

ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

Issue 16, Year 4 - 4th Quarter, October 2014

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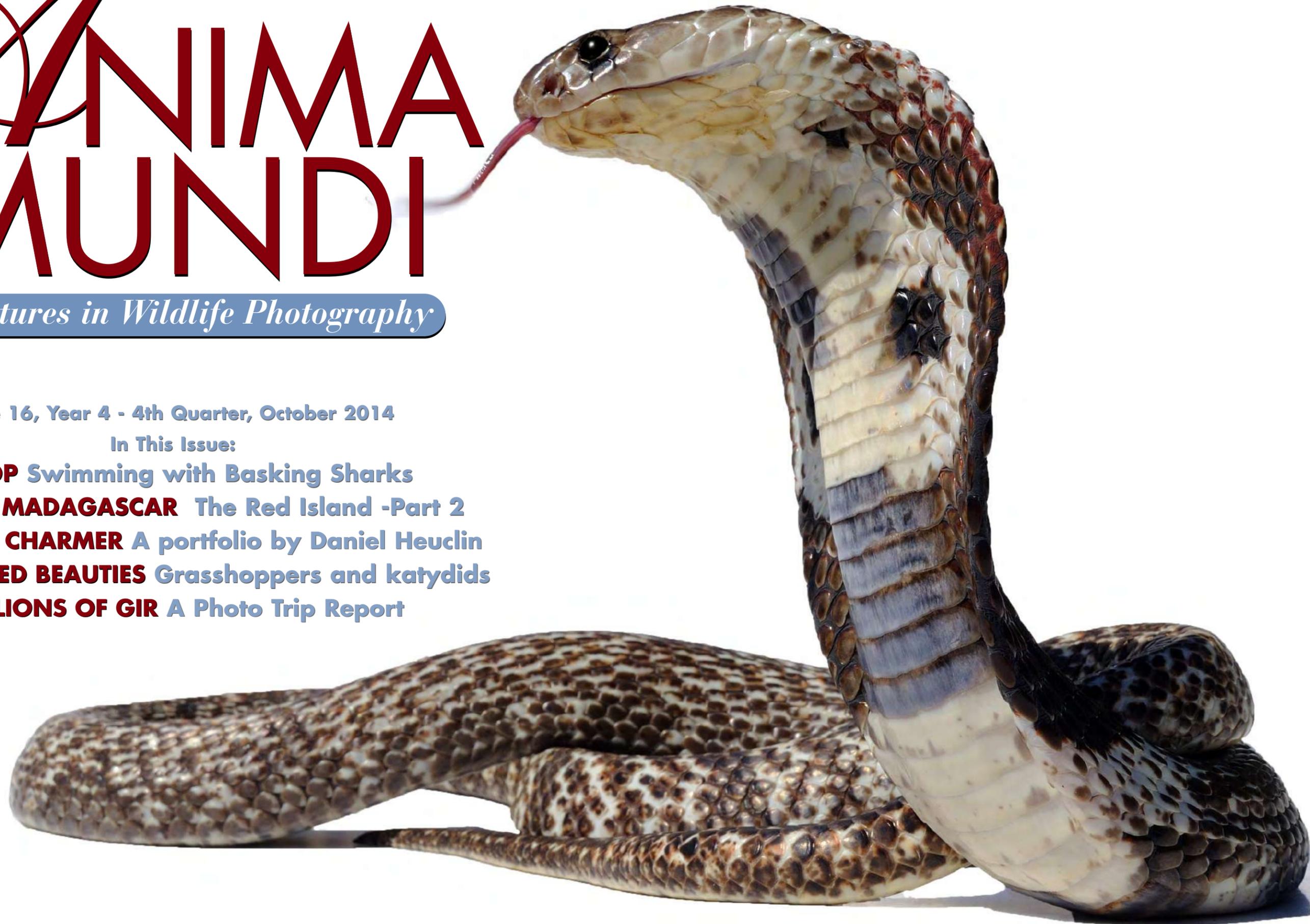
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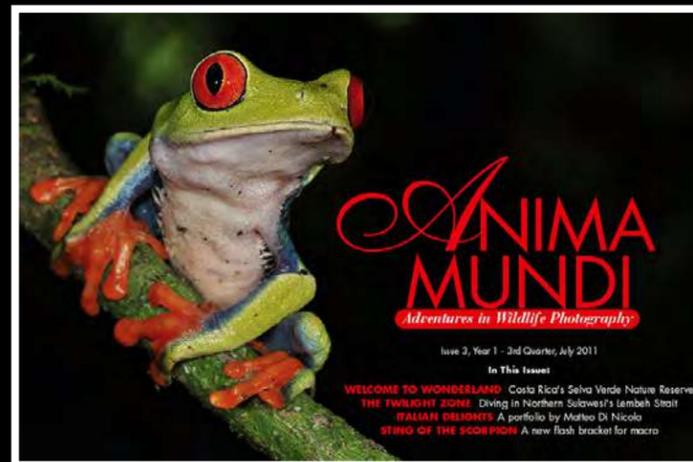
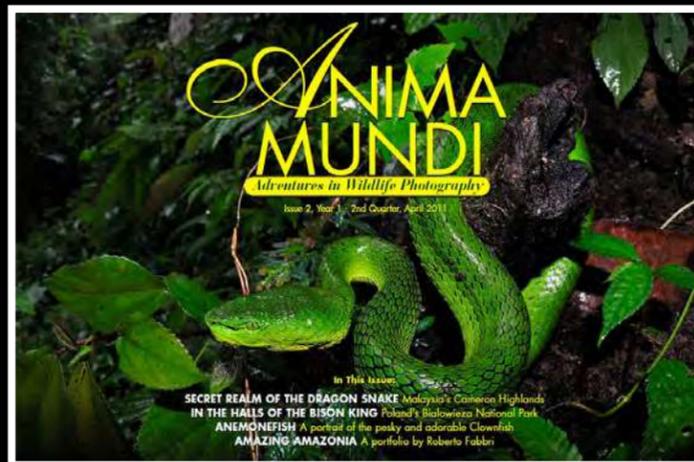
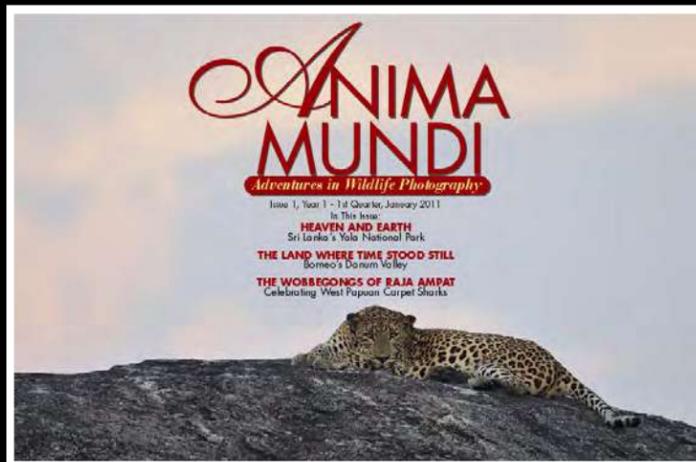
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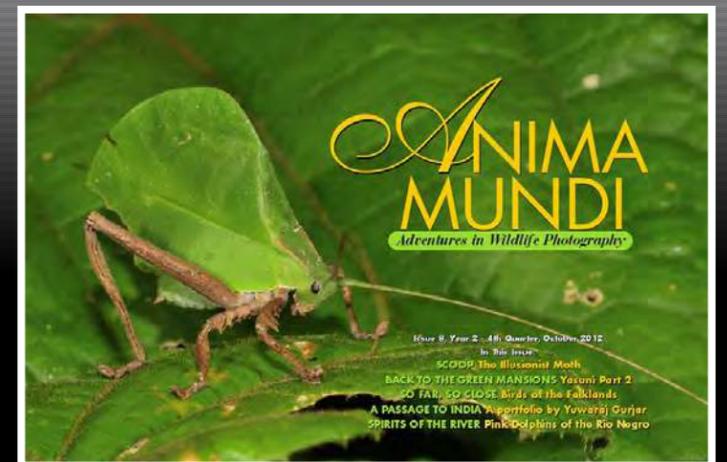
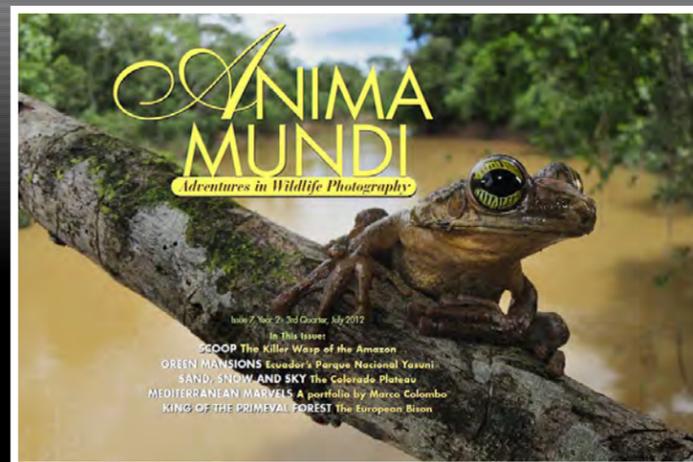


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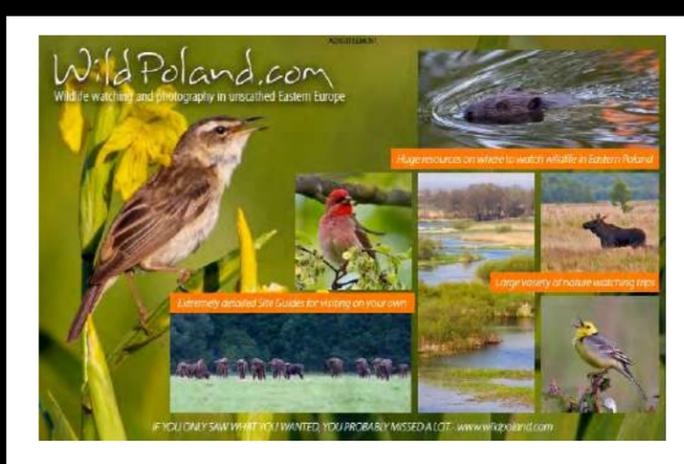
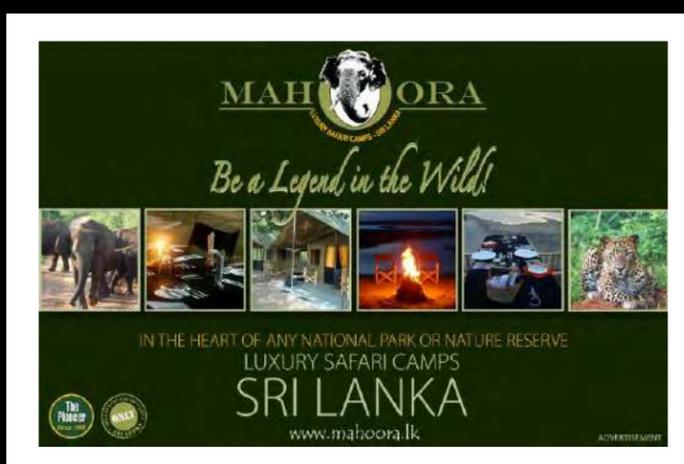
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Dear Andrea & Antonella,

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

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



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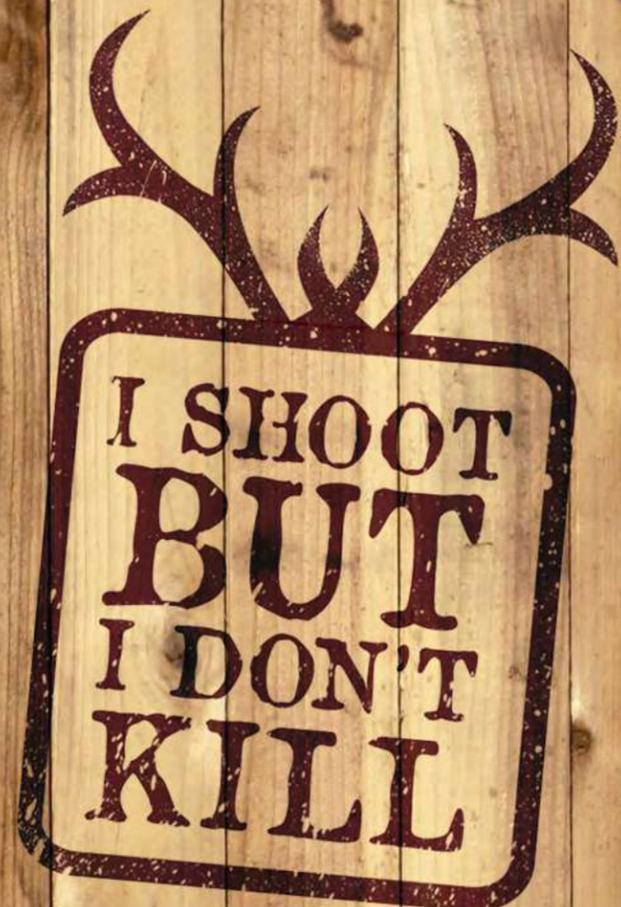
When Giovanna Holbrook took on the challenge of leading two University of Florida science professors and a group of naturalists to the Galápagos Islands in 1971, she had no way of knowing the lasting impact that experience would have on her life and on the lives of those traveling with her. The group 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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ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

Random ruminations

This time we won't be using this column to introduce our current issue - you can find the contents in the following Summary page, and then enjoy discovering them page after page. Rather, I'd like to share with you - Andrea is writing here - some random ruminations about wildlife photography...what it means for us, and how it should be done according to our ethics. With the current and apparently unstoppable deluge of low-grade photographic trash and deceitful imagery flooding the social networks, I really feel the urge to set things straight. Ready for the rant? Here we go...

1 - As editors of ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography* we strive to never take pictures of captive, confined, human-habituated animals. It might have happened on one or two occasions when an image was badly needed to illustrate a particularly rare species which we knew being present but had not been able to observe in the wild, but as a rule all our images are of completely wild individuals, portrayed in their natural environment. Occasional, careful manipulation may however take place with some dangerous snake species - i.e. the animal found in the wild needs to be gently moved to a more suitable position in the immediate vicinity to be photographed - this is a common practice adopted by most reptile photographers and field researchers since most snakes cannot be properly portrayed as they are usually found hiding or in inaccessible places.

2 - As editors of ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography* we are strongly committed against the use of baiting and feeding of wild animals for the purpose of photographing them (as it is often done with several iconic species, from sharks to eagles and bears). We despise the practice and none of our images is taken using it. We go and search long and hard for our subjects, and we are not necessarily always successful...but that's how wild animals in their natural environment are.

3 - As editors of ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography* we never use hides to photograph animals, particularly where baiting is used. The only exception to this rule is with scientific research hides near salt licks, when they are needed to avoid disturbance to the animals' natural behavior - as in the case with macaws in Peru.

4 - As editors of ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography* we deeply dislike and try to avoid any human-animal interaction images, especially where feeding and touching are involved. Rare exceptions to the rule are accepted when a size comparison is useful or a significant conservation message is attached to the image - as in our photo in this issue's Parting Shot on page 116.

5 - As editors of ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography* we never apply any Photoshop effects to our images. There is no cloning (bar the occasional speck of sensor dust) and no artificial enhancing of our photography - what you see is exactly what we observed in the field.

6 - Contributors to ANIMA MUNDI - *Adventures in Wildlife Photography* may occasionally resort to one or more of the practices above, but this is their choice alone. In this case we can accept publishing such images when overall quality grants it.

All the above might sound granted and obvious to some, but I felt it was about time to put it in writing for all to read, as the grotesque fakery which is overwhelming the digital media is dangerously blurring the line between reality and illusion. And we feel nature is badly served by fake, made-up images! We'll probably pick the subject up again in the future - in the meantime...

Have a good trip!
Andrea & Antonella Ferrari
www.animamundimag.com

■ Malagasy Tree Frog *Boophis madagascariensis*, Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, Madagascar. See our article starting from page 12.



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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Andrea and Antonella Ferrari
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Editor-in-Chief
Andrea Ferrari
editor@animamundimag.com

Original Layout Design
Laura Genovese
Anna Bortolini

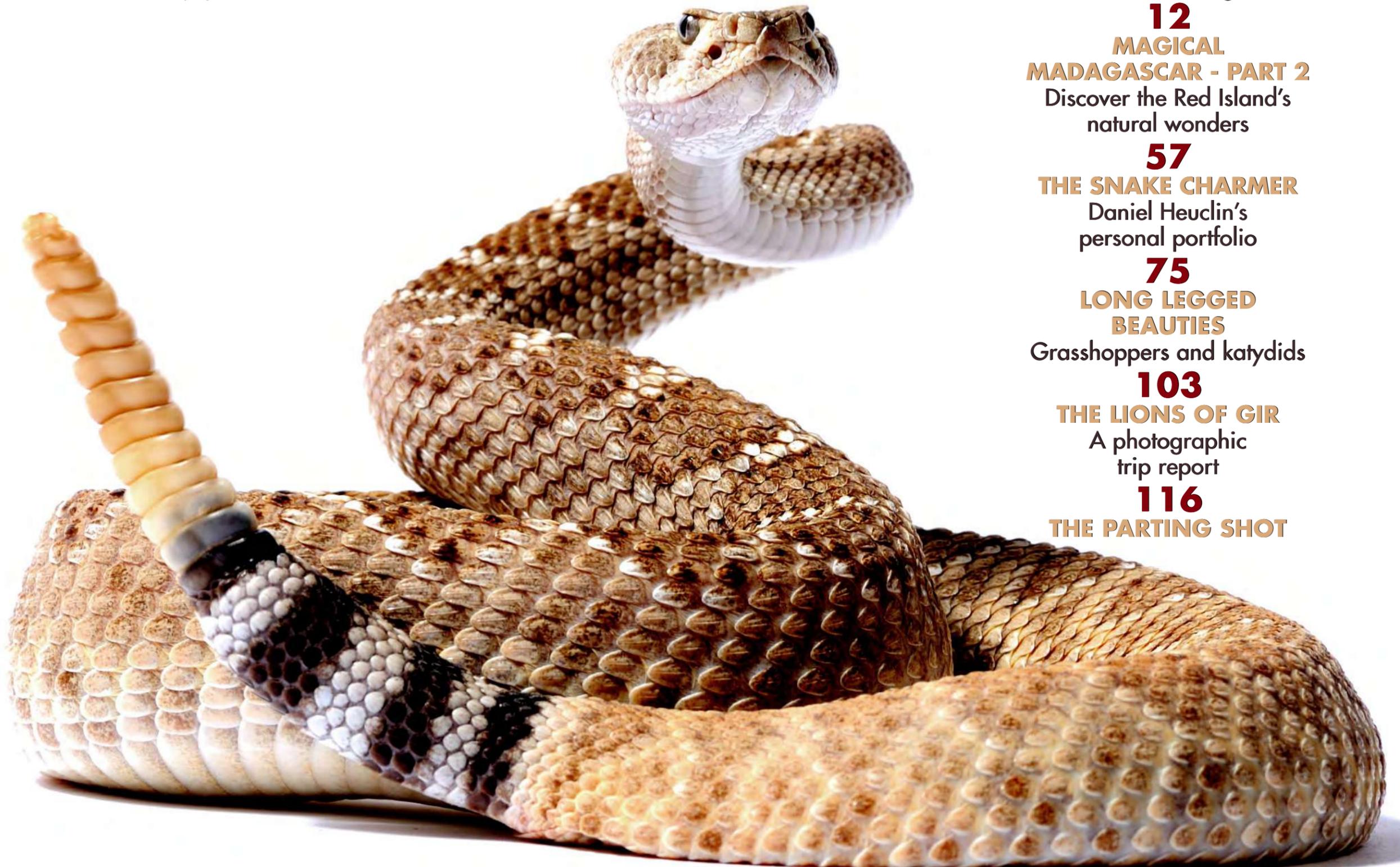
Videographer
Antonella Ferrari
anto@reefwonders.net

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

Technical Support
Komodo adv
mail@komodo-adv.com

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■ A Western Diamondback
rattlesnake *Crotalus atrox* poses
for legendary French snake
photographer Daniel Heuclin -
see his Portfolio from page 57.



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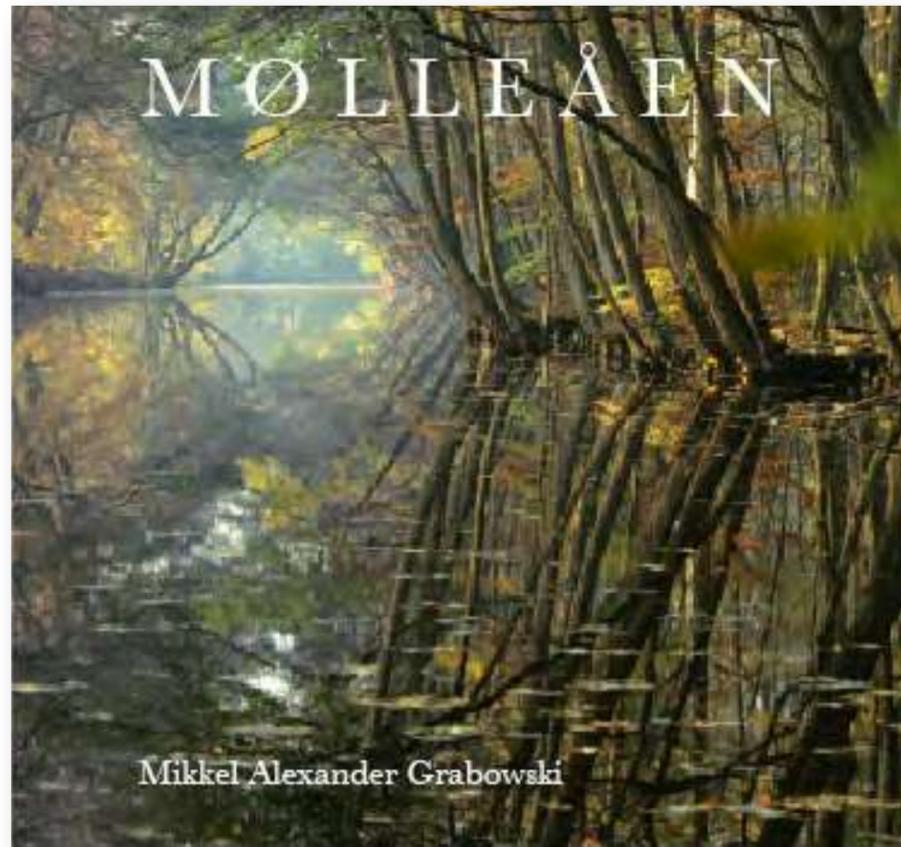
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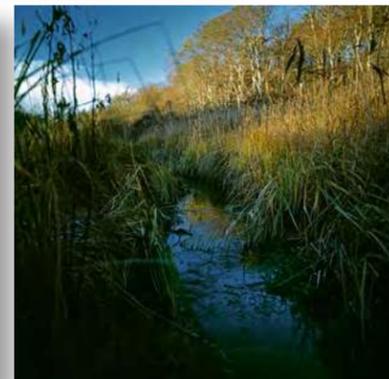
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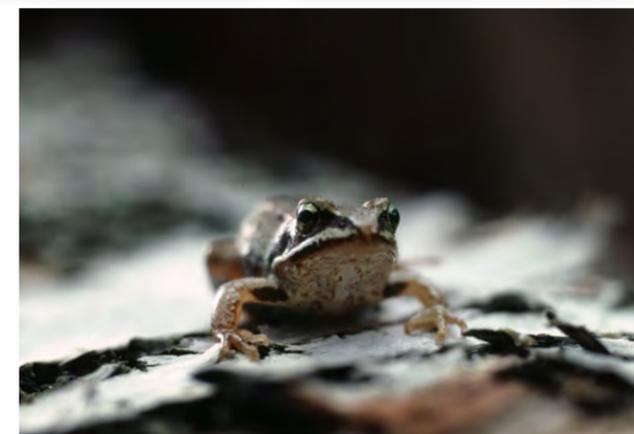
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MEET THE BASKING SHARK **THE GENTLE GIANT**

SNORKELLING WITH ONE OF THE
**MOST IMPRESSIVE
SHARK SPECIES**
IN THE SCOTTISH WATERS
OF THE HEBRIDES



— The Basking shark *Cetorhinus maximus* is the second-largest living fish, after the Whale shark, and one of three plankton-eating sharks besides the Whale shark and Megamouth shark. It is a slow-moving filter feeder and as such it shows anatomical adaptations to filter feeding, such as a greatly enlarged mouth and highly developed gill rakers, clearly visible in the photo.



On average, adult Basking sharks reach a length of 6–8 m (20–26 ft) and weigh about 5.2 tons. Some specimens still surpass 9–10 m (30–33 ft), but after years of large-scale fishing, specimens of this size have become very rare. Despite its large size and threatening appearance, this species is not aggressive and is harmless to people.

TEXT BY BRIGITTA LUYKX
PHOTOS BY RINIE LUYKX

Captain Jimbo and Sharky, our guide, are looking through their binoculars. They stare at the sea, hoping to spot some fins. We are on our way on the Bold Ranger, a chartered boat, trying to find the great Basking sharks of Scotland. We left earlier from the jetty of The Isle of Mull, and at the moment we are in the area of Gunna. So far, no luck. Captain James decides to move on to a place called Tirey. On our way there we see lots of puffins and razorbills, and sometimes a curious seal follows us from a distance. The weather is very good for Scotland and the sea is nice and calm - perfect weather for spotting marine mammals. Just when we think there will be no sharks for today, our captain starts screaming and laughing. He points at a few spots in the distance. There are many sharks over there! Their big dorsal fins are slicing the water. It

looks very impressive, the water is so clear you can see the shark swimming under the boat. I look at Rinie and see a big smile all over his face. Our first day and plenty of sharks! Time to change into our dive suits and jump into the water to snorkel with these huge creatures. We climb down to a small platform. The captain tells us to sit down on the platform while he maneuvers so that the sharks will be swimming towards us. Finally there is the call: "Jump! Jump!". We both jump in to the water, and as soon as we look down we see a shark approaching us. Wow! My heart starts pumping fast. They are really big with their mouth wide open. Its mouth is so big I could swim straight into it - it would probably spit me out immediately because it is a filter feeder. This species eats plankton, and there is lots of plankton in the water at the moment - this explains

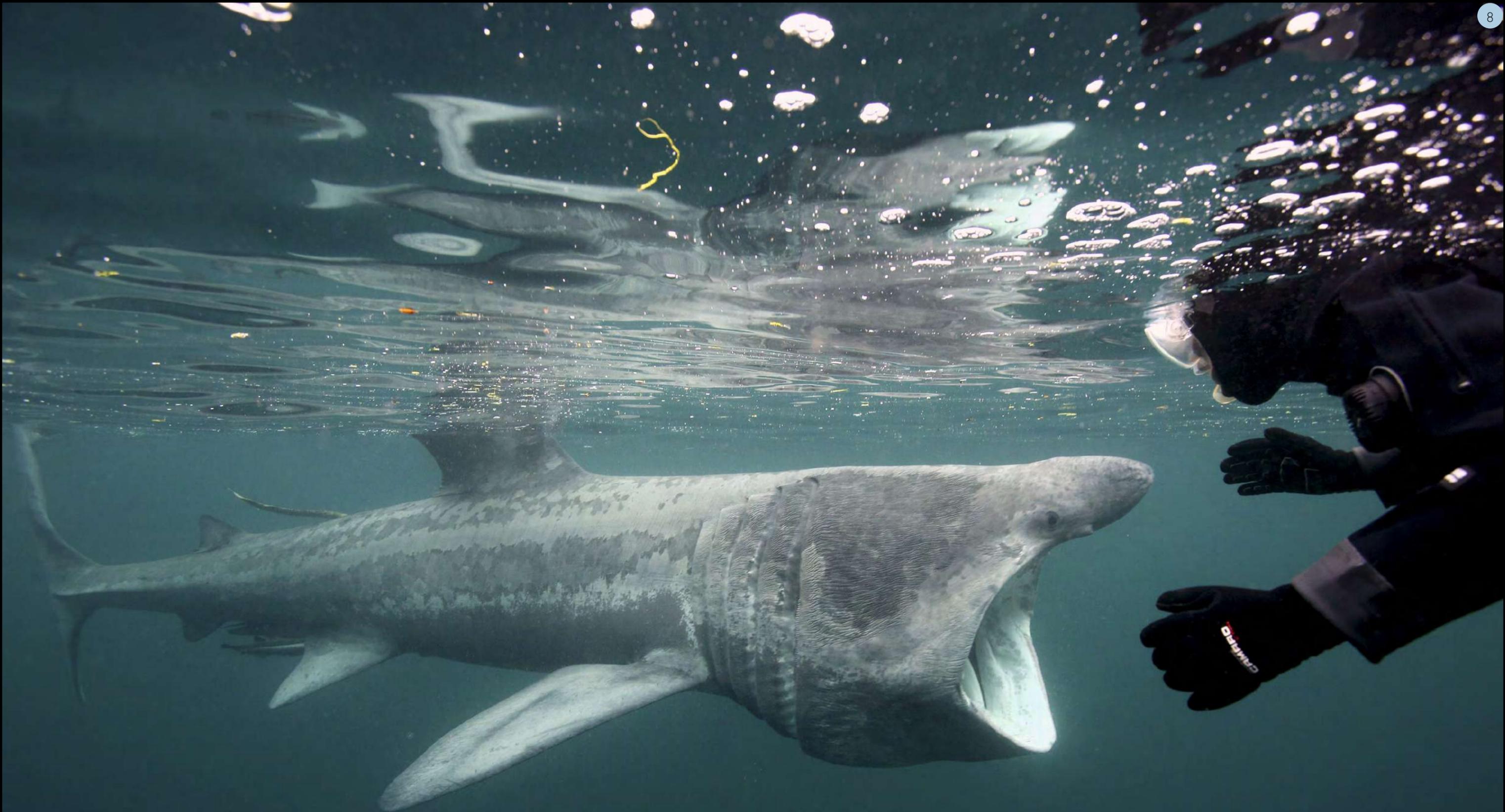
the large numbers of sharks that surround us. Then the shark comes so close I can almost touch it. It closes his mouth and turns away from me. When it turns I fear it will hit me with his big powerful tail, but it manages to avoid me completely. Rinie is taking pictures of this big individual. The one in front of him just turns away, but when I look behind him there are two others approaching him. I scream loud to him "Look behind you!", quickly he turns and gets his camera ready for the next two sharks. The sharks are approximately 6-8 meters long. Our captain is constantly screaming from the boat "Behind you, behind you!" - they are really everywhere, they are circling around us, everywhere we look we see sharks. After one hour and a half the numbers of sharks finally starts to decrease. And it is time for us to go back on the boat.

Basking sharks probably overwinter in deep waters. Small schools in the Bay of Fundy and the Hebrides have been seen swimming nose to tail in circles in what may be a form of mating behavior. Right, a Basking shark cruising on the surface and a colorful view of the harbour of Mull in the Scottish Hebrides.





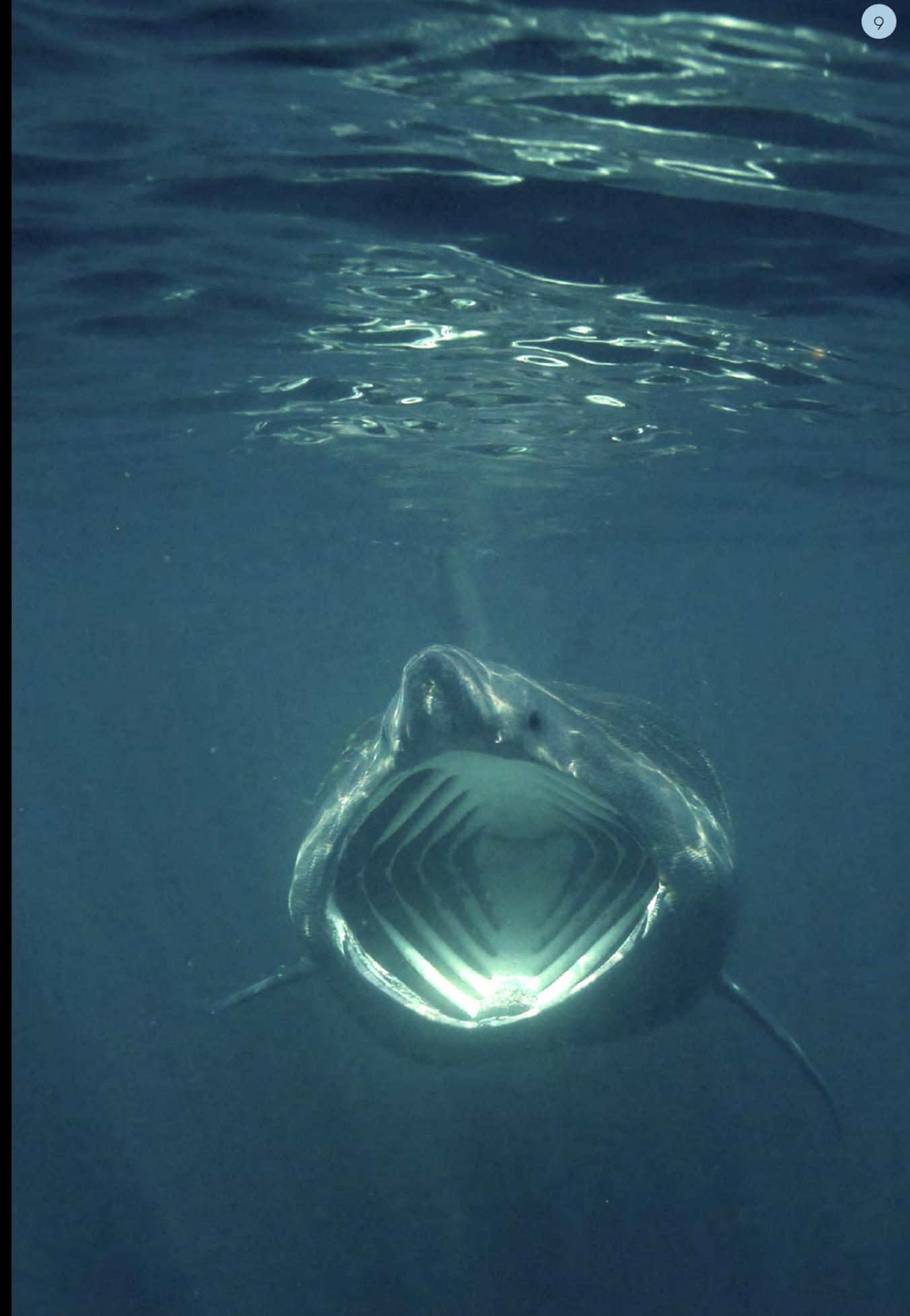
The Basking shark is a coastal-pelagic shark found worldwide in boreal to warm-temperate waters around the continental shelves. It prefers 8.0 to 14.5°C (46 to 58°F) temperatures, but it has been confirmed to cross the much-warmer waters at the Equator. It is often seen close to land, including bays with narrow openings. This species follows plankton concentrations in the water column, so it is often visible at the surface.

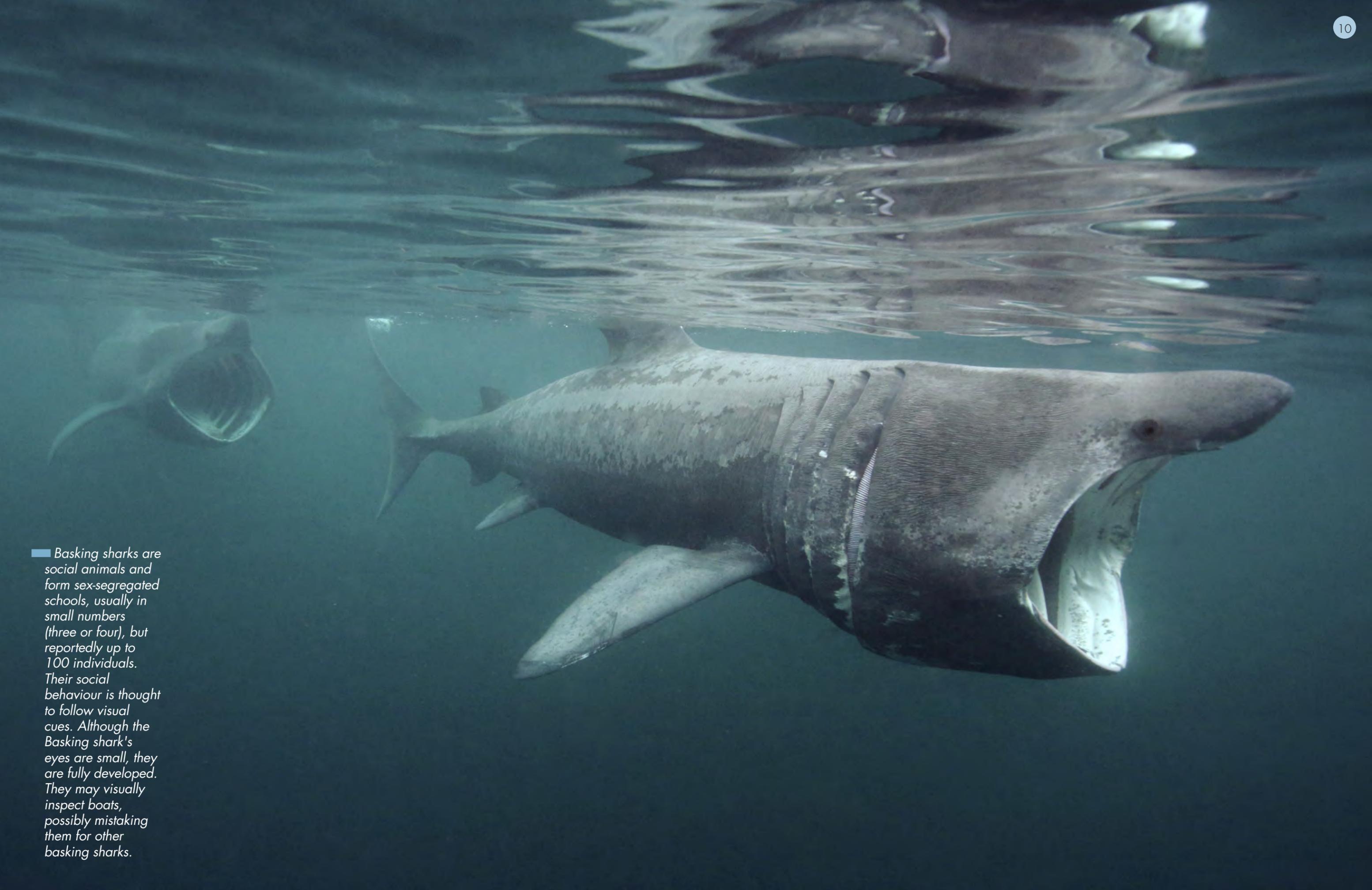


■ The shape of the snout is typically conical and the gill slits extend around the top and bottom of the head. The gill rakers, dark and bristle-like, are used to catch plankton as water filters through the mouth and over the gills. Basking sharks are usually greyish-brown in color with mottled skin. The caudal fin has a strong lateral keel and a crescent shape.



Above and left, our friend Rinie Luykx admires some beautiful Atlantic or Common puffins *Fratercula arctica*. Right, the imposing view of a Basking shark as it cruises feeding just below the surface. Adults typically reach 6-8 m in length.



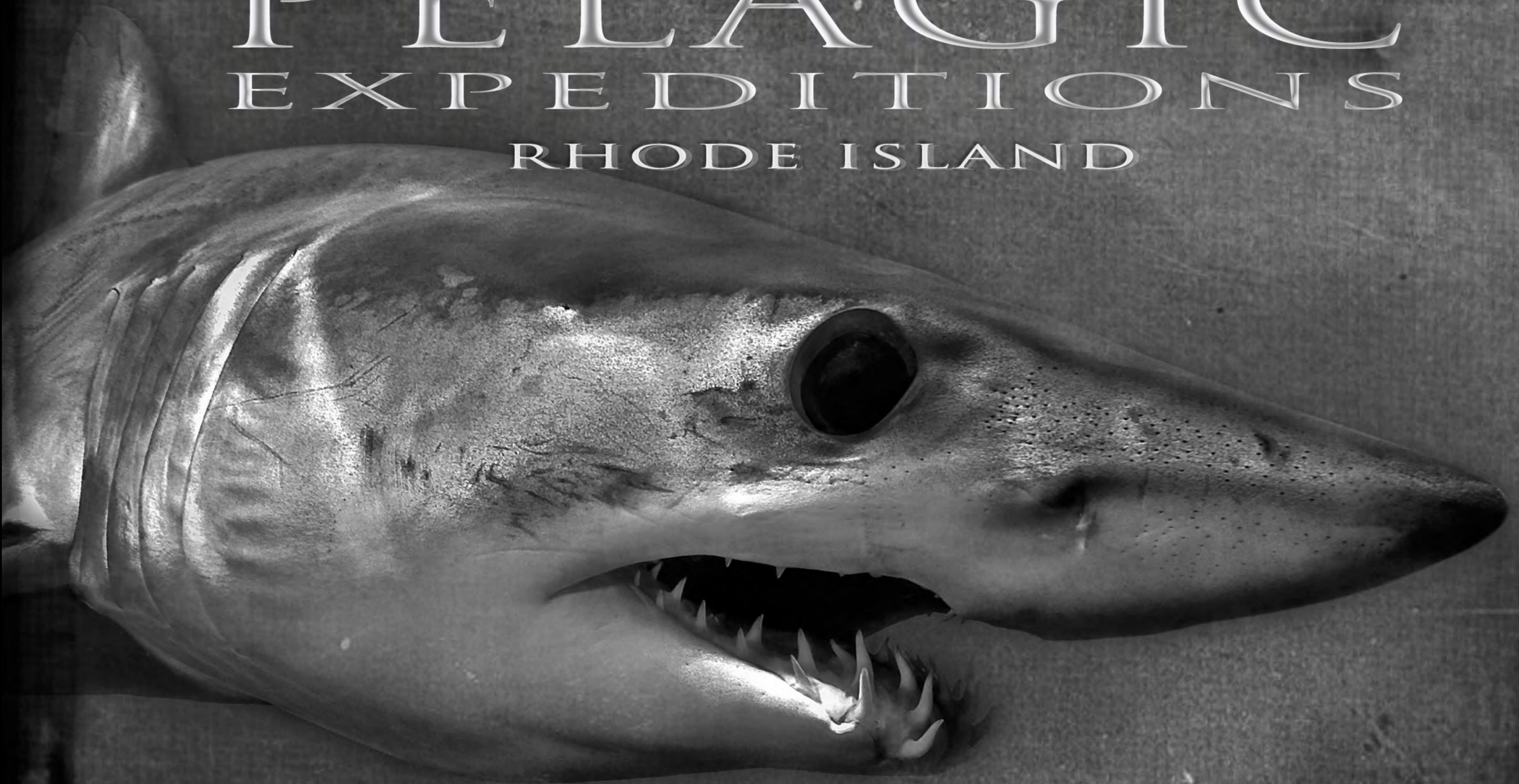


■ Basking sharks are social animals and form sex-segregated schools, usually in small numbers (three or four), but reportedly up to 100 individuals. Their social behaviour is thought to follow visual cues. Although the Basking shark's eyes are small, they are fully developed. They may visually inspect boats, possibly mistaking them for other basking sharks.



*The Basking shark **Cetorhinus maximus** has long been a commercially important fish, as a source of food, shark fin, animal feed, and shark liver oil. Like in so many other shark species, overexploitation has reduced its populations to the point where some have disappeared and others need protection.*

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NATURAL WONDERS OF THE RED ISLAND

MAGICAL MADAGASCAR

PART TWO

The second chapter of our herpetological expedition to the legendary land of endemisms in search of colorful chameleons - not to mention rare lemurs, amazing insects and spectacular landscapes



Short-horned Chameleon 
Calumma brevicorne, male,
Andasibe-Matadia National Park.

Ambalabongo Canyon, landscape sculpted by erosion, Ankarafantsika National Park.





■ Giant Leaf-tailed Gecko *Uroplatus giganteus*, Montagne d'Ambre National Park.

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

After having attempted in our previous issue to give a broad idea of what to expect during a wildlife photography trip to Madagascar, it is now time to get down to the details. When gathering information, we soon found out that the island of Madagascar is home to a stupefying number of species, but mostly of them are either seasonal or ranging throughout relatively small areas often separated by great distances, so one has to decide what will be the "target" subject before leaving. We opted for chameleons, so our itinerary was built around them - frogs, lemurs, birds and

landscapes would be incidental (as you probably have realized by now, in Madagascar that means one would see a lot of them anyway!). One fact which actually surprised us in the course of our research is that most chameleons are apparently seasonal, and quite difficult to encounter during most of the year, when they retire to the forest canopy and wear a relatively modest livery in greens and browns. The trick to get truly impressive portraits of these amazing animals is visiting Madagascar at the peak of their breeding season – between March and April, under normal conditions –

continued on page 16 ➤



Madagascan Tree Boa *Sanzinia* ■
madagascariensis, Andasibe-
Mantadia National Park.

*A veritable wonderland
of a thousand wondrous
colors and shapes*



and planning a very specific itinerary aimed at chameleon encounters. This is exactly what we did, relying on the experienced advice and faultless organization of our friend Thorsten Negro of [TanalaHorizon](#) - and what follows is a description of our itinerary.

FROM ANDASIBE TO VOIMANA

After arriving in the capital Antananarivo, we were driven east to the mountain cloud forests of Andasibe and Voimana. Andasibe-Mantadia National Park is a 155 square kilometre protected area consisting principally of primary growth forest in the Alaotra-Mangoro region in eastern Madagascar. The park's elevation ranges from 900-1250 meters, with a humid climate. Average annual precipitation is 1700 mm, with rainfall on 210 days of each year. This rainforest is habitat to a vast species biodiversity, including many endemic rare and endangered species, including eleven lemur species. The Park's two component parts are

Mantadia National Park and Analamazoatra Reserve, which is best known for its population of Madagascar's largest lemur, the Indri. This is one of the easiest Parks in Madagascar to visit from the capital city, Antananarivo, with a 3-hour drive east on a paved road, Route Nacional 2 (RN 2). While Analamazoatra and park headquarters are short walks from Antsapanana on the RN 2, special transport must be arranged or hired from local hotels to reach Mantadia. Hikes ranging from 1-6 hours are typically available in both parts of the Park. A local guide is required for visitors entering both parts.

The main threat to this Park comes from the disappearance of adjoining habitat outside it, caused primarily by logging and replacement of rainforest with commercial Australian eucalyptus and Chinese pine forests, and to a lesser extent by slash-and-burn cultivation for rice agriculture, which is exacerbated by the extremely high population growth rate and poverty in rural Madagascar. To address the disappearing habitat threat, reserves have been created in the vicinity of Andasibe-Mantadia that balance resource extraction with environmental protection, and attempt to create economic and environmentally preferable alternatives to replacing native forests with eucalyptus and pine. There are many interesting chameleon species here, such as *Calumma parsonii*, *Calumma parsoni cristiferum* and many more. We also stopped on the way at the reptile and amphibian breeding farm in Mandraka. In

continued on page 18 ➤

■ Panther
Chameleon
Furcifer
pardalis, adult
male, Djangoa
color morph,
Ankaramy-
Ambanja route.



Andasibe our group was divided into smaller groups (one of which was composed by the two of us!), so it was not too crowded during the excursions and everybody got a chance to see the animals well. While one group went to Analamazaotra National Park looking for chameleons and lemurs, the other group visited the nearby Voimana Nature Reserve looking for more chameleons, in particular the tiny but stunning *Calumma gallus*. After three nights in Andasibe we went back to the capital and then continued to the north, in direction of Ankarafantsika.

NORTH TO ANKARAFANTSIKA

Driving through the beautiful northern highlands, we then reached the National Park of Ankarafantsika. Ankarafantsika National Park lies in the Boeny Region of Madagascar. The closest city is Majunga, 115 km north of the Park. The area is mostly tropical in climate type. The Sakalava people are the predominant ethnic group living and farming in the Park. The greater big-footed mouse *Macrotarsomys ingens* occurs in the Park and is not known from anywhere else. The Park is located between the Betsiboka river to the west and the Mahajamba river to the east. Originally there were two Parks on either side of the Route 4 national road but these were combined in 2002. The Park occupies about 135,000 hectares and consists of patches of thick dry tropical forest interspersed with less dense areas. Other habitats include savannah, scrub and sandy eroded rock

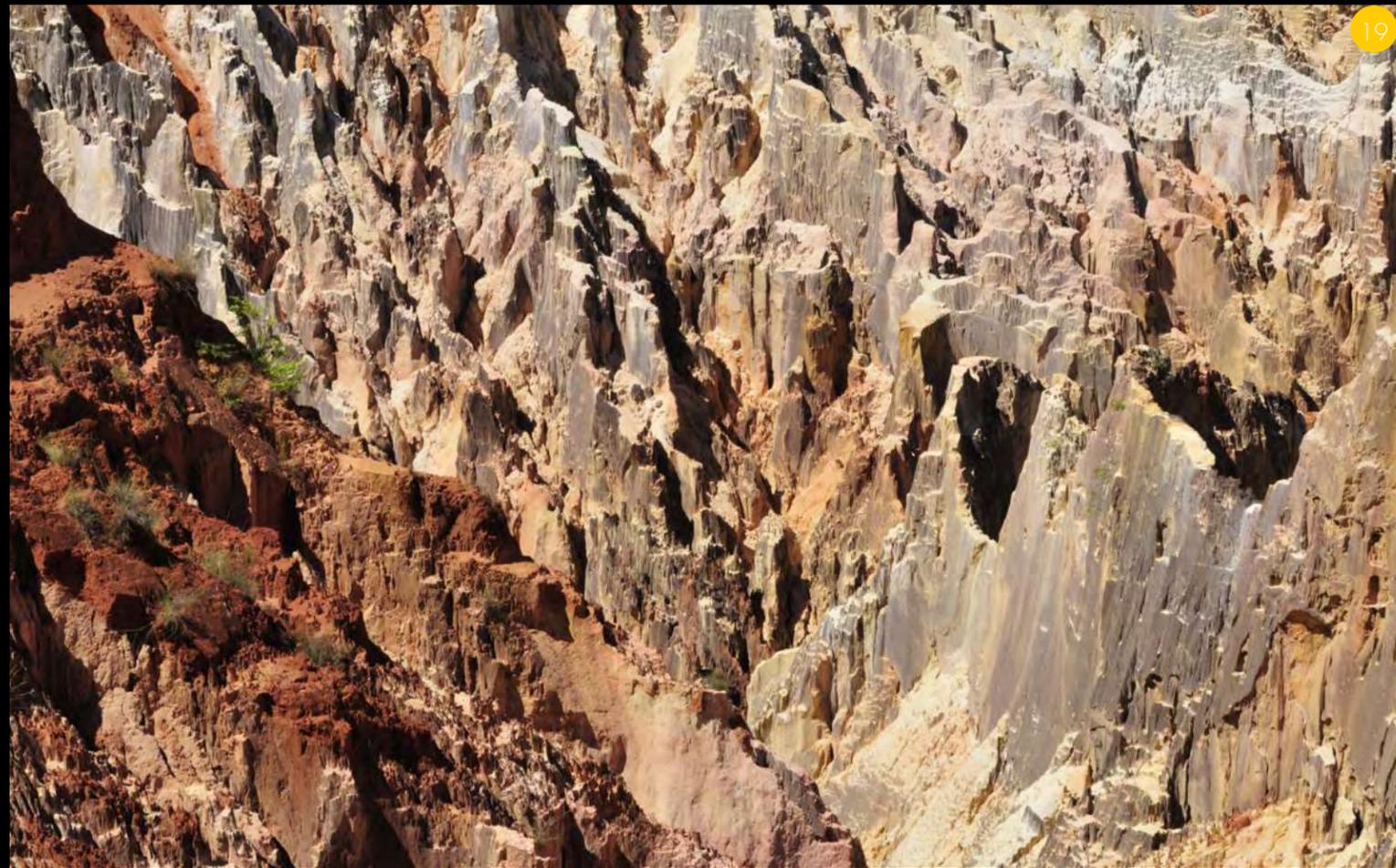
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Ground frog *Mantella madagascariensis*, Ranomafana National Park.





Left, Coquerel's sifaka *Propithecus coquereli*, Ankarafantsika National Park; top right, Ambalabongo Canyon, landscape sculpted by erosion, Ankarafantsika National Park; bottom right, Malagasy landscape showing effects of deforestation, near Ankarana National Park.



Antonella shooting the eroded landscape of Ambalabongo Canyon, Ankarafantsika National Park.





■ *Petter's Chameleon*
Furcifer petteri, female,
Montagne d'Ambre National Park.

areas, while some land is farmed by the indigenous Sakalava people. There are a number of lakes and the Park is criss-crossed by excellent tracks and paths. We had our own tents and food here; guides are available (and mandatory). The Park is mostly woodland and the tree species are typical of dry tropical forest. Over eight hundred species are present, many of them endemic to Madagascar. Notable examples include the flowering bush mpanjakabenitany *Baudouinia fluggeiformis*, the katrafay *Cedrelopsis grevei* used in traditional medicine, the small tree lohavato *Hymenodictyon occidental* and the sakoanala *Poupartia silvatica*, a large tree with conspicuous flowers. Native fauna is exceptionally well represented here. Ten species of amphibian and forty-four reptile species are present. These include the rare Madagascan big-headed turtle *Erymnochelys madagascariensis*, the Rhinoceros chameleon *Furcifer rhinocerotus* and the Dwarf chameleon *Brookesia decaryi*. Also present are two ground-dwelling boas, *Acrantophis madagascariensis* and *Sanzinia madagascariensis*, and the rare terrestrial snake *Liophidium therezieni*. Mammals found in the Park include eight species of lemur, two of which are mouse lemurs *Microcebus* spp., the world's smallest primates. The greater big-footed mouse *Macrotarsomys ingens* is a recently described small rodent known only from the Park and its vicinity. One hundred and twenty-nine species of birds have been recorded in the Park, more than half of them endemic to Madagascar. These include

continued on page 25 >



Left, Domergue's leaf chameleon *Brookesia thieli*, Andasibe National Park; right, Panther Chameleon *Furcifer pardalis*, adult male, Ambilobe color morph, near Ambilobe village.



*An incredibly variable
but always colorful species*



■ Panther
Chameleon
Furcifer
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male, Ambilobe
color morph,
near Ambilobe
village.



Far left, Bohm's Day Gecko *Phelsuma magascariensis boehmei*, Andasibe-Mantadia National Park; left, Malagasy Green Lynx Spider *Peucetia madagascariensis*, Ankify.

the Van Dam's vanga *Xenopirostris damii*, the Rufous vanga *Schetba rufa*, the elusive Banded kestrel *Falco zoniventris* and the more easily observed Madagascar Fish eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides*, which can often be seen at Ravelobe lake. The endangered Madagascar heron *Ardea humbloti* can also be seen at Lake Ravelobe. In this dry forest the rare *Furcifer rhinocerotus* can be found. The females of this species are purple in color and therefore highly attractive, but it is the bizarre nasal appendage of the male which has inspired the name of the species. Even the rare Pygmy chameleon *Brookesia decaryi* can be found with some luck in the foliage of the forest floor. The lake is home to a population of sizeable Crocodiles *Crocodilus niloticus madagascariensis*. The landscape here is extremely attractive and the truly stunning Ambalabongo canyon is a highlight of this tour which is not to be missed, even if the trek there – mostly under the equatorial sun and often in extreme heat - can be exhausting to the less fit.

TO ANKARANA AND MONTAGNE D'AMBRE

After our exceptionally fruitful stay on the west coast of Madagascar, we continued our journey north. A long drive of approximately eight hours took us to Antsohihy. This is prime habitat for the highly variable but always incredibly colorful Panther chameleon *Furcifer pardalis*. The villages of Ankaramybe, Djangoa and Ambanja are well known among reptile enthusiasts depending on the

continued on page 29 ➤



Panther Chameleon
Furcifer pardalis, Andasibe
 color morph, male in breeding
 livery, Andasibe-Mantadia
 National Park.

*A living
and breathing
rainbow
of colors*



■ Panther
Chameleon
Furcifer
pardalis, adult
male, Ambanja
color morph,
Ambanja.



Giraffe or Giraffe-necked weevil *Trachelophorus giraffa*, male, Andasibe-Mantadia National Park.
 Top right, Thorn Spider *Gasteracantha versicolor*, Andasibe-Mantadia National Park; bottom right, Scorpion *Grosphus ankarana*, Ankarana National Park.





■ Coastline landscape with fishermen near Ankify.



Crowned Lemur *Eulemur coronatus*, Montagne d'Ambre National Park.

different colour variations in *Furcifer pardalis* found there. The photo opportunities here are endless! We then continued north, to the idyllic seaside village of Ankify. Here, very large specimens of Panther chameleons can be found, and we also undertook a speedboat trip to explore the nearby island of Nosy Faly to look for the uniquely colorful morph of this species found there. Ankify offered one of the very few comfortable – one could almost say luxurious – accommodations of our trip, and we took advantage of it to relax a little on the beach before continuing our expedition to the north.

From Ankify we then drove to Ambilobe, another area which is home to one of the most popular color variations of the Panther chameleon. Along the road to Sirama we got to see many different colored specimens – we just had to keep looking at the bushes and ask our driver to stop when we spotted one! After this pleasant excursion, we finally reached the prehistoric-looking rock massif of Ankarana, home to several rare reptiles, including the stunningly camouflaged leaf tailed gecko *Uroplatus henkeli*. Ankarana Special Reserve was created in 1956. It is a small, partially vegetated plateau composed of 150-million-year-old middle Jurassic limestone. With an average annual rainfall of about 2,000 millimetres (79 in) the underlying rocks are susceptible to erosion, thereby producing caves and underground rivers - a karst topography. The rugged relief and the dense vegetation have helped protect

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Top, Lynx Spider *Oxyopes* sp., near Ankify; bottom, Bell's Hinge-back Tortoise *Kinixys belliana*, Nosy Faly; right, Panther Chameleon *Furcifer pardalis*, adult male, Ankify color morph, near Ankify.



Panther Chameleon
Furcifer pardalis, Nosy Faly
color morph, male in breeding
livery, Nosy Faly.

the region from human intrusion in the past. The plateau slopes gently to the east, but on the west it ends abruptly in the "Wall of Ankarana", a sheer cliff that extends 25 kilometres (16 mi) north to south, and rises as high as 280 metres (920 ft). To the south, the limestone mass breaks up into separate spires known as tower karst. In the center of the plateau, seismic activity and eons of rainfall have dissolved the limestone away in deep gorges, and sometimes redeposited it in ribbons of flowstone. In places where the calcific upper layers have been completely eroded, the harder base rock has been etched into channels and ridges known as *tsingy*. Beginning in the 1960s, an expatriate Frenchman named Jean Duflos (who later married locally and changed his name to Jean Radofilao) did a huge amount of exploration of the cave

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The beautiful seaside landscape at Antsiranana Bay, Diego Suarez.

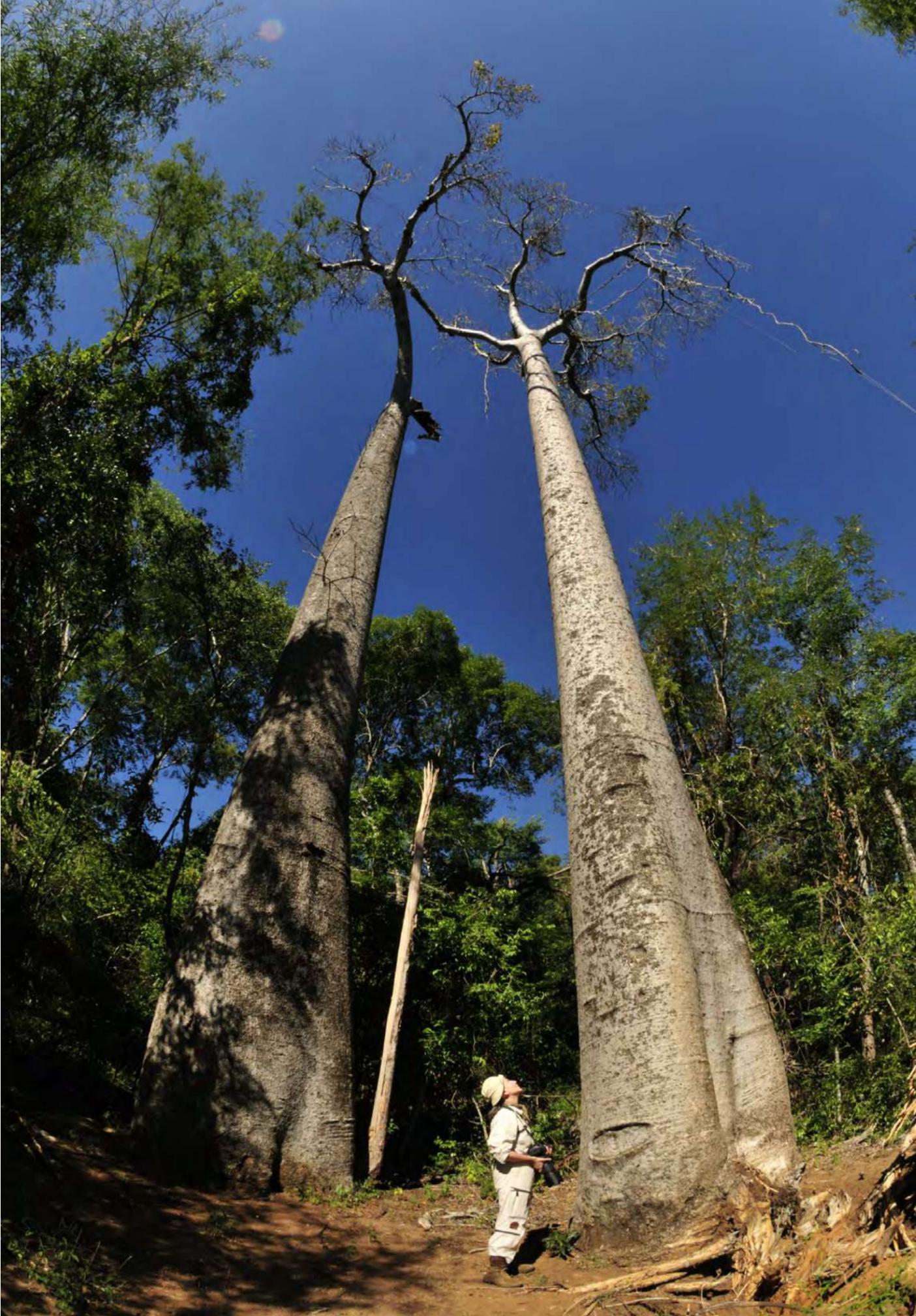


Left, Montagne
d'Ambre Leaf-Tailed Gecko
Uroplatus fiavana,
shedding old skin,
Montagne d'Ambre
National Park; center,
Henkel's Leaf-tailed Gecko
Uroplatus henkeli
camouflaged on tree trunk,
Ankarana National Park;
right, Mossy Leaf-tailed
Gecko *Uroplatus sikorae*
camouflaged on tree trunk,
Montagne d'Ambre
National Park.





■ *Petter's Chameleon*
Furcifer petteri, male,
Montagne d'Ambre
National Park.



Left, the last two Malagasy Baobab *Adansonia madagascariensis* left standing in the whole world, Ankarafantsika National Park; right, Ambalabongo Canyon, landscape sculpted by erosion, Ankarafantsika National Park.



systems and subterranean rivers of the Massif, much of it on his own or with visiting speleologists. A total of about 100 kilometres (62 mi) of cave passages within the massif have been mapped. One of the most accessible caves, La Grotte d'Andrafiabe, alone comprises at least 8.035 kilometres (4.993 mi) of horizontal passages. Indeed the Massif contains the longest cave systems in Madagascar, and probably in the whole of Africa. During their 1986 expedition, Phil Chapman and Jean-Elie Randriamasy collated a bird list for the reserve and recorded 65 species from 32 families representing nearly a third of all bird species that breed in Madagascar. The Ankarana Reserve is an important refuge for significant populations of the crowned lemur *Eulemur coronatus*, Sanford's brown lemur *Eulemur sanfordi* and other mammal species. The following lemurs are also recorded from the area: Northern sportive lemur *Lepilemur septentrionalis*, Brown mouse lemur *Microcebus rufus*, Fat-tailed dwarf lemur *Cheirogalus medius*, Fork-marked lemur *Phaner furcifer*, Eastern woolly lemur *Avahi laniger*, Perrier's sifaka *Propithecus diadema perrieri*, the rare Aye-aye *Daubentonia madagascariensis* and the Western lesser bamboo lemur *Hapalemur griseus occidentalis*.

After staying in Ankarana, we continued north and took a short trip

continued on page 41 >



Spearpoint Leaf-tail Gecko ■
Uroplatus eburni, Nosy Be.



Left, ■
 Carpet Chameleon
Furcifer lateralis,
 female, Mandraka;
 top right,
 Malagasy Leaf-
 nosed Twig Snake
Langaha
madagascariensis,
 male,
 Ankarafantsika
 National Park,
 Madagascar;
 bottom right,
 Malagasy Leaf-
 nosed Twig Snake
Langaha
madagascariensis,
 female,
 Ankarafantsika
 National Park.





The Red Tsingy or Tsingy Rouge, a spectacular limestone landscape shaped by erosion, Ankarana National Park.

■ Left, Plated lizard *Zonosaurus laticaudatus* feeding on insect prey, Ankarafantsika National Park; center, Koch's Giant Day Gecko *Phelsuma kochi*, Ankarafantsika National Park; right, Spearpoint Leaf-tail Gecko *Uroplatus ebenau*, Nosy Be.





Montagne d'Ambre Chameleon ■
Furcifer sp. "Montagne d'Ambre",
female, Montagne d'Ambre
National Park.



to visit the bizarre looking gorge of the Red *Tsingy*. The landscape here is absolutely unique and offers, again, a lot of photo opportunities. Our final destination was then the cloud forest of Amber Mountains. Montagne d'Ambre National Park is a National Park in the Diana Region of northern Madagascar. The park is known for its waterfalls and crater lakes, and is located 1000 km north of the capital, Antananarivo. It is also one of the most biologically diverse places in all of Madagascar; 75 species of birds, 25 species of mammals, and 59 species of reptiles are known to inhabit the protected area. Once again, we relied on our tents and food – temperatures here can be rather chilly during the night and early morning, and it rains often. Montagne d'Ambre is very well known for its rich amphibians and reptile wildlife. We observed several fascinating chameleon species, including the newly discovered *Furcifer timoni* and *Furcifer petteri*, besides several more common but equally attractive ones such as *Calumma amber*, *Calumma ambreensis*, *Calumma boettgeri*, *Brookesia tuberculata* and *Brookesia antakarana*, and the largest of all leaf-tailed geckos, *Uroplatus giganteus*. After spending a few days there, we then drove past Diego Suarez (Antsiranana) to the town of Ramena. Here we relaxed for a couple of days before returning to the capital and then continuing - this time alone - to Ranomafana National Park in the south-east, which will be the subject of a future, separate article. ●

■ Left, the raging Betsiboka river rapids; right, a fishing sailboat along the coastline landscape near Ankify.





■ *Left, close-up of Henkel's Leaf-tailed Gecko Uroplatus henkeli camouflaged on tree trunk, Ankarana National Park; right, the Red Tsingy or Tsingy Rouge, a spectacular river gorge shaped by erosion, Ankarana National Park.*



*A land forgotten by time
where endemisms
reign supreme*



■ Montagne
d'Ambre
Chameleon
Calumma amber,
female, Montagne
d'Ambre
National Park.



Top left, caterpillars of Madagascar Emperor Moth *Bunaea aslauga*, near Ankaramy; top right, Longhorn Beetle, family Cerambycidae, Ankarana National Park; bottom left, Plated lizard *Zonosaurus laticaudatus*, Ankarafantsika National Park; bottom right, Malagasy Common Big-eyed Snake *Mimophis mahfalensis*, Ankarafantsika National Park.



■ Suarez Baobab *Adansonia suarezensis*, Diego Suarez.



■ Dwarf Chameleon
Brookesia superciliaris,
Andasibe-Mantadia
National Park.





Left, Short-horned chameleon *Calumma brevicorne*, female in defensive threat display, Andasibe-Mantadia National Park; center, Lantern bug *Zanna pauliani*, first image in the wild, Andasibe-Mantadia National Park; right, Thorn Spider *Gasteracantha versicolor*, Andasibe-Mantadia National Park





False Tomato Frog
Dyscophus guineti, Sambava.



■ Left, Ground frog
Mantella ebenau,
near Ankify;
right, Malagasy
Red Tree Frog
Boophis pyrhus,
Andasibe-
Mantadia
National Park.





Panther Chameleon ■
Furcifer pardalis, adult male,
Ankify color morph, near Ankify.



■ Left, the muddy rapids of the Betsiboka river; right, a serene coastline landscape with fishermen near Ankify.





Canopy Chameleon ■
Furcifer willsii, female, Andasibe-
Mantadia National Park.



■ Left, Ylang-Ylang *Cananga odorata* flowers, Ankify; right, a close-up of the flower of the aptly named *Clitoria* sp., family Fabaceae.

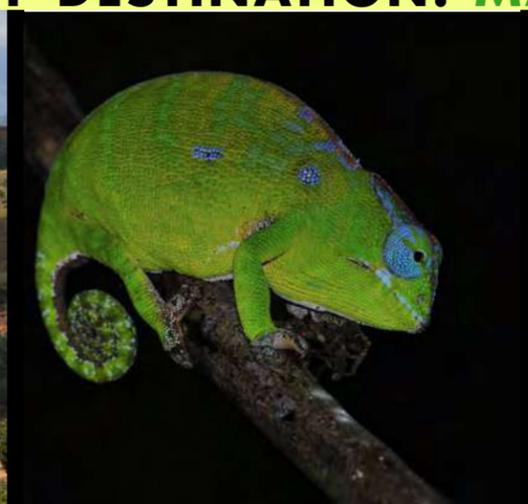
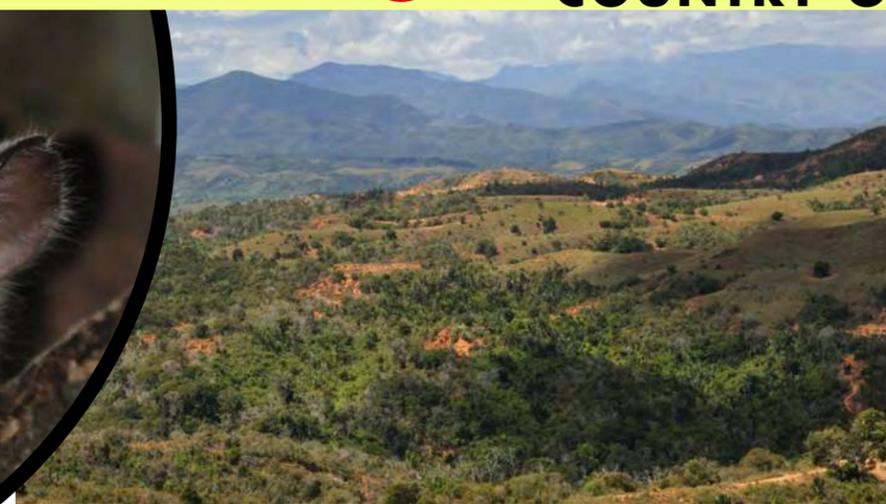




■ Carpet Chameleon *Furcifer lateralis*, pregnant female, encountered along the Ambanja-Ankarana route.

At-a-glance travel guide

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION: MADAGASCAR



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: Your international flight will land in Antananarivo (called Tana by most), the present capital and largest city of Madagascar, usually after a mid-flight stop-over in South Africa or La Reunion. Arrange in advance for your tour operator (we can safely recommend the highly specialized German agency [TanalaHorizon](#)) to come and pick you up. Most itineraries depart Tana on the morning of the day following the clients' arrival to make sure everybody is there in time, so your agent will book you a basic hotel room for the night.

MEANS OF TRANSPORT: If you are serious about your comfort, safety, baggage and wildlife

photography equipment forget about local transport (mostly represented by the chaotic *taxi-brousse*, typically African, overcrowded, noisy and usually run-down private minibuses). When touring with TanalaHorizon we had roomy, comfortable 4-wheel drive SUVs managed by experienced, responsible drivers (a must on Madagascar's pot-holed and often dangerous roads). Inside National Parks one can safely walk (there are no large terrestrial predators or venomous snakes in Madagascar).

CURRENCY: Malagasy Ariary. Changing foreign currency such as Euros or US\$ is not always easy in the countryside, so change upon arrival.

ACCOMODATION: Small hotels in towns, government or private small lodging and camping grounds in National Parks. Tents - despite the inherent discomfort, especially in torrential rains and cooler altitudes - are often the better choice. TanalaHorizon and most other tour operators have their own tents and will fix the camp for you. Toilets - often unhygienic - and washing facilities are obviously unattached and shared when camping.

FOOD: The Malagasy are the world's greatest consumers of rice, which is grown wherever possible, and most often consumed with charcoal-grilled Zebu meat (a wonderfully tasty and soft beef).

The “Eight Continent” which is totally different from all others



Strict vegetarians might have a hard time in Madagascar, and the fare can be monotonous, especially when off the beaten track and away from the usual tourist traps and beach resorts. Beware of street food, which has spoilt many a visitor's holiday.

LANGUAGE: Malagasy and French. Professional guides however often speak fluently a surprising variety of languages.

WORRIES: Crime - theft and armed robbery - in cities. The countryside is safer, but it is better not to be around after dark with money or camera equipment. The Malagasy are a very kind, sweet people, but their recent post-colonial history and turbulent politics have left many in abject poverty.

HEALTH: We did not experience any problems, but malaria is prevalent in several locations (the use of

Malarone is advised by most health authorities). Ticks and other parasites may present a hazard when walking in the forest, but the major cause of illness and serious discomfort is the consumption of contaminated street food and the drinking of tainted beverages - stick to food safely cooked and bottled drinks if you want to avoid troublesome, debilitating gut problems. Beware of petting the occasional semi-domesticated lemur, as they have been known to bite and might force you to suffer an extremely painful course of anti-rabies shots.

CLIMATE: Expect high tropical temperatures during the day, but climate is extremely variable and highly dependent on season and coastline. Check your itinerary and act consequently - generally speaking the Eastern side is more rainy and gets hit by the occasional Indian Ocean cyclone, while the South is drier and more desert-like.

BESIDES: The island of Madagascar - 1.500 km long and sited in the Indian Ocean in front of Mozambique - is extraordinarily diverse, with an apparently endless variety of habitats and landscapes - from the steaming coastal rainforests to the cool central highlands and from the beautiful beaches of the resort islands such as Nosy Be to the baobab-dotted deserts of the South. Indigenous culture - with its peculiar cult of the ancestors and the dead in general - is of great interest to many, but Madagascar's most appealing aspect lies in its extraordinary fauna and flora, rich in endemisms but currently severely endangered throughout the island. Several National Parks and Nature Reserves - some privately managed - offer exceptional chances for close observation and photography, but the dizzying abundance of species makes it highly advisable to concentrate only on some and tailor one's itinerary consequently. ●



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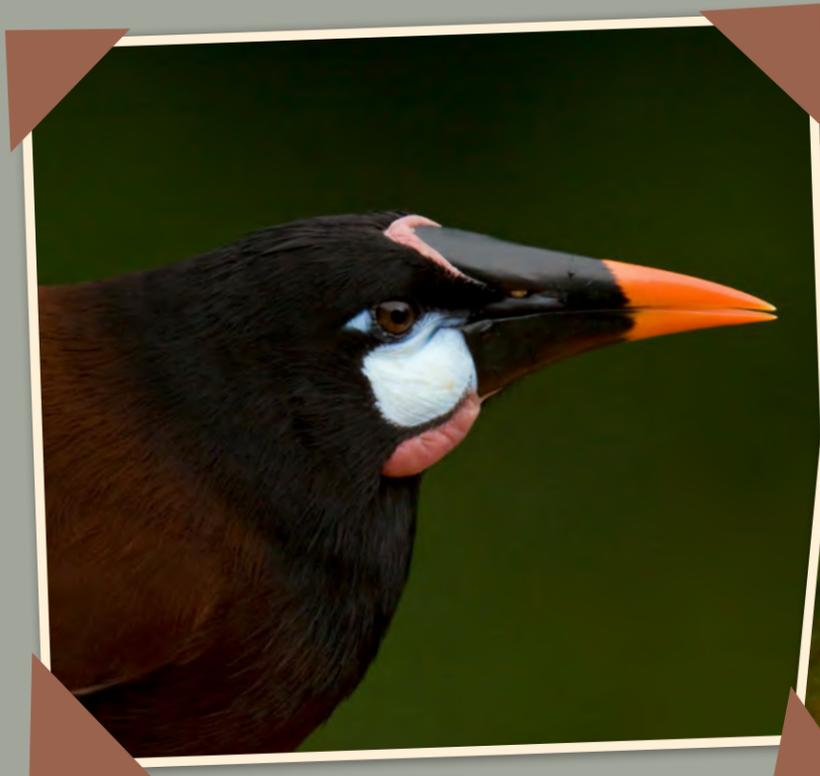
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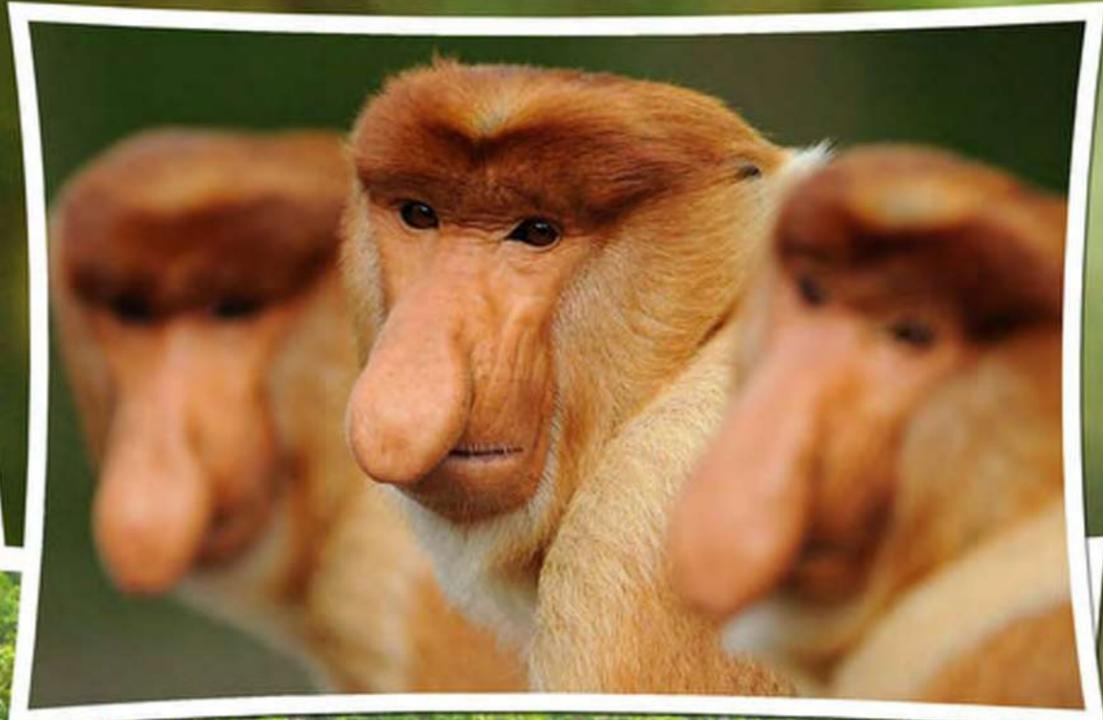
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Daniel Heuclin: A Wildlife Photographer in his own words

In the course of my life I have found myself face to face with the world's deadliest snakes, and that is what I love most: always trying to get *the* photo. In 40 years of globe-trotting I have amassed hundreds of thousands of images about animals, primitive cultures and ethnic communities, but snakes still are my first love. I was supposed to become a doctor, but I have chosen to be a nature photographer. Being one offers me the possibility of travelling, searching for snakes and other animals. It's my great passion. My mother used to tell me that I brought home my first snake when I was two, but I started to get really interested in them when I turned seven, and since my father didn't want me to bring them home I moved to Paris when I turned twenty-one. There I reared snakes, pumas and crocodiles, and I started travelling to photograph animals in their natural environment. People ask me how I can get so close to so many deadly species. The secret is immobility. Snakes don't see well, but have an acute perception of movement. Today I live in the vicinity of Poitiers, in France. I rear snakes and amphibians, I photograph them and I

study their behavior. I have more than 400 animals in my home, and I have a license to keep venomous reptile species, amphibians, small mammals and spiders. I also catch snakes in the wild to photograph them and their behavior in a controlled environment, and then I release them where they were found. In the course of my lifelong career as a wildlife photographer specializing in snakes, I have received about forty envenomations by venomous animals - of which four by different cobra species, with the remaining ones by several vipers, rattlesnakes, scorpions and even a Gila monster *Heloderma* sp.. Every year, I organize a series of conferences about venomous snakes and I present a show of my images at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. But in forty years of activity I have also been able to touch first-hand the terrifying man-made degradation afflicting all the world's different natural habitats. This is why I keep photographing - to show the vital relationship between man and nature, and to show that the two are inextricably linked. ●



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White-lipped Tree viper

Cryptelytrops albolabris

Found in northern India (Assam), Nicobar Islands, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, southern China (Fukien, Hainan, Kwangsi, Kwangtung), Hong Kong, West Malaysia, Indonesia (Sumatra, Borneo, Sulawesi, Java, Madoera, Lombok, Sumbawa, Komodo, Flores, Sumba, Roti, Timor, Kisar, Wetar).



Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake

Crotalus atrox

Found in the United States from central Arkansas to southeastern and Central California, south into Mexico as far as northern Sinaloa, Hidalgo and northern Veracruz. Disjunct populations exist in southern Veracruz and southeastern Oaxaca. The type locality given is "Indianola" (Indianola, Calhoun County, Texas, USA).

**Wagler's Pit Viper**

Tropidolaemus wagleri

Found in southern Thailand west Malaysia, in Indonesia on Sumatra, the islands of the Riau Archipelago, Bangka, Billiton, Nias, the Mentawai Islands (Siberut), Natuna, Karimata, Borneo, Sulawesi and Buton, and in the Philippines on the islands of Balabac, Basilan, Bohol, Dinagat, Jolo, Leyte, Luzon, Mindanao, Negros, Palawan, Samar and Tumindao.

Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake

Crotalus atrox

Found in the United States from central Arkansas to southeastern and Central California, south into Mexico as far as northern Sinaloa, Hidalgo and northern Veracruz. Disjunct populations exist in southern Veracruz and southeastern Oaxaca.





Kramer's Pit Viper

Cryptelytrops macrops
Found in Southeast Asia
in northern Cambodia,
Laos, Thailand, and
southern Vietnam.

Egyptian cobra

Naja haje
Found across most of
North Africa north of the
Sahara, across the savan-
nas of West Africa to the
south of the Sahara, south
to the Congo basin and
east to Kenya and
Tanzania, and in southern
parts of the Arabian
Peninsula





Pope's Tree Viper

Popeia popeorum

Found in Northern India, Burma, Thailand, West Malaysia and Vietnam. In Indonesia, it occurs on the islands of Sumatra, Mentawai Islands (Siberut, Sipora, North Pagai) and Borneo.

Copperhead

Agkistrodon contortrix

Found in the United States in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

In Mexico, it occurs in Chihuahua and Coahuila.





Mohave rattlesnake

Crotalus scutulatus

Found in the southwestern United States in southern California, southern Nevada, extreme southwestern Utah, most of Arizona, southern New Mexico, and some of Texas. It also ranges southward through much of Mexico to southern Puebla.

Green bush viper

Atheris squamigera

Found in West and central Africa: Ivory Coast and Ghana, eastward through southern Nigeria to Cameroon, southern Central African Republic, Gabon, Congo, DR Congo, northern Angola, Uganda, Tanzania, western Kenya and Bioko Island.





Indian, Spectacled or Common Cobra

Naja naja

Native to the Indian subcontinent which includes present day Nepal, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.



Visayan or Samar cobra

Naja samarensis
Found in the southern Philippines, and endemic to the islands of Dinagat, Siargao, Camiguin Sur, Bohol, Eastern Visayas region (Leyte, Southern Leyte, Samar, Northern Samar, Eastern Samar) and Mindanao and the Zamboanga Peninsula.

Sidewinder

Crotalus cerastes
In the southwestern United States, this species is found in the desert region of eastern California, southern Nevada, southwestern Utah, and western Arizona. In northwestern Mexico, it is found in western Sonora and eastern Baja California.



Desert Horned Viper

Cerastes cerastes

Found in arid North Africa (Morocco, Mauritania and Mali, eastward through Algeria, Tunisia, Niger, Libya and Chad to Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia) through Sinai to the northern Negev of Israel. In the Arabian Peninsula, it occurs in Yemen, Kuwait, extreme southwestern Saudi Arabia and parts of the country in Qatar





Red Spitting Cobra

Naja pallida
The red spitting cobra is mainly found in East Africa, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, southern Egypt, northern and eastern Ethiopia, and northern Tanzania and northern Sudan. It is also widespread in the dry country of eastern and northern Kenya.

White-lipped Pit Viper

Cryptelytrops albolabris
Found in northern India (Assam), Nicobar Islands, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, southern China (Fukien, Hainan, Kwangsi, Kwangtung), Hong Kong, West Malaysia, Indonesia (Sumatra, Borneo, Sulawesi, Java, Madoera, Lombok, Sumbawa, Komodo, Flores, Sumba, Roti, Timor, Kisar, Wetar).



Meadow viper

Vipera ursinii

Found in southeastern France, Hungary, central Italy, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, northern and northeastern Macedonia, Albania, Romania, northern Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, northwestern Iran, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and eastern Uzbekistan steppes to China (Xinjiang).





Common cobra

Naja naja

Native to the Indian subcontinent which includes present day Nepal, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Eastern Green Mamba

Dendroaspis angusticeps

This species is indigenous to more coastal regions of southern and east Africa. The eastern green mamba's range extends from Kenya south through Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, eastern Zimbabwe, into South Africa as far as southern Natal and northern Pondoland. It can also be found in Zanzibar.





Canebrake rattlesnake

Crotalus horridus atricaudatus

Found in the eastern United States from southern Minnesota and southern New Hampshire, south to east Texas and north Florida.



Philippine cobra
Naja philippinensis
Found in the northern regions of the Philippines on the islands of Luzon, Mindoro, Catanduanes, and Masbate.

Equatorial Spitting Cobra
Naja sumatrana
found in the equatorial Southeast Asian nations of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and in the Philippines. In Indonesia it occurs in the islands of Sumatra, Borneo, Bangka, Belitung, and the Riau Archipelago.





Usambara eyelash viper

Atheris ceratophora

Found in the Usambara and Uzungwe Mountains in Tanzania. It is probably also found in the Uluguru Mountains.



Philippine Pit Viper

Trimeresurus flavomaculatus

Found on the Philippine islands of Agutayan, Batan, Camiguin, Catanduanes, Dinagat, Jolo, Leyte, Luzon, Mindanao, Mindoro, Negros, and Polillo.



Green bush viper
Atheris squamigera
Found in West and central Africa: Ivory Coast and Ghana, eastward through southern Nigeria to Cameroon, southern Central African Republic, Gabon, Congo, DR Congo, northern Angola, Uganda, Tanzania, western Kenya and Bioko Island.

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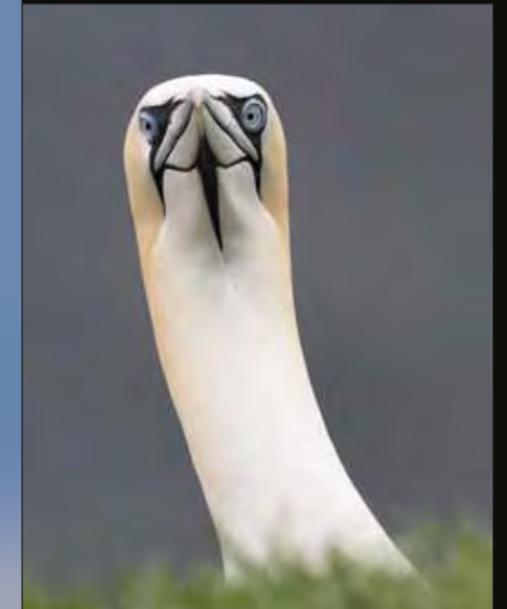
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"My experience was EXCEPTIONAL! The trip exceeded my expectations in all areas. I hoped to get in a position to see owls and couldn't possibly have been happier. It was abundantly clear that David invested significant time and effort prior to the arrival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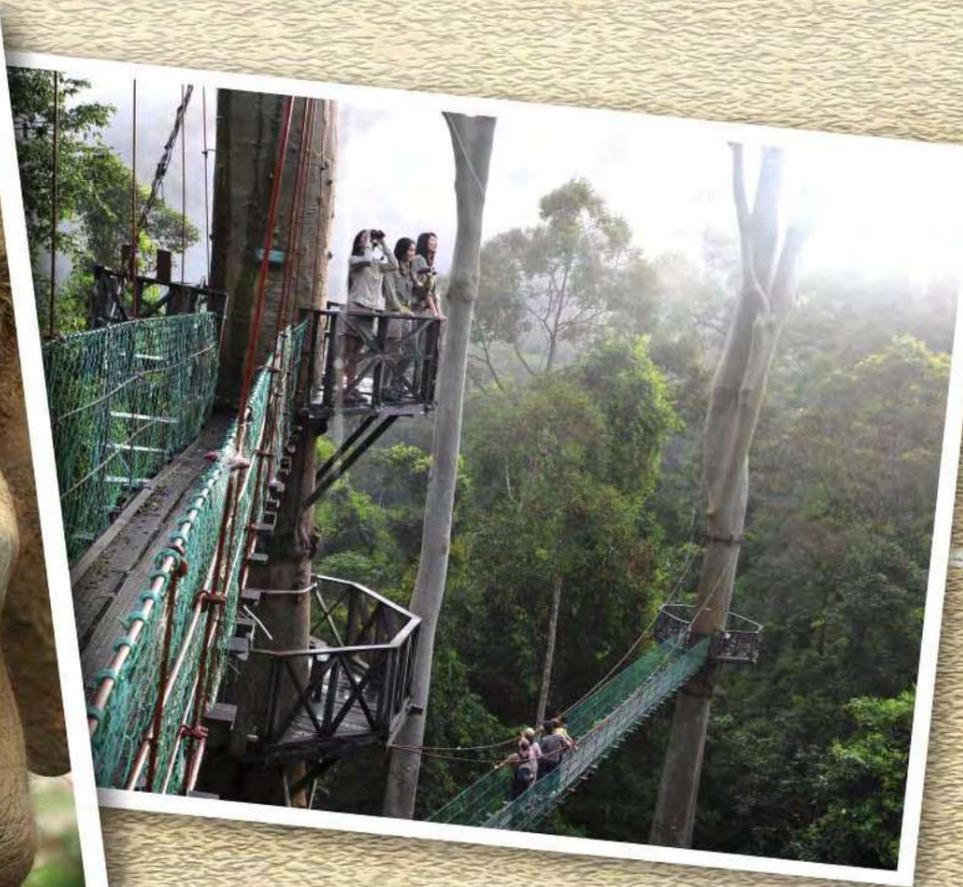


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Beauty of the Beast

GRASSHOPPERS AND KATYDIDS

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BEAUTIES**



Dazzlingly colorful or wonderfully camouflaged, the tropical members of the orthopteran tribe come in all sorts of surprising shades and shapes



Pycnopalpa bicordata

Decaying-leaf-mimic katydid *Pycnopalpa bicordata*, Mindo cloud forest, Ecuador.
On the opening spread, Spiny Katydid, *Panacanthus cuspidatus*, Yasuni National Park, the Amazon, Ecuador



Copiphora sp.

Rhinoceros Katydid (*Copiphora sp.*), Mindo cloud forest, Ecuador

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

I must admit - from the start - that we are not madly enamored of grasshoppers and katydids the way we are of - say - praying mantises. There's something undeniably grotesque in their body proportions - it's quite difficult appreciating those jackknife hind legs and how they work - and most grasshoppers and katydids (beware - there is a difference!) will readily disappear with a startling jump if approached too closely, rather than sitting there and watching you with the eerily detached, malignant interest shown by a hungry praying mantis. However, the more we observe them during our frequent trips to remote tropical rainforests - especially in those of Central and South America - the more we are learning to like them. True, most of them do not show the supreme grace shown by mantises, and prove to be rather more challenging as camera subjects with their chunky bodies and folded hind legs - but I have to add that the array of thorns and spines shown by several species, the dazzling technicolored hues adorning others and above all the stupefying display of camouflage and mimicry shown by even others often leaves us speechless. Believe me - there are few rainforest sights as stupefying as that offered by a displaying Amazon flasher or

Peacock katydid *Pterachroza ocellata* (see *ANIMA MUNDI - Adventures in Wildlife Photography Issue 9, January 2013*) or as startling as the one shown by a leaf-mimic katydid such as *Roxelana* or *Typophyllum* when one sees a big green or dry leaf - complete with veining, insect bites and mold spots - start sedately walking away. Yes, grasshoppers and katydids can really surprise you - and in more ways than expected, as I found out to my own expense when I tried to pick up a *Copiphora* Conehead - those shiny black mandibles can rip your skin to shreds and draw blood (besides some perfectly justified howling!). In fact, far from being the merry lettuce-chewers we imagine them to be, lots of katydids are fierce, carnivorous predators which will not shy away from catching and consuming other insects (and even small lizards and geckos, given the opportunity). The following gallery offers some interesting examples - both in the fascinating variety and in the inherent difficulty in photographing them decently - of a few members of the orthopteran tribe. Several of these are only partially identified, sometimes only by their Family name. There are so many of them that most haven't been described yet. So next time you spot one don't dismiss it - it might actually be a new species. ●



Paraphidnia sp.

Lichen-mimic Katydid *Paraphidnia sp.* (Tettigoniidae), Mindo cloud forest, Ecuador



Copiphora rhinoceros

Cone-headed Katydid *Copiphora rhinoceros*, Selva Verde Nature Reserve, Costa Rica



Steirodon sp.

Spiny katydid *Steirodon sp.*, Tambopata Reserve, rio Tambopata, Peru, Amazonia



Eumastax sp.

Monkey face Grasshopper *Eumastax sp.*, Tambopata Reserve, rio Tambopata, Peru, Amazonia



Phyllochoreia sp.

Hooded Leaf grasshopper *Phyllochoreia sp.*, the Western Ghats, the Sahyadris, India



Pterachroza ocellata

Leaf Katydid *Pterachroza ocellata* in defensive display, Yasuni National Park, Ecuador



Eumastacidae

Mating Monkeyface Grasshoppers (*Eumastacidae*), Yasunì National Park, the Amazon, Ecuador



Championica peruana

Spiny Lichen katydid *Championica peruana*, Tambopata Reserve, rio Tambopata, Peru



Pseudophyllinae

Lichen-mimic Katydid, *Pseudophyllinae*, Selva Verde Nature Reserve, Costa Rica



Orophus sp.

Leaf-mimic Katydid *Orophus sp.*, Selva Verde Nature Reserve, Rio Sarapiquí region, Heredia, Costa Rica



Helolampis sp.

Mating Acrididae grasshoppers, Yasunì National Park, the Amazon, Ecuador



Vestria sp.

Crayola katydid, *Vestria sp.* (Tettigoniidae), Yasunì National Park, the Amazon, Ecuador



Parableta sp.

Leaf-mimic katydid, *Parableta sp.*, Yasuní National Park, the Amazon, Ecuador



Colpolopha sp.

Colpolopha sp., dorsal view, Yasuni National Park, Ecuador



Pterachroza ocellata

Leaf Katydid *Pterachroza ocellata*, Yasuni National Park, the Amazon, Ecuador



Roxelana crassicornis

Leaf-mimic katydid *Roxelana crassicornis*, Tambopata Reserve, rio Tambopata, Peru, Amazonia



Poecilocloeus cf. lepidus

Rainbow katydid *Poecilocloeus cf. lepidus*, Tambopata Reserve, rio Tambopata, Peru, Amazonia



Omura congrua

Cryptic Leaf katydid *Omura congrua* (Pyrgomorphidae), Tambopata Reserve, rio Tambopata, Peru, Amazonia



Panacanthus cuspidatus

Spiny Katydid *Panacanthus cuspidatus* (Tettigoniidae), Yasuni National Park, the Amazon, Ecuador



Pterachroza ocellata

Flasher or Peacock Leaf-mimic katydid *Pterachroza ocellata*, Tambopata Reserve, rio Tambopata, Peru, Amazonia



Paraphidnia sp.

Lichen-mimic Katydid *Paraphidnia sp.* (Tettigoniidae), Mindo cloud forest, Ecuador



Eumastax sp.

Monkey face Grasshopper *Eumastax sp.*, Tambopata Reserve, rio Tambopata, Peru, Amazonia

A special contribution by Juan Manuel Cardona Granda, National University of Colombia and Shimane University, Japan



Homeomastax dereixi

A complex genus whose species are all externally very similar and can usually only be separated by their known ranges and quite esoteric internal genital characters. They all sport the same red bands above the knee.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY JUAN MANUEL CARDONA GRANDA

Most people tend to think of grasshoppers as green or brown little bugs rarely worth a second look. But in the neotropics they can be neither monochrome nor small. However, many of the most incredible species are rarely photographed, despite being relatively common. The reasons for this are many: grasshoppers are skittish, wary creatures ready to jump away when a stooping photographer gets close; many live in places where few humans venture (like the forest canopy or the yearlong drizzly and frigid paramos); and even if you get a clear shot at them, often you do not know which grasshopper it is: they are notoriously difficult to identify because literature on them is nearly nonexistent, long out of print, hard to get and not in English, causing not only photographers but even entomologists to shun them in field surveys. This photographer is working hard to change that with a series of field guides to neotropical grasshoppers: the first volume of a projected trilogy titled *Grasshoppers of Northwest South America - A Photo Guide*, is already out in both English (<http://goo.gl/tc3Un>) and Spanish versions (<http://goo.gl/UVJ3x>) and a Japanese one is under preparation. The second volume of the series *Grasshoppers of Northwest South America* will be out this year featuring over 80 species of grasshoppers, many of which had never been photographed before. The series totals now over 140 documented species and it is available

in both Spanish and English editions (<http://www.blurb.com/b/323690-8-grasshoppers-of-northwest-south-america-a-photo-gu>). The neotropics are home to an incredible array of both short-horned (the true grasshoppers) and long horned (katydid) grasshoppers, many of them with incredible shapes and colors. I have even been told and been reproached by people about the colors and shapes of the grasshopper pictures featured in the coming pages being fake ("of course, everybody knows grasshoppers are green", they say, looking me in the eye and waving their fingers), but of course anyone who has roamed the forests and grasslands of the tropics knows that no color is off bounds as far as grasshoppers are concerned. Some of the most colorful ones are even the easiest to see, as they preen fearlessly in plain sight on plant leaves, because their strident coloration signals lizards, frogs and birds, their eternal enemies, that they are far from being a tasty snack, most surely foul-tasting of even poisonous. What follows is a photogallery featuring some of the rarest - or most outrageously colorful - grasshoppers found in my home country, Colombia. Some do not even have a name yet, but I find them all equally beautiful and interesting and I hope you will too!

<http://www.fcgsas.com>



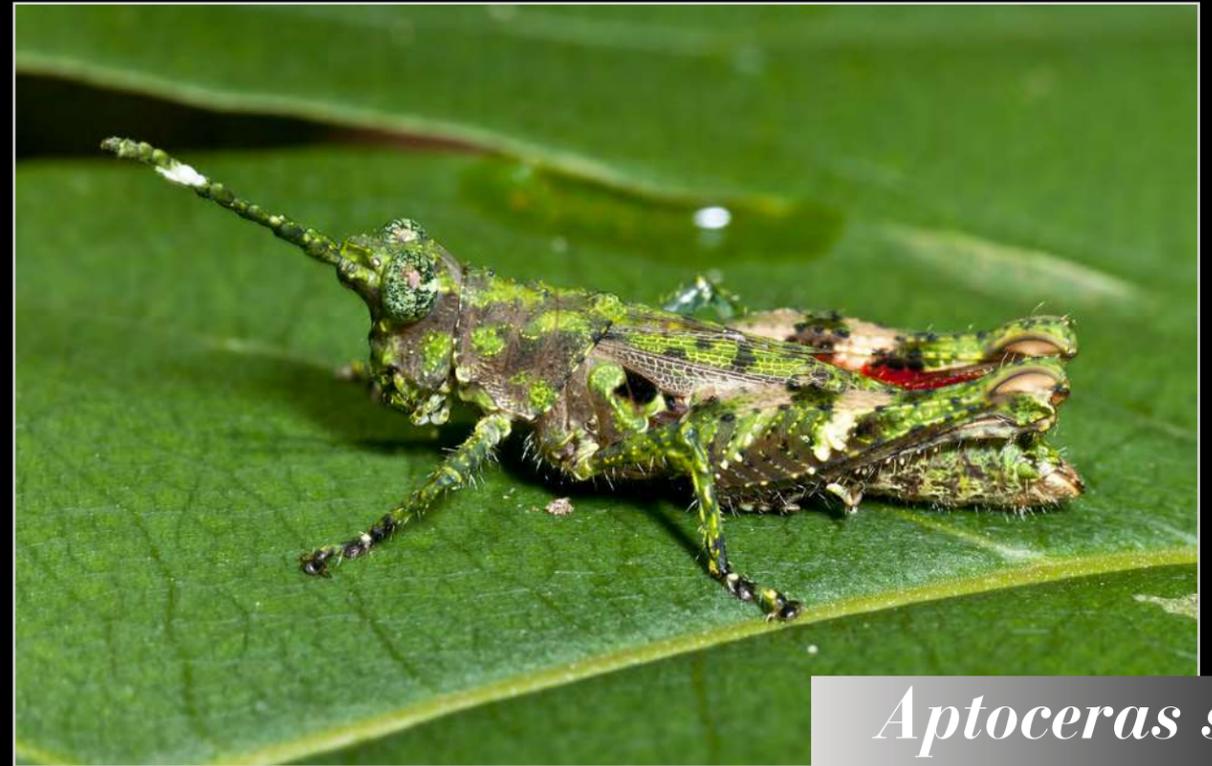
Eumastacidae

This is a new species (name already assigned but yet to be published) from the Yarigués mountain range in northwest Colombia. Its showy colors are similar of those of the Colombian flag.



Rhammatocerus schistocercoides

Male of the Llanos Locust, which every 15-20 years or so can gather in swarms of millions of individuals devastating any plant in their path and rendering the meat of cows, pigs and any animal which eats it inedible to humans because of its acrid taste.



Aptoceras sp.

Some of the most beautiful species are not so because of colors but because of the way they can blend in with their environment, as this species does in the mossy fallen trunks where it is usually found in the Amazon basin. This one was photographed in Peru.



Acantodis curvidens

Another one of the moss mimicking Katydids, this one is built like a tank in armor plates. When threatened, these katydids do not flee but try instead to scare away the intruder by performing strange dances with their legs and flapping their wings threateningly.



Lactista stramineus

Dry forest grasshoppers such as this one have superb camouflage skills, and only a sudden movement betrays their position, as it happened with this one in the Chicamocha Canyon in eastern Colombia.



New Eumastacidae sp1

Colombia is a speciation hub for Monkey grasshoppers and many species there are yet to be discovered or named, such as this spectacularly colorful species from the highlands of the northwestern province.



Parapiezops homalonotus

Although some Rhytidochrotines are as green or brown as the popular image of the grasshopper, others have the most amazing colors, as this *Parapiezops homalonotus*, from the remote Pacific jungles of the Colombian Baudu mountain range.



Chromacris psittacus pacificus

This species inhabits western Colombia, where it can be found in sometimes very large groups feeding off the poisonous leaves of plants from the tomato family (Solanaceae), from which they pick the toxins announced by their bright and aposematic colors.



Trichopaon sp1

No need to go to an expedition in the jungle to find new, amazing and colorful species. This Rhytidocrotine grasshopper is in all likelihood a new species, found barely half an hour from Medellín, Colombia, in the remnant mountain forests encircling the city.



Lagarolampae

Sometimes lacking wings, the Lagarolampine grasshoppers are related to lubber grasshoppers. They all have small, freckle-like white spots and lines in their metallic-colored bodies, and live in the forests rather than in grassland.



Opaon varicolor

This could well be my all-time favorite species, found in the western montane jungles of Colombia. As its name indicates, there are several different colored morphs (often at the same site!), of which that seen here is the one I find most striking. But there are blue-orange, black-red or red-white-blue versions, among others. As all of their subfamily (*Rhytidochrotinae*) they completely lack wings, and their colors and nonchalant behaviour are probably a sign that they are as poisonous or foul-tasting as their distantly related cousins the monkey hoppers.



Mimetica castanea

To me, the most incredible example of mimetism in grasshoppers or otherwise, is this species, found in the jungles of western Colombia. Its similarity to a dead leaf includes minute venulet patterns in its wings, and even necrotized-looking dark spots!



Megacheilacris bullifemur vallensis

A montane species from the Antioquia Department in Colombia. The females of these species do not let males mount them, and the coupling is then an awkward dance in which the male soothes the female with his curvy antennae while mating from the side.



Paraphidnia sp.

Katydids or long-horned grasshoppers can be masterfully camouflaged, even changing their body shape to fit the most incredible forms: this *Paraphidnia sp.* mimics the lichens and mosses it lives around and feeds on in the jungles of Colombia.



Eumastacidae Caramanta

Monkey grasshoppers are some of the most colorful insects I know, and individuals sporting metallic blue, red and orange at the same time are common. This is a new species, yet to be classified, discovered in 2012 in an Andean valley in Colombia.



Carbonellacris sp.

Carbonellacris is another genus of the Eastern Plains which mimics grasses almost perfectly in color and shape. It is almost impossible to spot one if it does not move.



Championica bicuspidata

Lichen- and moss-mimicking katydids as this spectacular species rely on their incredible camouflage to avoid predation, and only will try to flee if they are touched.



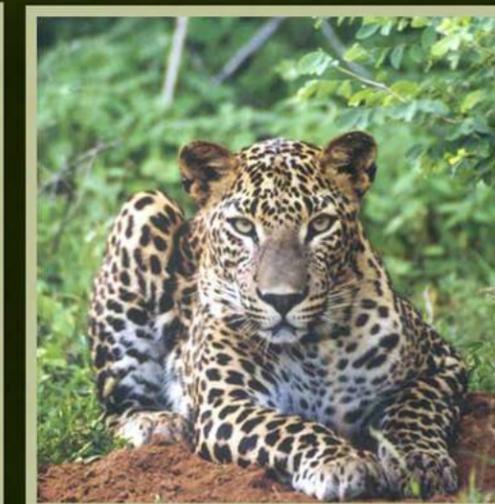
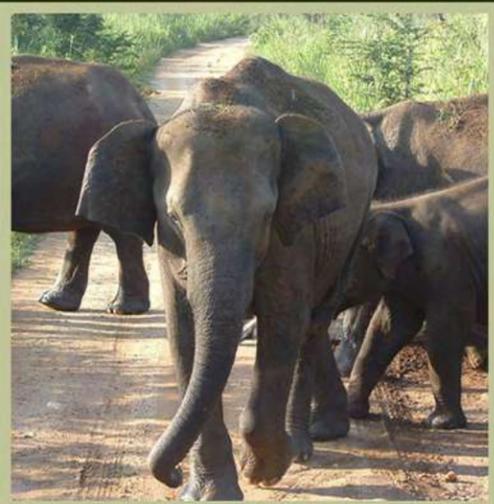
Taeniophora sp.

Grasshoppers of this genus are some of the most colorful in the neotropics. Despite their garish coloration, they are rarely noticed by people because they tend to perch fairly high in plants and they are extremely skittish and agile jumpers.

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Trip Report

A VISIT TO INDIA'S GIR NATIONAL PARK

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A lion is shown in profile, resting in a savanna landscape. The lion has a thick, golden-brown mane and is looking towards the right. The background is filled with tall, dry grasses and some green foliage, typical of a savanna environment.

LIONS OF LEGEND

A delightfully personal and direct narration revealing all the joys and frustrations one faces when looking for iconic species in India's National Parks



Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica*

The Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica*, also known as the Indian lion, is a lion subspecies that exists as a single isolated population in Northern India's Gujarat State. Although presumed to be extinct in Persia (today's Iran), it is also known as the Persian lion.



Spotted deer or Chital *Axis axis*

The Spotted deer is the most commonly taken species (45% of known kills) by the Asiatic lions of Gir National Park. Adult Chitals weigh only around 50 kg.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY DR.SANGEETA DHANUKA

I am just back from a week long visit to the Gir National Park, the land of lions. We were a team of 4 - Dev Anand Paul, Vaithiya Nathan, Sanjivani Vaze and me. This trip was one hell of a roller-coaster, right from the planning to the safaris. The planning began in July, between Dev and me, who till then were only Facebook friends, knowing each other through a common friend. The plan was to visit Bera to see leopards, as I am yet to see a leopard after 15 yrs of wildlife trips. A lot of gathering info and talking to people and we decided to drop it, for reasons we were not comfortable with. What then? At that time the SC had banned all tiger safaris and nobody knew when they would start if at all. Nov first week is too early for birding trips as well.....where can we go then? I was speaking to some friends for suggestions and then somebody said Gir. Dev jumped at the suggestion and bingo, we were on the Indian Railways website. Only 4 seats available! Hell with it we thought, lets block our tickets and we can then ask others if anyone wants to join. Later, Vaithi (Dev's friend) and Sanjivani (a co-birder from Mumbai) agreed to join, but both had to finally travel sleeper 3 tier for one way of the journey. Next started the

hunt for lodging, boarding and safari bookings. Some friends helped and passed on contact details of the forest rest house 'Sinh Sadan', supposedly the best place to stay if you want to be sure you don't miss the safaris. Yes, only 30 vehicles are let in for a safari at Gir and the ones who stay at Sinh Sadan stand a better chance. Called up Sinh Sadan - 'Madam, we take bookings only 15 days in advance. If you want to come on 5th Nov, call up after 20th Oct'. We didn't do anything in Aug, Sept and until 12th Oct. I called up on 12th, to be given more and more phone nos and after 10 calls to various nos, I was told that no bookings will be accepted till 25th Dec as ministers had blocked all accommodation due to elections! How we finally managed a economical hotel booking is another long story in itself which I will skip here. The day arrived.....3rd Nov. Dev and Vaithi flew in from Chennai and we started our journey from Mumbai together. The journey ensured we got very familiar and comfortable with each other's company. 4th noon we arrived, very skeptical of how the hotel would be. We were lucky, it turned out to be good. 6 pm in the evening we were informed that we didn't get lucky with the advance bookings

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Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica*

The Asiatic lion is listed as Endangered by IUCN based on its small population size, which has steadily increased in Gir Forest National Park, more than doubling from a low of 180 individuals in 1974 to a level of 411 individuals consisting of 97 adult males, 162 adult females, 75 sub-adults, and 77 cubs as of April 2010.



Soft-shelled turtle *Nilssonina sp.*

The Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary in Western Gujarat is the only habitat for the Asiatic lion where an area of 1,412.1 km² (545.2 sq mi) was declared as a sanctuary for their conservation in 1965. Later, a National Park covering an area of 258.71 km² (99.89 sq mi) was established where no human activity is allowed.



Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica*

Asiatic lions are slightly smaller than African ones. Adult males weigh 160 to 190 kg (350 to 420 lb), while females weigh 110 to 120 kg (240 to 260 lb).

and one of us has to spend the night in the queue to get the morning safari bookings. At Gir, the tourist himself has to go for the current bookings. It was decided that someone from the hotel would stand at night and Dev and Vaithi would go at 4.30 am to replace him and we would rotate turns between the 4 of us for the remaining bookings on all days. Not a good omen to begin with...nevertheless...Suddenly at 8 pm we were told, the bookings for day one had been done. What, where, how we don't know and we were all raring to go. 1st safari : 6.30 am, 5th Nov: We were all under the impression that lion sightings are much easier than tiger sightings, more-so as we have been reading for years that Gir is overpopulated with lions. Its cold and we set out, all excited. Soon we see the elusive jungle cat which stays in front of us for a good 2-3 mins. The excitement further builds and we are convinced lady luck is on our side. We drive on and after sometime come upon a tracker who is informing the Gypsies (Indian jeeps) about a lioness lying close by. Wow...the first adrenalin rush. We too go in, only to see the belly. I don't even make the effort of picking up my camera, but we are amused to see people in other Gypsies falling over each other to click a pic, some even with their iPads! We decide to back out immediately. The tracker then tells us, there is a lion too some metres away and we are up again. Alas, again

just a belly. He then raises his head to give us a glimpse for a second and the action is over. Nothing more during the safari. The guide tells us we should take a 9.30 rather than 6.30 safari next day for better sightings and we decide to give it a try. We are then told we could do some birding for the noon at the river side. Not knowing the spot we are dependent on the driver and the guide and we agree for a pre-decided amount, only to realize our folly later, on reaching the spot. Anyway, we console ourselves saying we have become wiser now and won't fall into the trap again. 2nd safari: 3.30 pm, 5th Nov: a new pair of driver and guide. This fellow seemed to be far better and we were more hopeful. Nothing till 5 pm: (and we are casting dejected glances at each other, Dev trying to cheer us up by "opening the bar" as he would call it - the chocolate bar. At 5 pm we see the guide tell us reassuringly that we will see a lion - and in 5 minutes we do! But only the back is visible. No good. Then the lion turns its head and we manage our first few shots of the lion, against a green background. Vaithi says, "Ah, at least we have got the passing marks now". By now it is loud and clear to us that sighting a lion is in fact more difficult than a tiger sighting. At least a tiger does not sleep for 18 hrs a day and you might chance upon it walking about in the forest. Not so with the lions. 3rd safari: 9.30 am

continued on page 110 ➤



Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*

Gir is rich in bird species. The scavenger group has 6 recorded species of Vultures. Some of the other typical species include Crested Serpent Eagle, the endangered Bonelli's Eagle, Crested Hawk-eagle, Brown Fish Owl, Indian Eagle-Owl, Rock Bush-Quail, Pygmy Woodpecker, Black-headed Oriole, Crested Treeswift and Indian Pitta.



Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica*

This subspecies occurred in Persia, Mesopotamia, Baluchistan, from Sind in the west to Bengal in the east, and from Rampur in the north to Nerbudda in the south.

6th Nov: nothing to write about. Forget lions, we did not see anything. There were loud alarm calls very close by indicating a leopard was around us. We waited for a few mins and then the driver and guide decided it was not worth waiting, for reasons known to them. For the rest of the safari, neither they both spoke nor we. By 11 am we were looking forward to the safari getting over. But we decided one thing for sure. No more 9.30 am safaris, 6.30 am it would be. 4th safari: 3.30 pm 6th Nov : another new pair of driver and guide. The driver looked to be a very motivated chap and something about him told us he was the man we needed. He told us just one thing...have patience and trust me. We had no choices anyway. It was 5.30 pm, we had just 30 mins before we had to start back and we thought another safari lost. Then he said, "Now I will show you what I promised". In 10 minutes we were upon a lioness. Click, click, click, click. This man knew the movements of the animals and kept himself well informed, we realized. And then she got up and walked towards us. She then came and sat barely a few feet from us. I sat down on the floor of the Gypsy to make eye contact with her. She sat about 5 m from me. I wanted to jump out of the Gypsy and hug her as my eyes locked with hers. The lioness proved lucky for us and we saw another female and male some metres ahead. That evening

we came back on cloud nine and Vaithi said, "From pass class we have moved to B+ grade". We told the driver, you are our lucky man. Can't you join us for the remaining 5? He said "Madam, you try talking in the booking office but they don't easily accept it". I tried doing that, but they said "We can give you the same guide but not the same driver. We will try". Fair enough, lets wait and watch. 5th safari: 6.30 am 7th Nov. Just a drive. Only saw a few peacocks. 6th safari: 3.30 pm 7th Nov: once again, nothing to write. 7th safari :6.30 am, 8th Nov. We only clicked some bulbuls and bee-eaters. We were at the restaurant having lunch when our favorite driver walked in to ask how it has been going. We said "Forget lions, even birds and other animals have forsaken us after the safari with you". He said "How many more to go?". "2" we said. "Ok" he replied, "let me use my good offices to see if I can join you again". 3.30 pm 8th Nov, 8th safari: we step out of the hotel to see our driver waiting with the Gypsy. Suddenly we are all gleeful. "Madam, now the Gir pride is at stake. I will not let you all go back dejected like this. My promise. I have seen a lioness with 4 cubs in the morning. I know the territory and I think I know where she will move in the evening. But once again, patience and leave the rest to me". 5 pm, he starts driving with single minded focus and we are holding onto the edges of the

continued on page 112 >



Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica*

The Indian lion population occupies remnant forest habitats in the hill systems of Gir and Girnar that comprise Gujarat's largest tracts of dry deciduous forest, thorny forest and savanna.



Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus*

As per 2010 approximately 105 lions - 35 males, 35 females, 19 sub-adults, and 16 cubs - lived in the satellite areas outside the Gir forest.



Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica*

The advent of firearms led to the extinction of this subspecies over large areas. By the late 19th century, lions had been eradicated in Turkey. During the Indian Rebellion of 1857, a British officer alone shot and killed 300 lions, and by 1963 the last five had all been killed in Iran.

Gypsy. He stops - and we see a pride of six lions and lionesses. Click, click,click ,click for 30 mins. Apparently, one female of the pride had 4 tiny cubs too. We waited, but by then the news of this pride of 6 had spread and there were Gypsies lined up. No chance the cubs would be brought out. And then one of the pride came a little forward. Again, I was squatting on the floor of the vehicle, for that eye level shot. And then news came of a male lion on the road, a few kms ahead. Quietly and without showing any visible excitement, we moved away from the pride, to be the first ones to reach the spot. We did! And there he was. Once again I was on the floor of the Gypsy. Checked the distance reading on my lens...7 metres. Wow! This close...I waited for him to look at me. And then it came...the moment, as our eyes locked. Time was running out and this was my last image. Eight safaris done, one more to go. We convinced our driver to join us again next morning for our final safari. Vaithi now promoted us to A+ grade. Final safari: 6.30 am, 9th Nov: the lion was still there where we left him last night. He then walked for a good 15-20 min. Then he vanished into the forest. We completed our route and were returning when he was found again, at a different spot, in beautiful light and giving some stunning poses and expressions. The hair looked liked threads of gold. And the moment we soooo wanted to capture. The giant yawn...Thus ended our roller-coaster trip to Gir. ●



Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica*

A morphological character seen in Asiatic lions - but rarely in African ones - is a longitudinal fold of skin running along the belly. According to the IUCN Red List, the Asiatic lion is listed as "endangered" as it currently exists as a single subpopulation, and is thus vulnerable to extinction from unpredictable events, such as an epidemic or large forest fire.



Intermediate egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*
The abundant avifauna in Gir National Park numbers more than 300 bird species, most of which are resident.



Spotted owlet *Athene brama*
In the surrounding Sanctuary only Maldharis (a local population of wildlife-loving herdsman) have the right to graze their livestock.



Rose-ringed parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Prior to the resettlement of the peaceful Maldharis, the Gir forest was heavily degraded and used by livestock, which competed with and restricted the population sizes of native ungulates. Various studies have revealed tremendous habitat recovery and increases in wild ungulate populations following the Maldhari resettlement during the last four decades.

The Parting Shot



This is a very recent image, which we have taken in April 2014 during our three week-long visit to Tadoba National Park, in the Indian State of Maharashtra. We were leisurely driving along a slightly upward-sloping red dust road when we were suddenly faced by a stunning sight, emerging in the distance. Striding calmly, as a true queen, the Panderpauni female (so named for her range) was coming towards us, a full pageantry of Gypsies (the Indian jeeps built by Maruti) with attendant tourists in tow.

She even had her own armour-bearers in attendance, in the person of two smartly uniformed forest wardens nonchalantly walking a few feet behind her, one holding a plastic squirt bottle and a fiber truncheon (I wonder how useful would those had been she had decided to have a go at them), the other casually taking pics of her on his mobile phone. I love this image, and I find it very striking for a variety of reasons - its surrealistic quality, its uniqueness, the fact that each and every tourist in the back-

ground is an Indian national (which bodes well for conservation and environmental awareness), the quasi-religious silence and awe which accompanied the scene, the strict order and distance being kept by the drivers (another great first for notoriously undisciplined India), the beaming, smiling faces of the people watching this stunningly beautiful, supremely elegant tigress, the fascinating cultural and practical implications being implied here about the relationship between man and nature. ●

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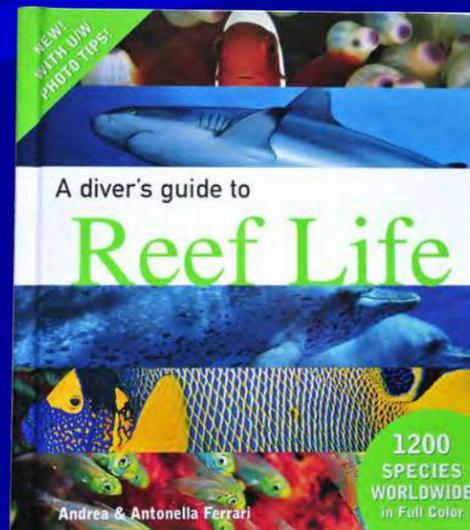
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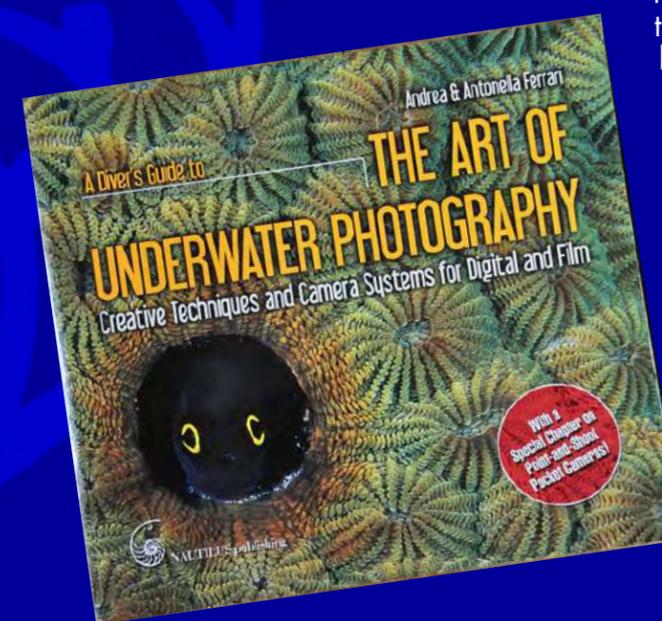
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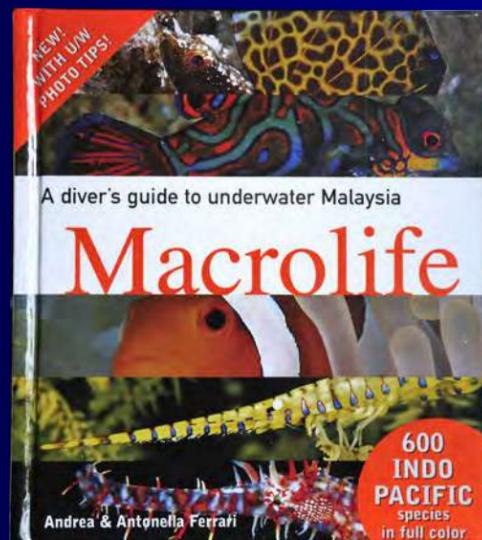
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