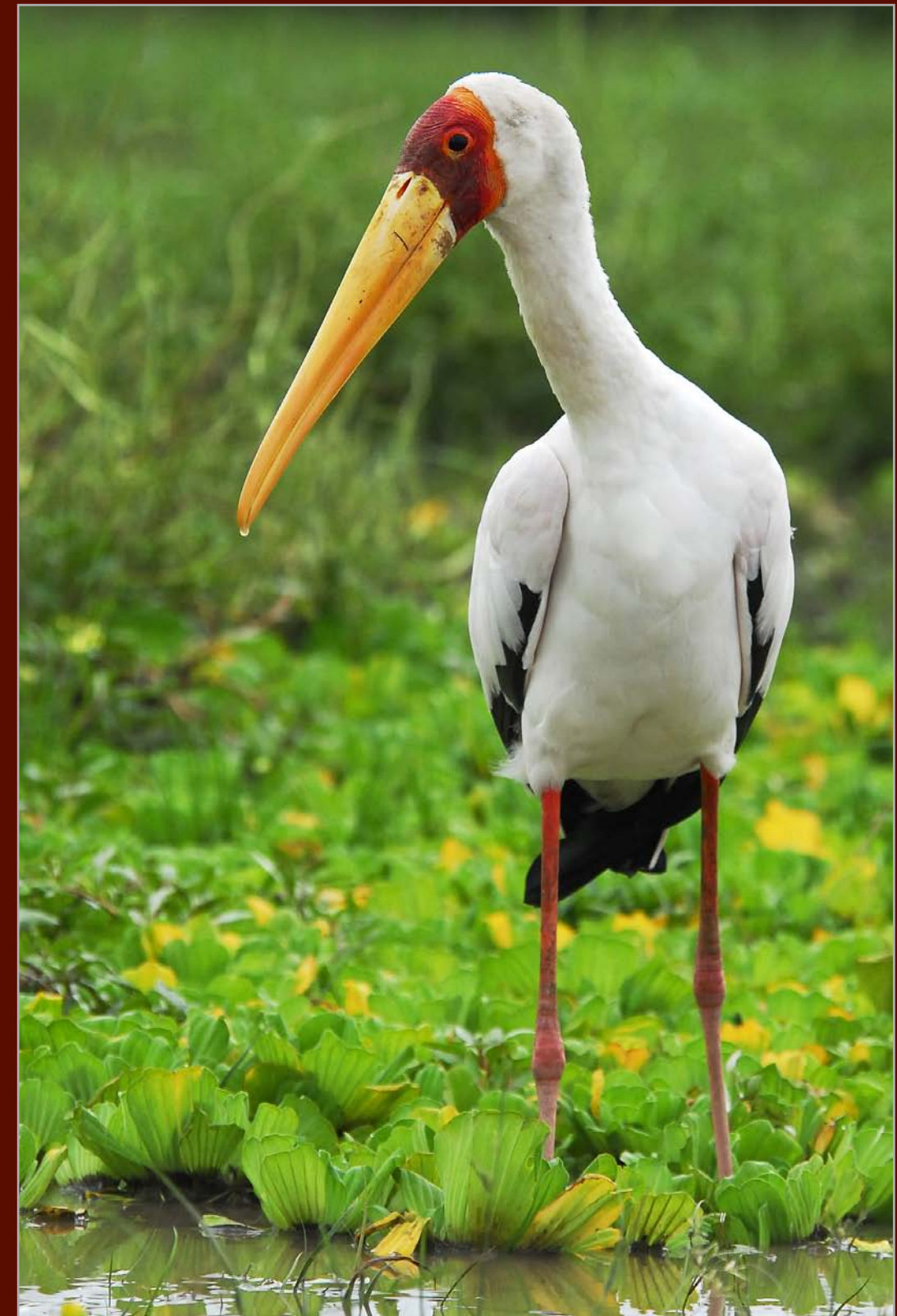
African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*
A large species that is found throughout sub-Saharan Africa wherever large bodies of open water occur.



Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus*
Widely distributed in sub-Saharan Africa and the southern Arabian Peninsula, preferring open woodland and savanna.



African or Cape Buffalo with egret *Syncerus caffer*
One of the most successful grazers in Africa. It lives in swamps and floodplains, as well as mopane grasslands and forests of the major mountains of Africa.

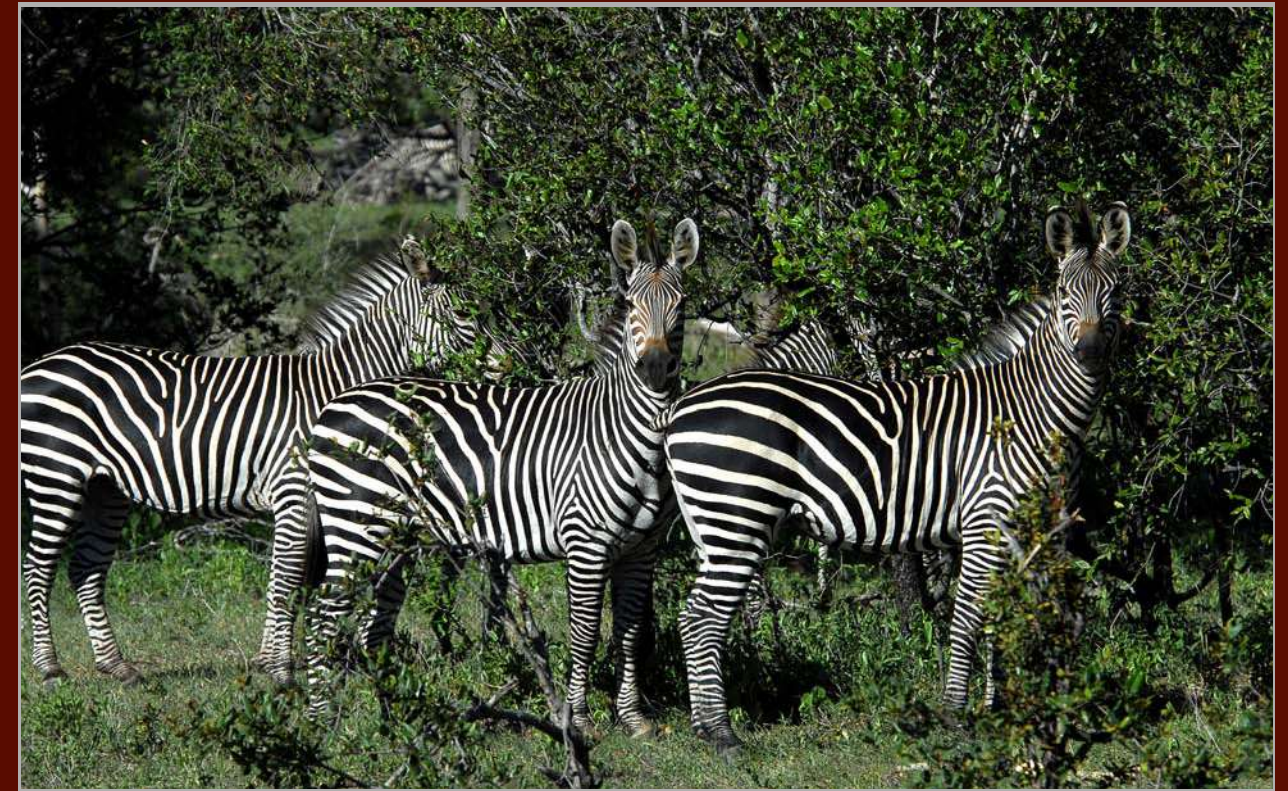


Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*
A large wading bird in the stork family *Ciconiidae*. It occurs in Africa south of the Sahara and in Madagascar.

Lioness *Panthera leo*
Sleeping mainly during the day, lions are primarily nocturnal or crepuscular.



Selous' Zebra *Equus quagga selousi*
A severely endangered species mostly found in Mozambique.



Puff Adder *Bitis arietans*
A very common, highly cryptic and extremely dangerous species.



Nile Crocodile with prey *Crocodylus niloticus*
An opportunist hunter which will prey on fish, reptiles, birds and mammals.



Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius*

Hippos are some of the largest quadrupeds and they can easily outrun a human, having been clocked at 30 km/h (19 mph) over short distances. Hippos - among the most aggressive creatures in the world and, as such, among the most dangerous animals in Africa - are threatened by habitat loss and poaching for meat and ivory.

Camp tent interior

There are several high end lodges and camps in the Selous Game Reserve, mainly situated along the river and lake systems.

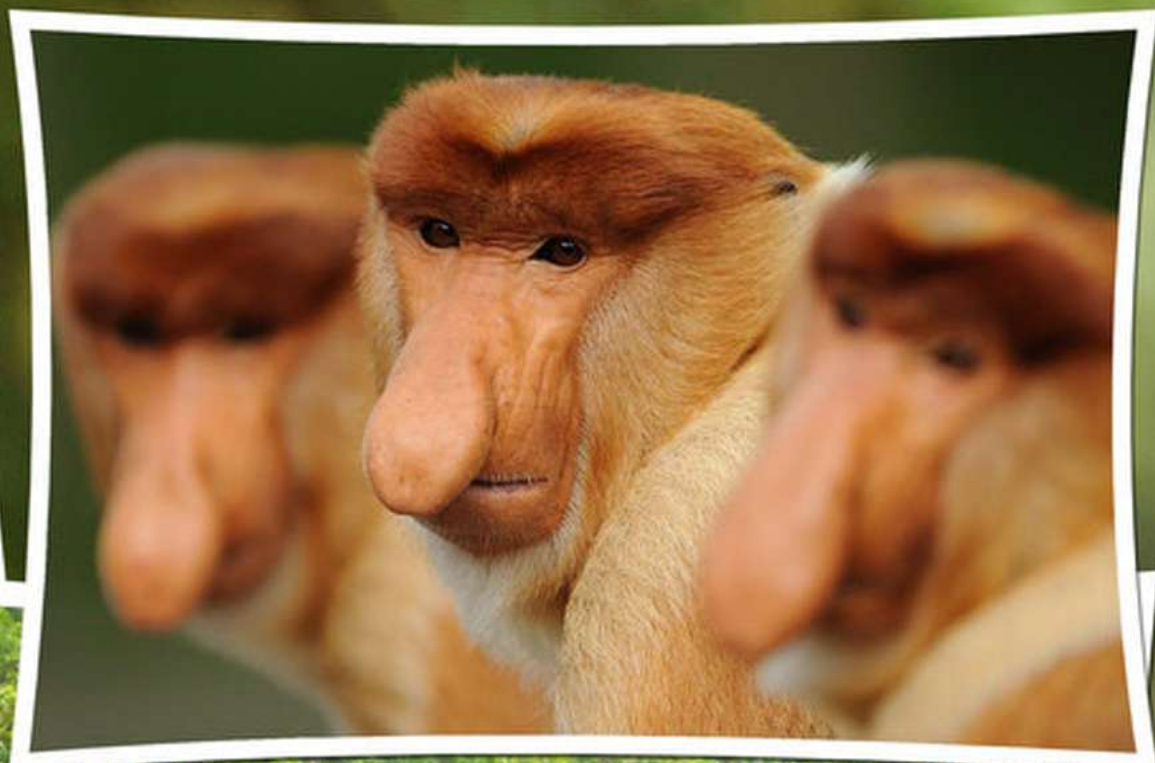
**Hippopotamus** *Hippopotamus amphibius*

Hippos are semiaquatic, inhabiting rivers, lakes and mangrove swamps, where territorial bulls preside over a stretch of river and groups of five to 30 females and young. During the day, they remain cool by staying in the water.

**Bush breakfast**

Rather difficult road access means most visitors arrive by small aircraft from Dar es Salaam, though train access is also possible.

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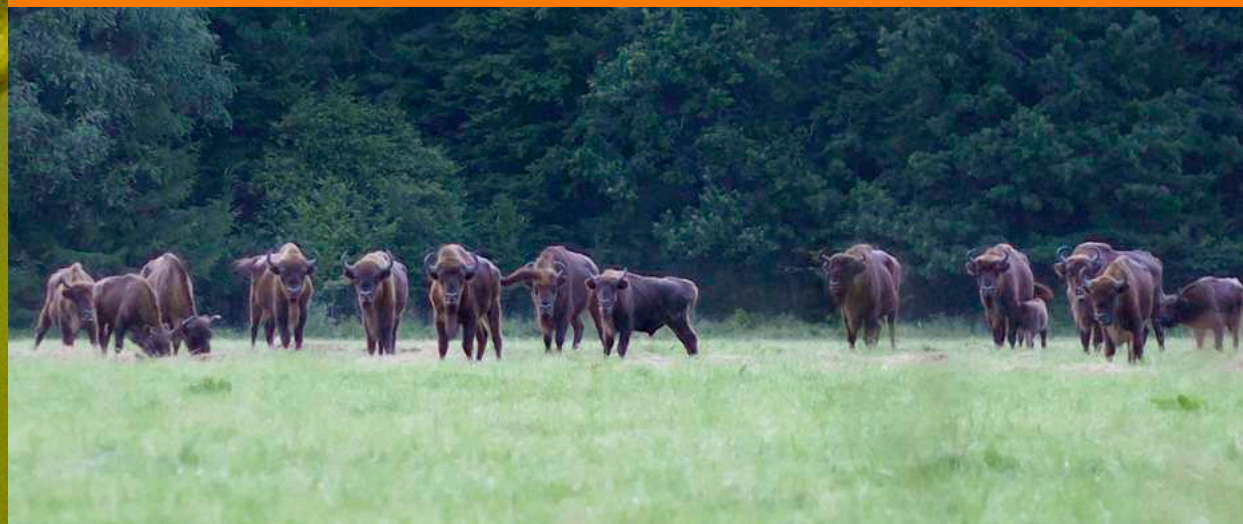


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"My experience was EXCEPTIONAL! The trip exceeded my expectations in all areas. I hoped to get in a position to see owls and couldn't possibly have been happier. It was abundantly clear that David invested significant time and effort prior to the arrival 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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Spotlight

A stunning example of the
strange mutualistic relationship
between the microhylid frog
Chiasmocleis ventrimaculata
and the giant tarantula
Pamphobeteus sp.

A TINY FROG AND A GIANT TARANTULA

THE ODD COUPLE

The unique - and mysterious - mutualistic relationship between a giant predatory South American spider and a minuscule defenceless amphibian



While regularly preying on other terrestrial and tree frogs, the giant tarantula ignores the presence of the small frog.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY EMANUELE BIGGI
AND FRANCESCO TOMASINELLI

*F*rogs lead difficult lives in South American rainforests. Many of them are preyed on by snakes and by arthropods, especially by spiders, which are big and particularly active at night. Tarantulas like *Teraphosa*, *Pamphobeteus* and *Avicularia*, especially adult females, are adept killers of treefrogs and forest floor species smaller than themselves. But there is a frog that has developed a peculiar relationship with some spiders. This is the Microhylid *Chiasmocleis ventrimaculata*, a 3 cm long terrestrial frog, common on the wettest forest floor, near rivers. But what is interesting is that this species lives, often in good numbers, near and inside spider burrows of some tarantulas species. The spider, a still undescribed but very large, relatively common and locally well-known *Theraphosidae* species belonging to the genus *Pamphobeteus*, tolerates the frog and never attacks it. Adult females of this

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Adult female tarantulas
Pamphobeteus sp. not only
tolerate the tiny microhylid
Chiasmocleis ventrimaculata,
but also show a surprising
amount of maternal care,
living with their offspring
without showing any
cannibalistic
tendencies.





Young of *Pamphobeteus* not only live for at least one year with the adult female (without being eaten and without eating each other), but are also capable of communal feeding - this unique sequence shows the clutch preying on an unfortunate tree frog.



■ An adult female of *Pamphobeteus* explores the forest floor. These large tarantulas leave their burrow very rarely, and do not venture very far from it.

A juvenile Pamphobeteus preys on an unlucky tree frog. These very large and impressive arachnids are known as "Aranhas pollitos" or "Chicken Tarantulas" in South America due to their habit of living communally with their offspring, rather like a hen with its chicks. Top right, another image of a large adult with its tiny microhylid "house mate".



species live together with their spiderlings until they have reached at least one year of age, with no sign of cannibalism. They also feature communal feeding, mother and babies, on cockroaches, crickets and of course small frogs but they pay no attention to this tiny Microhylid living with them. Field tests indicate that the frog is probably recognized thanks to skin chemicals which the spider finds unpalatable.

The advantages for *Chiasmocleis ventrimaculata* seem obvious: thanks to its fearsome bodyguard it won't be attacked by other spiders and by small snakes. Intrusions are not tolerated in the tarantula territory.

And it's also possible that the arachnid is somehow helped by the frog which preys upon small parasites (mainly *Diptera*) and possibly ants, which could harm the spider or its eggs. This curious relationship is one of the few cases of mutualism between amphibian and spiders, for the first time photographed in such detail. The relationship between the two partners anyway is not rigid: many tarantula burrows were observed without frogs, as well as free frogs roaming on forest floor with no spider "bodyguard". Similar cases have been documented with *Xenesthis immanis* instead of

One of several theories put forward to justify the peaceful coexistence of these two apparently incompatible species (at right) postulates that the tiny frog feeds on the parasitic larvae (top right) which are often found on large tarantulas. Body chemicals secreted by the amphibian are also quite possibly involved.



Pamphobeteus sp, but it's likely that other tarantula species enjoy this sort of mutualistic relationship with *Chiasmocleis*. Close relationships between the Microhylids *Ramanella nagaoi* and *Kaloula taprobanica* and the tarantulas *Poecilotheria ornata* and *P. subfusca* have been observed in Sri Lanka. These species are large and aggressive arboreal hunters, known to consume tree frogs. But apparently *Ramanella* shares tree holes with these spiders and their young without being attacked. Another relationship has been reported between the spider *Aphonopelma seemanni* and the Tungara frog *Engystomops pustulosus*

from Mexico. This last relationship widens the spectrum, because the frog isn't a Microhylidae like the previous ones. It really seems that mysterious relationships between spiders and frogs are much more widespread than thought initially, and this could lead to even more fascinating discoveries in the near future. Tropical forests are erupting volcanoes of biodiversity, each species being bound to tens of others in an endless and complex web of relationships. Disentangling this web and understanding its schemes is one of the most interesting and important challenges in tropical biology research. ●

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The Parting Shot

I took this portrait of a Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* on the beach of Madoogali, a tiny, jewel-like, Italian-managed resort in the Republic of the Maldives. I admit I do not particularly love the Maldives - a hardline, secretive Islamic state which hides behind the facade of a tropical paradise open to international tourism but which in fact doesn't allow interaction with the native population

and whose backward social policies don't seem to get better with time - but I have to add that the island and beach panoramas, the vibrant, colorful ocean life and the unique beauty of this Indian Ocean archipelago are truly mesmerizing. I imagine this big bird had been a migrant which had become somewhat disorientated and had landed in exhaustion on the island. Whatever the reason, he seemed

to have adapted pretty well to the situation, and appeared to have readily adopted the island lifestyle, taking the occasional beach stroll in the late afternoon and being fed fish scraps by the resort's kitchen staff. I loved the contrast between its bright white plumage, the aquamarine lagoon and the rain-laden, stormy clouds on the horizon - and this is the result, a true postcard from paradise. ●

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Fan-throated
lizard



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FABULOUS FINLAND

A Trip Report by Guido Muratore



**PLIGHT OF
DARWIN'S FROG**

Dante Fenolio's field
conservation work



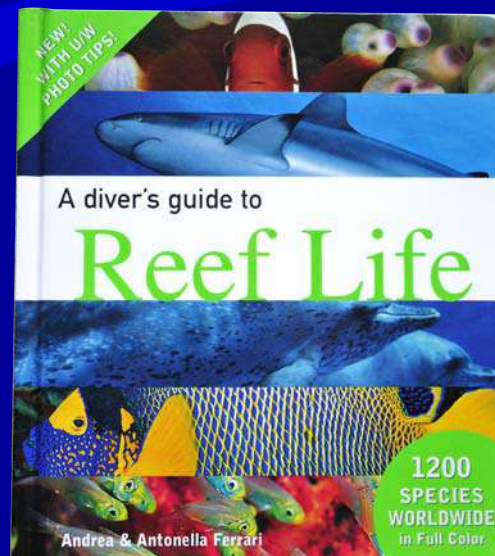
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Ferraris also produced *A Diver's Guide to Underwater Malaysia Macrolife*, in my opinion the best of its kind. Now they have created an indispensable companion volume that will serve every diver well. • BOB GOEMANS, SALT CORNER.COM: This work is truly a must for all that are interested in the underwater creatures that inhabit our tropical waters. • CLAUDIA PELLARINI, SUBMERGE MAGAZINE: As essential as your passport on every dive trip from the Red Sea to the Caribbean and Indo Pacific.



A Diver's Guide to the Art of Underwater Photography

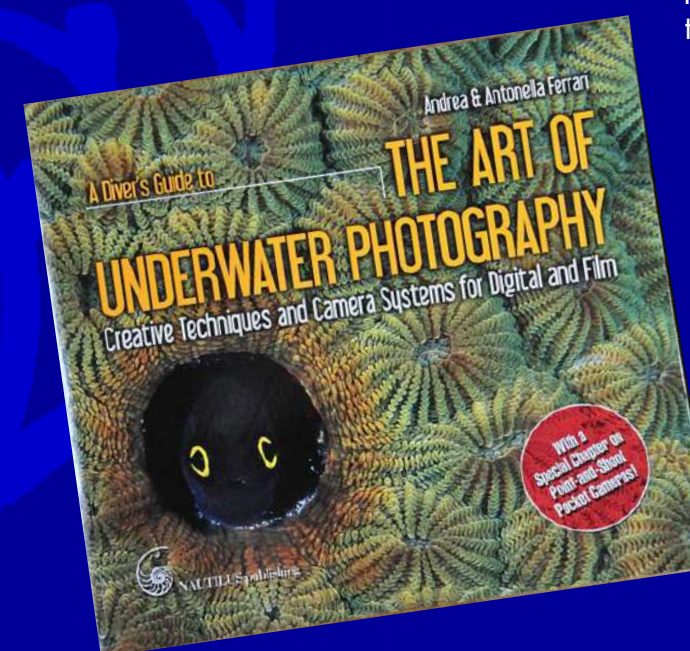
Creative Techniques and Camera Systems for Digital and Film

A highly-readable, technically-accessible, step-by-step guide in eight chapters to the secrets and wonders of underwater photography - featuring dozens of stunning, inspiring images by several of the world's most brilliant authors

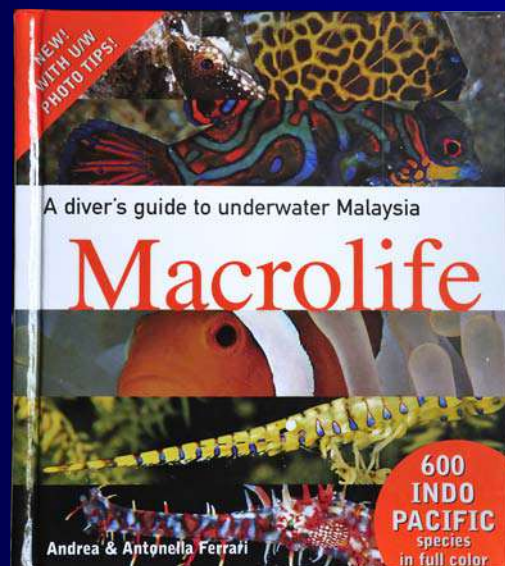
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ALEX MUSTARD, WETPIXEL.COM: This book gives us a rare insight into the mindset, dedication and imagination involved in creating magnificent underwater images. I sat down and read this enjoyable book from cover to cover. The lack of techno-talk makes it a very accessible method to improve your photography. The images are some of the finest you will see in a guide to underwater photography. All the images are very well reproduced, which will not come as a surprise to anyone who owns any of the other books by the authors. A large format 360 page feast of fabulous images and thought provoking and enjoyable writing on taking pictures in the ocean. • UNDERCURRENT: This book is filled with spectacular images, designed not only to offer great technical guidance, but also help the underwater photographer discover and develop the artist within. Clearly the best and most beautiful "how-to" book ever produced. • JOHN BANTIN, DIVER MAGAZINE: With an enviable reputation for authoring fine books on underwater photography, the Ferraris have laced the pages of their new book with juicy pictures.

There is none of the pseudo-art talk that often ruins otherwise beautiful books of photographs. I read it from cover to cover, and it's a great read. The pictures do the talking, and need no talking-up. This 360-page volume doesn't have a weak page in it. • MIKE SEVERNS DIVING: This book is less about the technical aspects of the craft and more about the art and the "eye." This is a big, fat, beautiful, coffee-table-type book that includes 400 photographs illustrating techniques to achieve such effects as artistic lighting and framing. Inspirational as well as educational.



DIVE INTO DISCOVERY WITH NAUTILUS PUBLISHING



A Diver's Guide to Underwater Malaysia Macrolife

600 INDO-PACIFIC MACRO marine species featuring 800 SPECTACULAR COLOR PHOTOS with full details on distribution, habitat, size, life habits and underwater photography tips

THIS IS WHAT THE DIVING COMMUNITY SAYS

DIVERNET: Not only does it help identify the critters, but it also gives useful tips on how to photograph them. • BACKSCATTER: Best work I've yet seen. For Mabul or Kunkungan, this book should be as necessary as a passport. • FAMA MAGAZINE: Well written, quite informative, beautifully illustrated... a priced right, quality publication. Get a copy, you'll be happy you did! • TAUCHEN MAGAZINE: 600 marine species illustrated with spectacular photos and a compact text for a very useful and much needed underwater guide. • ASIAN DIVER: Illustrated with more than 800

extraordinary colour photos, this is the field guide of choice for all serious macro divers. • NORTHERN CALIFORNIA UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY: The photography is impressive - if you need to identify any species from this area, this guide is a gem. • UNDERCURRENT: We just discovered the ultimate guide to Indo-Pacific macro life - this book is a must for traveling divers. BBC WILDLIFE MAGAZINE: Identifies and describes 600 small marine species from the Indo-Pacific. Clear, concise, informative... packed with more than 800 colour photos. • FOUR LAKES SCUBA CLUB: Both a macro and a fish field guide for all serious divers from the Maldives to Australia. A must! • DIVER MAGAZINE: Colour photographs of the highest quality make it easy to identify what you have seen...An essential tool for anyone.

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