

ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

Issue 20, Year 5 - October 2015

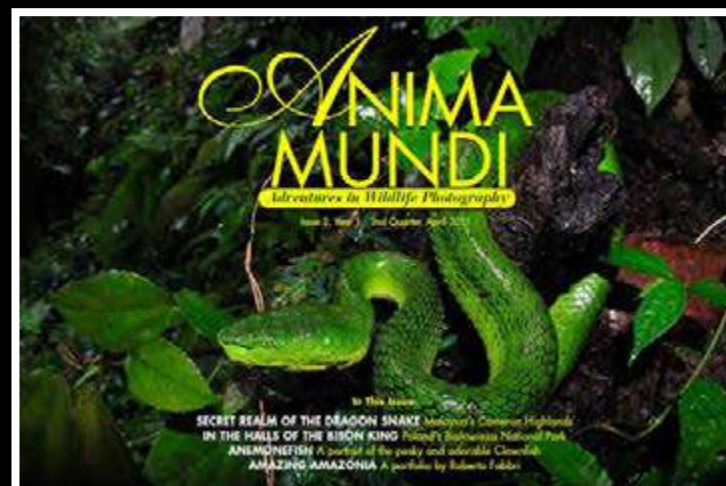
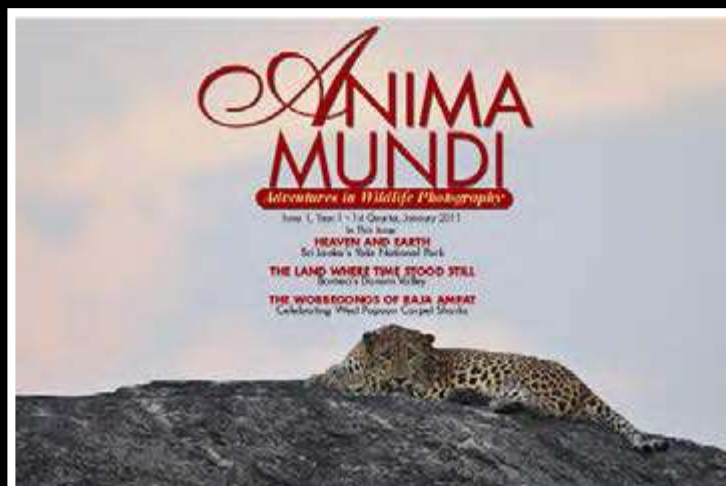
In This Issue:

SCOOP The Satanic Leaf Gecko

LEOPARDS AND LAKES Sri Lanka's Wilpattu National Park

TESTING TIME FOR TERRAPINS Italy's endangered chelonians

AFRICAN AQUARIUM Diving with cichlids in Lake Malawi

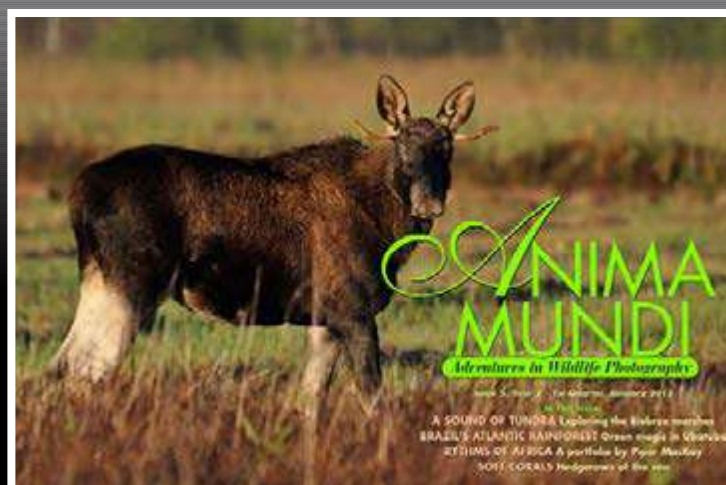


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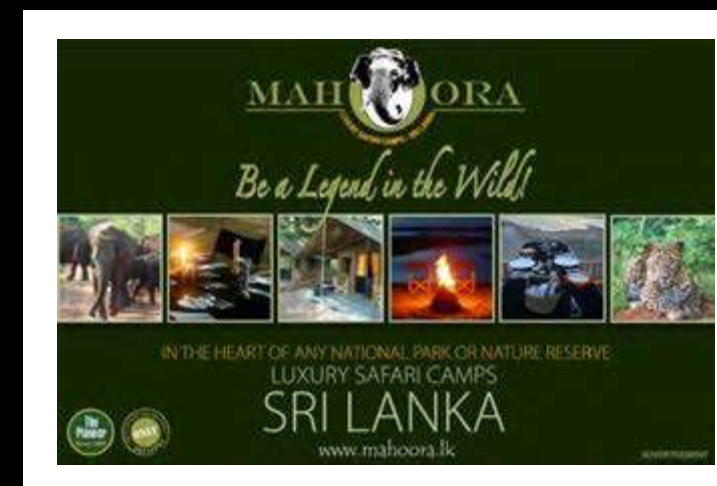
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With more than 15,000 downloads worldwide per issue (as per August 2012), ANIMA MUNDI has seen its readership consistently and rapidly growing in the brief span of only two years and eight published issues. Its authoritative and unbiased travel reports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

Dear Andrea & Antonella,

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

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



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

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■ A dramatic portrait of a juvenile Crested or Changeable Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus* from our feature on Sri Lanka's Wilpattu National Park, starting on page 12.



ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

It's a Hard Life, Baby

I have no difficulty in admitting that the late spring and summer issues of *Anima Mundi - Adventures in Wildlife Photography* are - as pleasant as they are - the hardest to put together, as the garden is alive with the calls of birds and frogs, our English Bull Terrier Emma wants to play and run on the lawn and the sundeck beckons with the promise of relaxation and laziness under a bright blue sky...But as they say - it's a dirty job, and somebody has to do it! So, as I listen to Antonella as she finishes packing for our upcoming trip to Sri Lanka (yes! Back to Yala and Wilpattu! Hooray!), I summon all my remaining resolve and put the finishing touches to this latest issue of ours. And what great issue it is, in my humble opinion!

We begin on page 4 with a lovely Scoop on that magical master of mimicry from Madagascar, the amazing Satanic Leaf Gecko - very few other species can compete with this little harmless reptile in the art of camouflage and sheer richness of pattern and texture. And those eyes, those facial features! This species alone - in my opinion - would be worth a herping trip to Madagascar! Well, see for yourself...

From Madagascar we then jump to another beautiful Indian Ocean island, Sri Lanka, for our cover story - a huge and heavily illustrated trip report (in two parts - on this issue and the next one) from Wilpattu National Park, a land of lakes and leopards almost unrivalled in serenity, scenic beauty and richness of wildlife sightings. Sri Lankan protected areas compare very favourably with Africa and India's most famous

National Parks - so go to page 12 and prepare yourselves to be amazed!

After our exotic Eastern excursions it is now time for some more sedate European Fieldwork - travel to page 63 and read all about the research being done to save Italy's endangered freshwater turtles, currently threatened by habitat erosion and invasions by exotic, introduced species. Terrapins may not be as fashionable or alluring photographic subjects as leopards or gorillas, but they are part of the ecosystem too, and their survival is of utmost importance to the preservation of biodiversity. Kudos to those working with them - often with little financing and in less-than-ideal situations!

We wrap our current issue with another big feature starting on page 77 - a finely detailed and well illustrated travel report by our contributor Scott Bennett from the waters of Lake Malawi - one of Africa's inland "seas", rich in a dazzling number of cichlid species. This is a story which will be of great interest not only to wildlife photographers but also to discerning scuba divers, underwater photographers interested in the unusual and specialized freshwater aquarists.

So this is it - after having returned from Sri Lanka and before leaving to Namibia we'll start working on issue 21, January 2016. In the meantime...

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

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Publishers
Andrea and Antonella Ferrari
nautilus@reefwonders.net

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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■ *Italy's threatened terrapin*
Emys orbicularis - see what is
being done to study and protect
this species from page 63.

Contents

4

SCOOP

The Satanic Leaf Gecko

12

LAND OF LAKES AND LEOPARDS

A visit to Sri Lanka's
Wilpattu National Park

63

TESTING TIMES FOR TERRAPINS

Saving Italy's endangered
water turtles

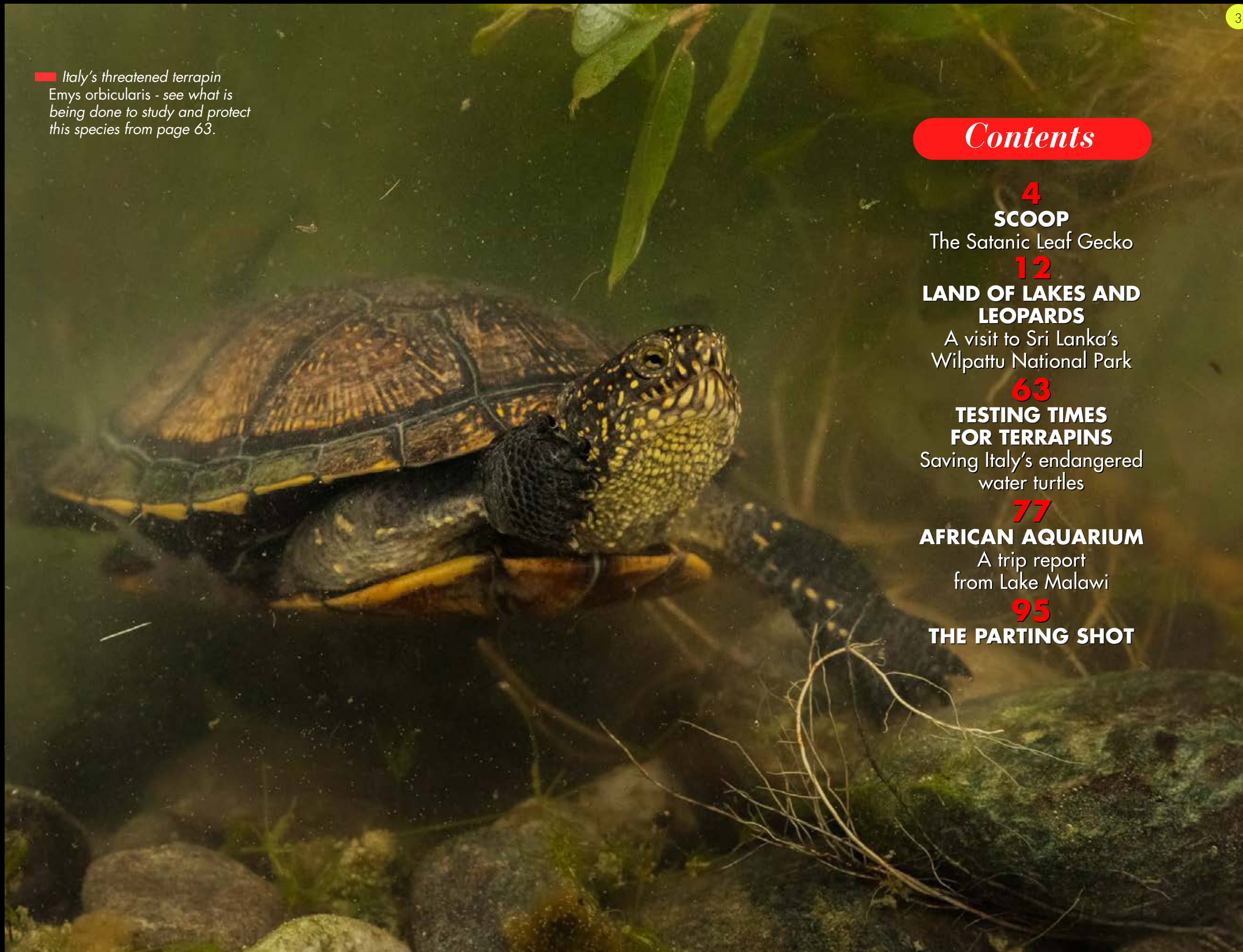
77

AFRICAN AQUARIUM

A trip report
from Lake Malawi

95

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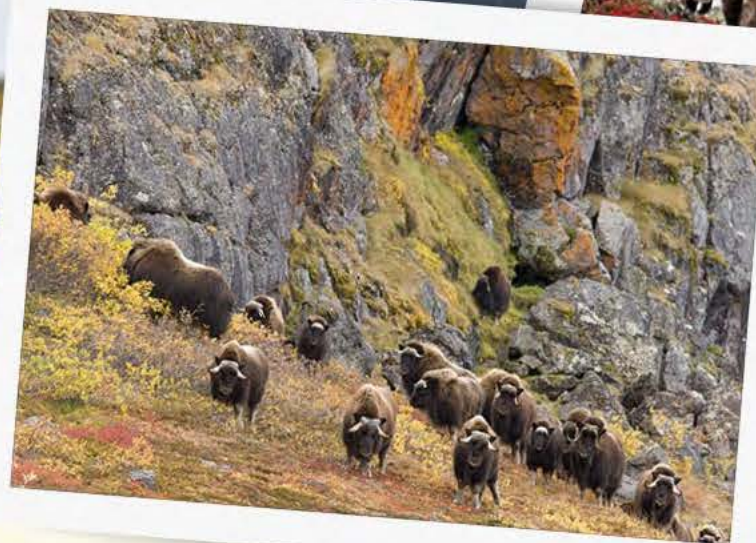
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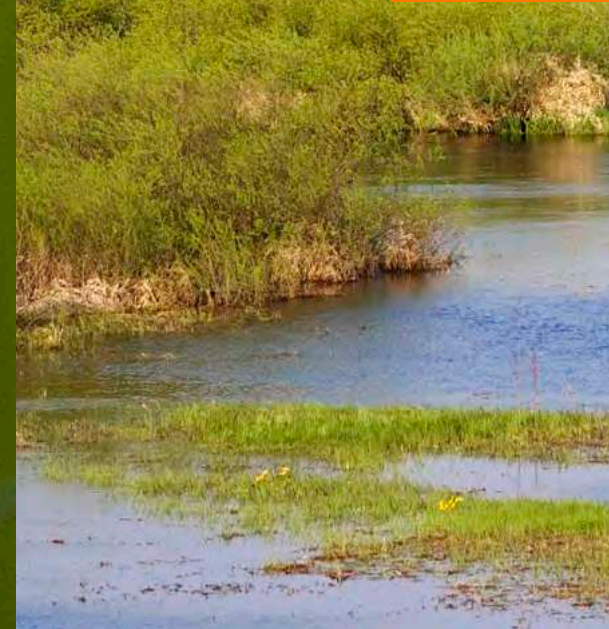


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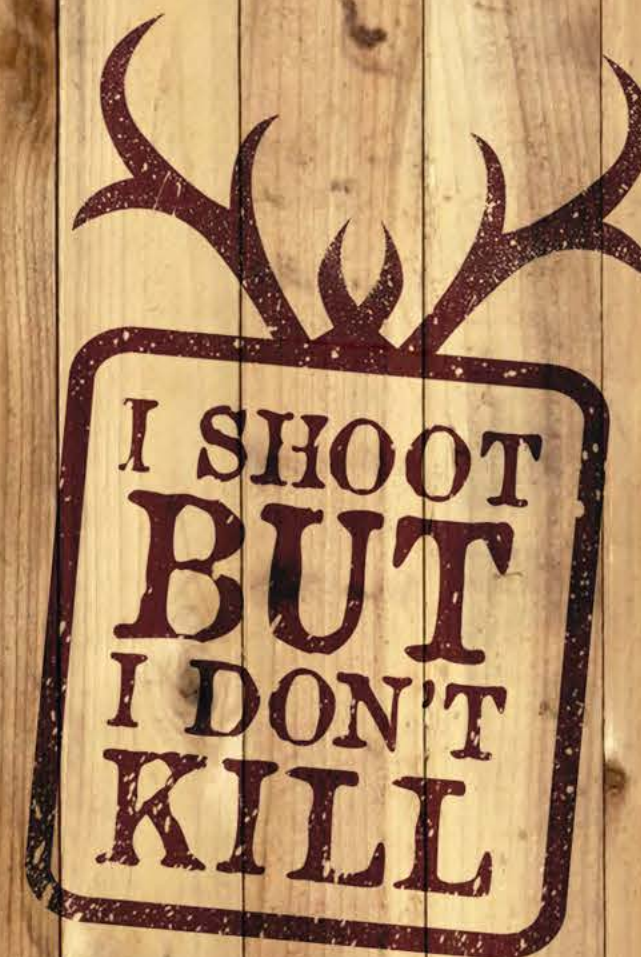


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The amazing Satanic Leaf Gecko **MADAGASCAR'S MASTER OF DISGUISE**

■ One of Madagascar's most bizarre and sought-after species, the Satanic Leaf Gecko *Uroplatus phantasticus* owes its common name to the "horns" above its eyes, which give it an unmistakably devilish look. This male was photographed at night - when the species becomes active - in the forest of Ranomafana National Park.

A RARE ENCOUNTER WITH A DEVILISH-LOOKING, COMPLETELY HARMLESS AND STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL REPTILE SPECIES ENDEMIC TO THE RED ISLAND

■ The extraordinary livery and the gaunt, crooked appearance of *Uroplatus phantasticus* help it to successfully blend with the foliage of the low-level forest canopy where this species is found.

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

The amazing Satanic Leaf Gecko *Uroplatus phantasticus* reigns supreme - in our opinion - among the most bizarre of Madagascar's fascinating reptile species. A strictly nocturnal animal, it was high on our wish list when we visited Ranomafana National Park thanks to our friends at [TanalaHorizon](#), and we soon sighted several individuals during our treks inside the rainforest - both during the day, when they rest curled up looking exactly like a dead leaf, and at night, when they actively prowl the low bushes looking for prey. It is usually

observed at heights of between 0.5 and 2 m above ground. Its stunning camouflage, its finely ornamented livery and its devilish looks make this completely harmless little gecko a real visual treat! This leaf-tailed gecko is endemic to Madagascar, where it has been recorded from many localities in the central-east of the island. It occurs from 400 m asl., reaching as high as 1,300 m in Andringitra, and has an estimated extent of occurrence of 41,507 km². This species is locally abundant, although as a forest-dependent species it is likely that the population is

declining. A nocturnal lizard that lives in relatively intact humid forest, it can tolerate only very light levels of disturbance, and is unlikely to persist in forests subject to heavy logging. The Satanic Leaf Gecko used to be exported from Madagascar for the international pet trade, but there is currently no legal export of it, and illegal exploitation is likely to be low. However, captive breeding occurs only in low numbers, and this species is currently threatened by the loss and degradation of humid forest due to logging, cattle grazing and farming. ●

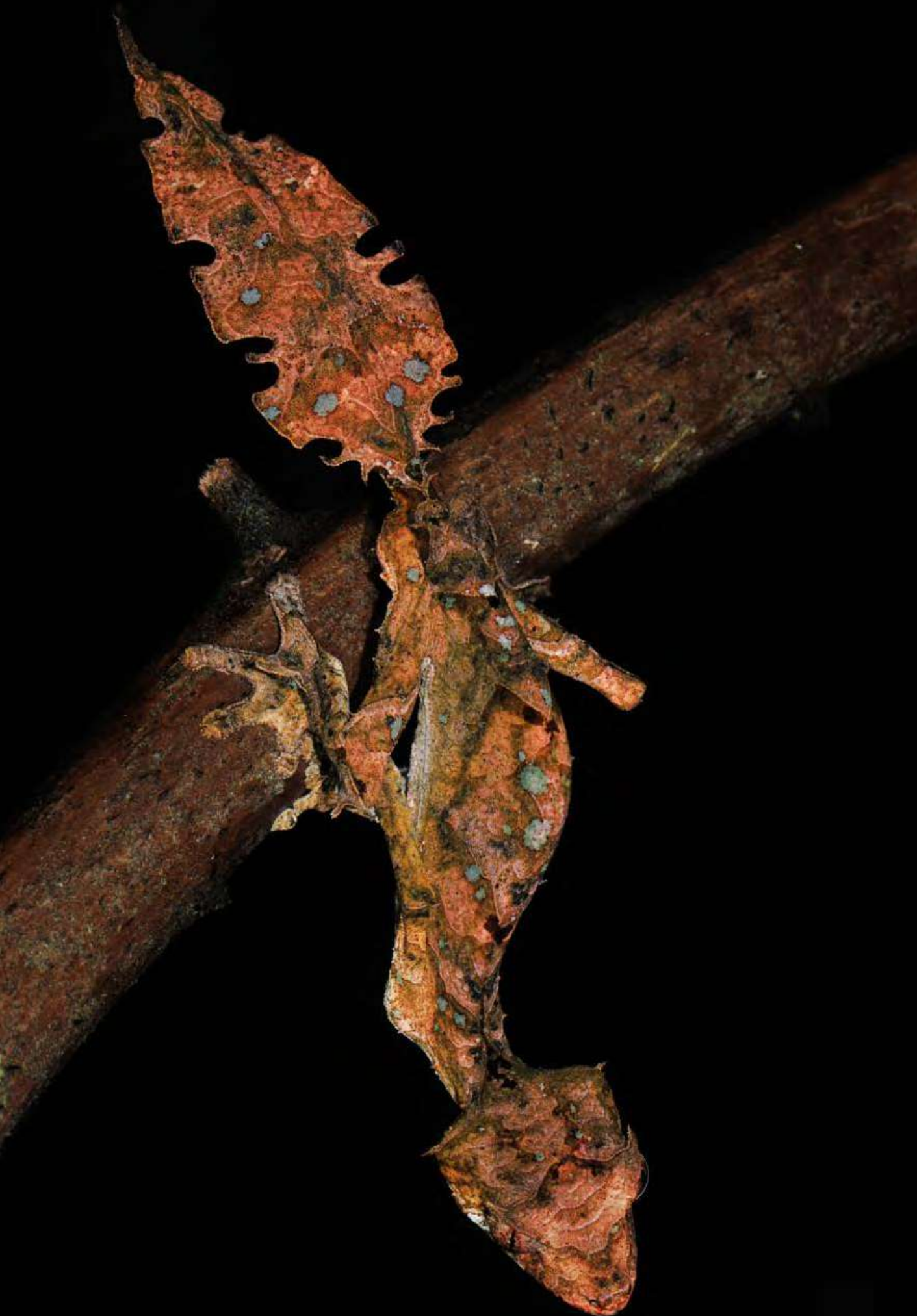


Genetic data have revealed that *Uroplatus phantasticus* is in fact a complex of several species, with a full taxonomic revision being required. It is included in CITES Appendix II, but more research is needed into its taxonomy, the limits of its distribution, its population status, and harvest levels. Both specimens illustrated in this page are females, as can be seen by the undented tail margins of the individual at right.






Confirmed localities for this species include the Angavo-Anjozorobe corridor, Iofa, Didy and Andriantantely, Mantadia, Zahamena, Betampona, Fierenena, Ranomafana and Vohidrazana.



■ Males of *Uroplatus phantasticus* (left) can be recognized by the indented margins of their leaf-like tail and by the generally more colorful livery. As this is a strictly nocturnal species, most day images of *Uroplatus phantasticus* are in fact - however spectacular - posed shots of captured animals.





When resting by day,  Uroplatus phantasticus curls up among the foliage of small trees and low bushes, pretending - usually with great success - to be a bunch of dead leaves. The camouflage of this species is indeed phenomenal, and spotting one in the forest is anything but easy.

Both the male (left) and the female (right) of this species can be amazingly colorful and patterned. The cryptic livery and sinuous stance habitually taken by *Uroplatus phantasticus* make it however literally disappear among the foliage of the Malagasy rainforest.





This fascinating species (or complex of species) displays an enormous amount of variability, and not two specimens are completely alike. What is recurrent in all *Uroplatus phantasticus* individuals is the exceptionally effective camouflage effect and the richly patterned livery.





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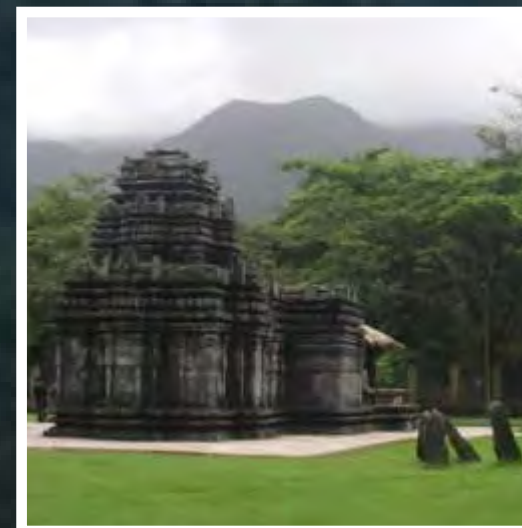
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SRI LANKA'S WILPATTU NATIONAL PARK

LAND OF LAKES AND LEOPARDS

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spectacular wildlife in one of the world's
most scenic protected areas

*A breathtakingly beautiful
landscape of serene lakes*

A splendid panoramic vista
of a typical villu (lake) landscape,
Wilpattu National Park, Sri Lanka.



TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

Since my first brief visit to Wilpattu National Park, almost forty years ago, I had long dreamed to be able to return there to share its natural beauties with my beloved wife Antonella, and to finally be able to visit it at leisure. Wilpattu, you see, is one of Sri Lanka's most scenic National Parks, and arguably one of the world's most beautiful - it had left an unforgettable impression on me, as it is indeed unlike any other wildlife sanctuary on the island. But what is it that makes it so unique? Wilpattu - Sri Lanka's largest Park - is situated in the dry lowlands of the island's north-west and comprises a

series of lakes – or *villus* – showing varying sizes and degrees of freshness or salinity. With a unique mosaic of over fifty of these wetland areas, these water basins are the Park's most prominent topographical feature (*Villu Pattu* means Land of Lakes). *Villus* are in fact shallow natural lakes that fill with rainwater, and are usually surrounded by white sand beaches and open grassy plains amidst the dense scrub jungle that predominates elsewhere. The *Villus*, with their abundance of water, are topped up during the main rainy season between September and December, when the

continued on page 16 ➤

Indian elephant
Elephas maximus
indicus feeding on the
shores of a villu.



Indian pond
heron or
paddybird
Ardeola grayii.

A young
Spotted deer
Axis axis male.



Park receives heavy downpours thanks to the northeast monsoon. They act as natural reservoirs during the annual drought, which lasts from May to September. Their presence, as the numerous photographs accompanying this article hopefully demonstrate, make Wilpattu's landscapes truly, uniquely and spectacularly beautiful. Declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1905, and elevated to National Park status some 30 years later, Wilpattu is still the largest of Sri Lankan Parks, covering a massive 131,693 hectares, but has gone through a roller-coaster stretch of difficult times during its long life. After having enjoyed for many years the privilege of being the island's most famous and visited Park, it suffered heavily during the hard years of the Tamil uprising and the civil war which followed. The Park was actually closed from the early 1990's until 2003, due to the fighting in the area, and the local wildlife suffered accordingly from

continued on page 18 ➤



■ *Target locked!*
Sri Lankan
leopard
Panthera pardus
kotiya focusing
on a potential
prey nearby.

Female Spotted deer
Axis axis on the flower-
filled shore of a villu.

heavy poaching and even landmines. At the moment the wildlife has however successfully rebounded, and sightings are often frequent and spectacular - but Wilpattu is somewhat still suffering, currently from the minority-pleasing maneuvers of local demagogues, petty local politics and the sprouting of illegal settlements in its northern section. But if the landscapes are supremely beautiful, it is the fauna inhabiting them - and which can be observed in such a stunning environment - that makes a visit (possibly more than one, in our case!) a duty for any self-respecting wildlife photographer. This, above all, is the land of leopards, specifically the Sri Lankan subspecies *Panthera pardus kotiya*, noted - particularly in Wilpattu - for its massive size, rich coat and muscular bulkiness. Sightings may not be as regular or as frequent as those in the

continued on page 21 ➤



■ Wilpattu is extraordinarily rich in bird species. Left, male Indian peafowl or blue peafowl *Pavo cristatus*; top right, Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhyncus*; bottom right, Orange-breasted Green pigeon *Treron bicinctus*.






The extraordinarily beautiful courtship display of a male (peacock) Indian peafowl or blue peafowl *Pavo cristatus*.

other crown jewel among Sri Lankan National Parks, Yala NP (see *Anima Mundi - Adventures in Wildlife Photography* Issue 1), but this is the only place in the world where one can hope to admire one stretching languorously, resting or even stalking its prey on the blinding white background of the *villus'* sandy beaches - truly a unique sight. The Park, with its unique rainwater lakes and pools, is also home to large numbers of Asian elephants, Sloth bears, Spotted deer, Sambar deer, Barking deer, Marsh crocodiles, monitor lizards, snakes and turtles, alongside many bird species including raptors, peacocks, hornbills, spoonbills, storks, bee-eaters, pigeons and doves,

continued on page 25 ➤

A Sri Lankan jackal (Canis aureus naria) is captured in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. The jackal is standing and looking towards the right. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with some trees and foliage, all bathed in the warm, golden light of dawn. The overall mood is serene and natural.

Sri Lankan jackal
Canis aureus naria
bathed in the golden
light of dawn.



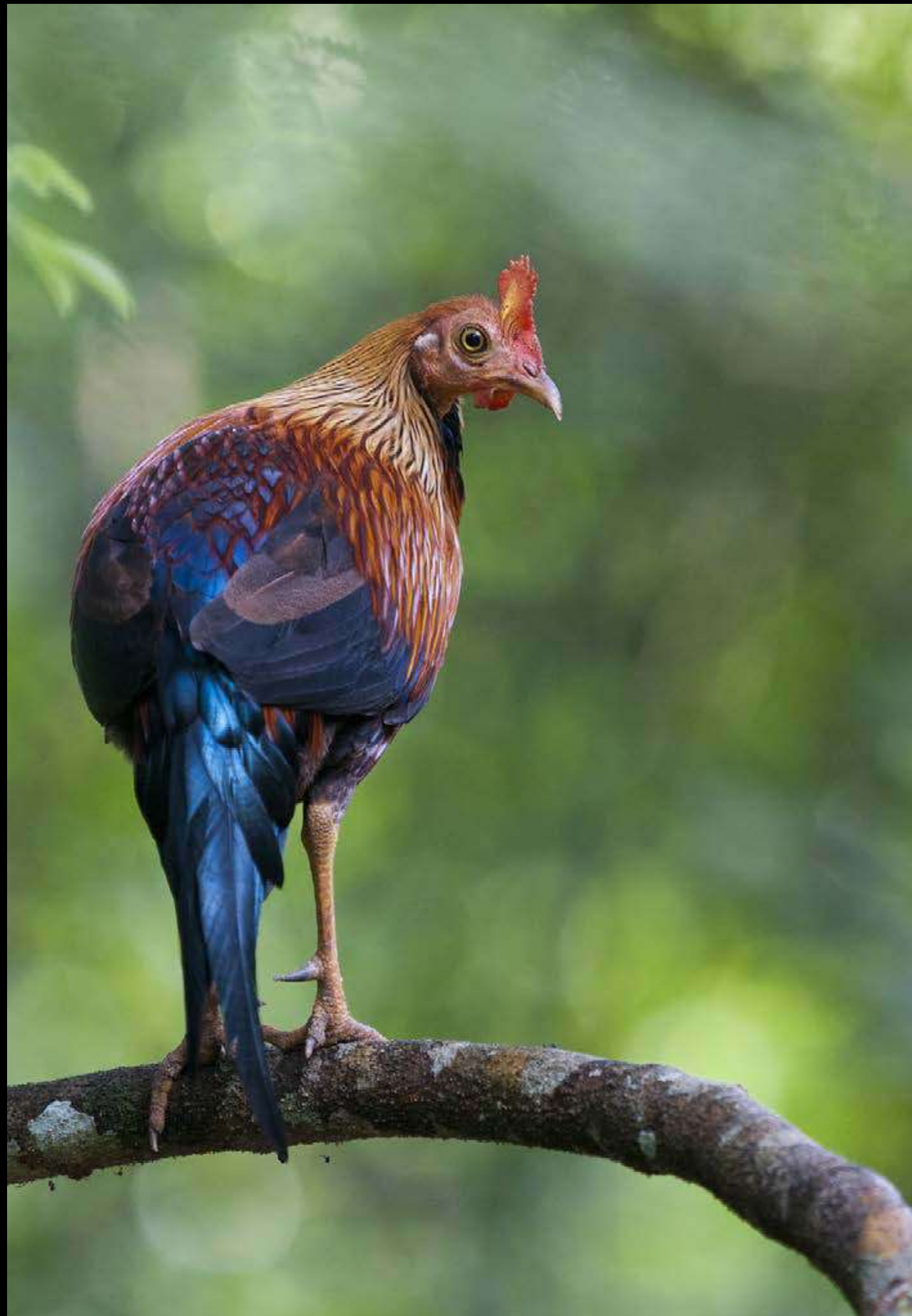
Left, Crested
serpent eagle
Spilornis cheela.
Right, Crested
or Changeable
Hawk Eagle
Nisaetus
*cirrhatu*s,
juvenile.



■ Ceylon mugger
crocodile or Sri
Lanka marsh
crocodile
Crocodylus
palustris sub.
kimbula.

*Countless crocodiles basking
on the villus' sunlit shores*





Far left,
Crested or
Changeable
Hawk Eagle
Nisaetus
cirrhatus.
Left, Sri Lankan
junglefowl
Gallus lafayetii.

kingfishers, herons, egrets and ducks. The list is exceedingly long, but to sum it up briefly - a seriously undertaken wildlife photography trip to Wilpattu will never disappoint. On the practical side, Wilpattu's average temperature is a very pleasant 27 C°, and the best time to visit is between February and October: the Park has a good network of gravel roads, particularly those which join the *villus*, and good accommodation is readily available in the vicinity. Wilpattu can be reached in 3-4 hours driving along excellent tarmac roads from Colombo's International Airport; Sri Lanka being such a small island, the Park is also conveniently close to the holy city and archaeological site of Anuradhapura, one of the highlights of the so-called "Cultural Triangle" which lovers of art, religion, culture and history will not want to miss visiting.

GOOD TRAILS AND PICNIC SITES

So the day to return to Wilpattu finally came - the war had been over long enough for the local wildlife to recover from its harrowing hardships and for the long-neglected Park infrastructures to work again. Wilpattu was literally reborn, more beautiful than ever, like a phoenix from its ashes. To explore it in the best possible way and to maximize

continued on page 32 ➤




Male Sambar deer ■
Rusa unicolor.



■ A rare sight: a pair of Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* in a breeding or territorial display.



Top left,  Emerald dove
Chalcophaps indica;
top right,
Pin-tailed snipe
Gallinago stenura.
Bottom left,
White-rumped shama
Copsychus malabaricus;
bottom right, Greater coucal
Centropus sinensis.



■ Another rare and unexpected encounter: an adult female Sri Lankan leopard *Panthera pardus kotiya* (on the left) with its two subadult cubs.



Indian elephants *Elephas maximus indicus* feeding in the shallow waters of a villu.






Top left,  Green bee-eater
Merops orientalis;
top right,
Pacific golden plover
Pluvialis fulva.
Bottom left,
Indian Pitta
Pitta brachyura;
bottom right,
White-throated kingfisher
Halcyon smyrnensis.





Ceylon mugger crocodile 
or Sri Lanka marsh crocodile
Crocodylus palustris
sub. *kimbula* basking
on the shores of a villu.

our photographic opportunities we turned for advice to our personal friend and naturalist Mevan Piyasena, a local and very knowledgeable wildlife lover who - being exceptionally experienced - agreed to be our guide and tracker for the duration of our stay. After some careful thinking, we opted to spend every single day inside the Park, from dawn to dusk, without going back for lunch to our bungalow, to save time and optimize our stay. Ours was in fact the perfect choice - Wilpattu National Park is equipped with several rest stops where visitors can get off their vehicle, stretch their legs and have a lovely packed lunch, Sri Lankan-style, while basking in the glorious beauty of the surroundings (and possibly even have some unexpected wildlife encounter - pesky Bonnet macaques, monitor lizards, mongooses, snakes and even elephants or leopards might occasionally join the party). Despite several unexpected unseasonal afternoon thunderstorms - which somehow robbed us of a few good opportunities but offered some incredible cloudscapes - we had a truly spectacular trip, with countless

continued on page 36 ➤




■ White-bellied sea eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*.

Left, Painted-lipped lizard *Calotes ceylonensis*, an endemic species; center, Land or Bengal monitor *Varanus bengalensis*; right, Garden lizard *Calotes versicolor*.



Sri Lankan
leopard *Panthera
pardus kotiya*.
This beautiful male
damaged the tip of
its tail during a fight
or a hunting attempt.



Left, 
Lesser adjutant stork
Leptoptilos javanicus;
right, Sri Lankan
grizzled
giant squirrel
Ratufa macroura.



sightings of every species we expected to see (in fact, as I am writing these words we are also busy packing for another trip - to Wilpattu, again!). The numbers and variety of encounters were staggering, and the openness of the natural environment allows well-lit photography in most situations, as even the thickest of forests in Wilpattu is a far cry from the oppressive, cathedral-like rainforests of the Amazon or South-East Asia, being open to breeze and above all to that much-desired blessing to wildlife photographers - sunlight.

A PARADISE FOR WILDLIFE LOVERS

Wilpattu covers a very extensive area, and to explore it as much as possible

continued on page 41 ➤



Common
kingfisher
Alcedo atthis.



Top left, Chestnut-headed bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*; top right, Jerdon's nightjar *Caprimulgus atripennis*. Bottom left, Sri Lanka grey hornbill *Ocyrceros gingalensis*, an endemic species; bottom right, Stork-billed kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*.



*Lotus-filled shallow lakes
dotting the open forest*

Indian pond
heron or paddybird
Ardeola grayii.

Left, Malabar pied hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*; center, Woolly-necked stork *Ciconia episcopus*; right, Purple heron *Ardea purpurea*.





Another villu
(lake) landscape,
typical of the
Wilpattu
environment.



Right, 
Crested or
Changeable
Hawk Eagle
Nisaetus cirrhatus;
right,
Black-naped
monarch
or Black-naped blue
flycatcher
Hypothymis azurea,
in its nest.

one needs to drive around a lot, especially if wishing to reach the Indian Ocean coast (yes - Wilpattu borders with the sea!). It is a rather long day, but well worth it, as the closer one gets to the ocean, the better one can appreciate the subtle changes in the environment and the vegetation. Driving around in Wilpattu basically consists in checking out every *villu* one can think of (there are a few favorites where great sightings of the resident leopards are more or less guaranteed); going from one *villu* to the next, one drives on excellent trails inside the semi-dry forest, where it is easier to observe deer, reptiles and above all an enormous variety of birds - including the most exceptionally inquisitive and friendly Crested Snake eagles *Spilornis cheela* we have ever had the luck to encounter. Asian elephants are also frequently observed as they bathe and feed in the *villus*, often in small herds, while Sloth bears - as anywhere else - are less predictably encountered. ●

**DON'T MISS THE SECOND
INSTALLMENT OF OUR
WILPATTU STORY – COMING
IN JANUARY 2016 ON ISSUE
21 OF ANIMA MUNDI –
ADVENTURES IN WILDLIFE
PHOTOGRAPHY!**



Sri Lankan leopard
Panthera pardus kotiya
relaxing on the white sand
fringing Maha Patessa,
one of Wilpattu's lakes.



A photograph of two Green bee-eaters (Merops orientalis) perched on a dry, light-colored branch. The birds are facing right, with the one in front slightly ahead of the other. They have bright green plumage, a yellowish-green forehead, and a black stripe through the eye. Their beaks are long and dark. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green. The bird in the foreground has its long tail feathers visible, hanging down.

■ *Green bee-eater*
Merops orientalis,
a very common
and strikingly
beautiful species
in Wilpattu
National Park.

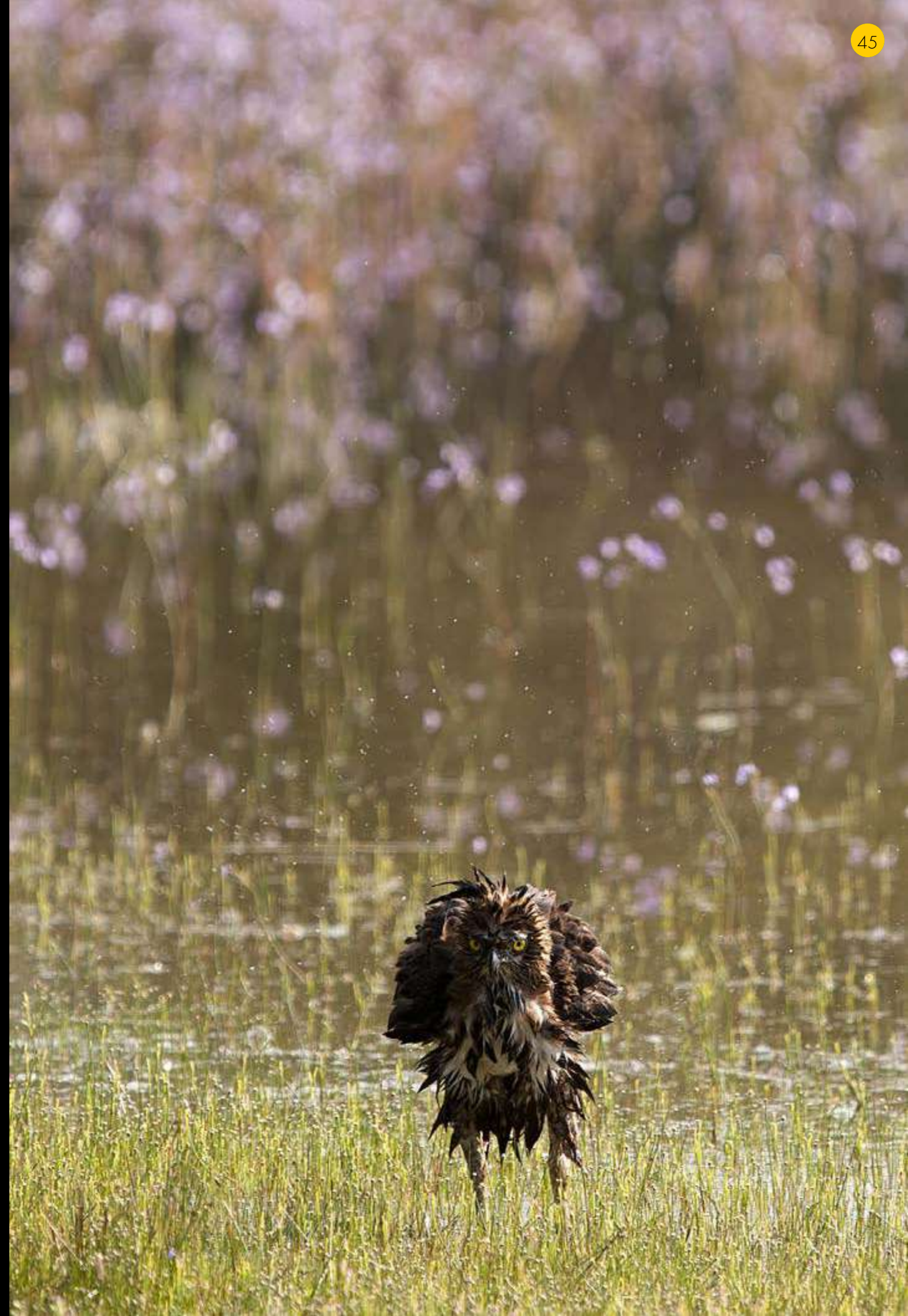


Left, male Indian peafowl or blue peafowl *Pavo cristatus*; right, Little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius*.





■ Left, a portrait of a juvenile Crested or Changeable Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus*; right, an adult of the same species looking somehow less dignified after a bath.



*The unchallenged
apex predator
of Sri Lanka's forests*

■ Sri Lankan
leopard *Panthera
pardus kotiya*.







Top left, Wild boar *Sus scrofa*; top right, Barking Deer or Muntjak *Muntiacus muntjak malabaricus*. Bottom left, Grey mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*; bottom right, Indian or Black-naped hare *Lepus nigricollis*.

Spotted deer
Axis axis, mating.





■ Ceylon mugger
crocodile or Sri
Lanka marsh
crocodile
Crocodylus
palustris sub.
kimbula.



■ Typical Wilpattu
landscape under
an extraordinarily
stormy sky.



Far left,
Brown Fish Owl
Ketupa
zeylonensis;
center, Chestnut-
headed bee-eater
Merops
leschenaulti;
right,
Brahminy kite
Haliastur indus.





Sri Lankan leopard
Panthera pardus kotiya.



■ Left, Sri Lankan grizzled giant squirrel *Ratufa macroura*; right, portrait of a Toque macaque *Macaca sinica*, an endemic species.





A serene villu
(lake) landscape.



Left, seated Buddha statue in the Abhayagiri of the ancient capital city Anuradhapura, a holy Buddhist cult and pilgrimage site which is part of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle and is under patronage of UNESCO as a World Heritage site; right, Sri Lankan leopard *Panthera pardus kotiya*, Wilpattu.





Colossal sitting statue of Buddha in meditation at the Gal Vihare of the ancient capital city of Polonnaruwa, a holy Buddhist cult and pilgrimage site which is part of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle and is under patronage of UNESCO as a World Heritage site.

Indian elephant ■
Elephas maximus indicus
feeding in a shallow villu
in the late afternoon.





■ Left, colossal standing Buddha at the Lankatilaka of the ancient capital Polonnaruwa, a holy Buddhist cult and pilgrimage site which is part of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle; center, Sri Lankan leopard Panthera pardus kotiya; right, the Vatadage of the ancient capital city of Polonnaruwa.



A supremely elegant
young Sri Lankan leopard
Panthera pardus kotiya
female.

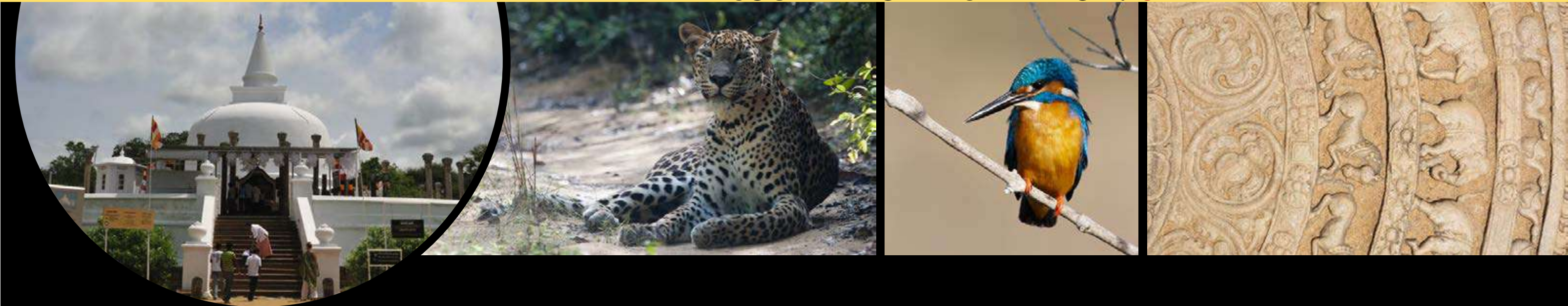


■ A trio of Green bee-eater *Merops orientalis*.



At-a-glance travel guide

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION: SRI LANKA



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 at Bandaranaike International Airport, in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo, where you will be met by your guide of choice. Travelling around this beautiful and relatively small tropical island for holiday and sightseeing alone is exceedingly easy and safe (in fact highly advisable), but when dealing with the bureaucracy of National Parks and the unpredictability of wildlife we always prefer to rely on a good, knowledgeable local guide. Whenever we visit Sri Lanka's National Parks we do so with our naturalist and wildlife photographer friend **Mevan Piyasena**, who has proven himself on several occasions a highly reliable, professional organizer.

MEANS OF TRANSPORT: Open, canvas-roofed 4-wheel drive jeeps are used for privately guided trips and are ideal for comfortable, flexible wildlife photography inside the National Park. Walking and night driving inside the protected areas is not allowed, but a few semi-protected rest stops are provided where one can get off the car and have a light picnic breakfast or lunch.

CURRENCY: Sri Lankan rupee - even if US dollars and Euros are commonly accepted at most tourist resorts, it is advisable to change a reasonable sum upon arrival to buy the inevitable (and excellent) organic spices and tea to bring home.

ACCOMODATION: Accommodation ranging from spartan to luxurious is readily available in the vicinity of the Park's gate (camping or spending the night inside Sri Lankan protected areas is sadly not allowed anymore). A very good and practical option is offered by simple, clean, private country bungalows - complete with personal cook and caretaker - being widely offered for rental.

FOOD: Sri Lankan food is spectacular, often very fiery, mostly based on all possible culinary declinations of coconut flesh and milk and with a predominance of savoury vegetarian and fish dishes, usually served in abundance. Do not miss the

A rich wildlife which has been long preserved by Buddhist culture



mouth-watering curries and the buffalo milk curd topped with treacle (palm sugar syrup) dessert.

LANGUAGE: Sinhalese and Tamil, but excellent English is widely spoken everywhere.

WORRIES: Basically none at the moment - Sri Lanka is one of the safest, most relaxed countries we know. As anywhere else, avoid being around alone at night in Colombo, especially if carrying expensive jewellery and cameras.

HEALTH: Again, Sri Lanka appears to be a very safe tropical country health-wise. We are unfamiliar with any cases of dangerous tropical diseases there, and food appears to be safe anywhere. As usual, avoid drinking tap or well water and prefer tea or bottled water. Ticks, mosquitoes and the occasional venomous snake are a liability in the field.

CLIMATE: Tropical, but very variable depending on season and altitude. In the lowlands expect hot, relatively dry days and the occasional thunderstorm; at higher elevations - such as in the tea plantations of Nuwara Eliya - expect misty, cool mornings and cold nights. One side of the island is usually experiencing the rains of the monsoon at a time while the other is in the dry season - so simply switch sides accordingly to your preferences of the moment!

BESIDES: Situated at the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent, the island of Sri Lanka - the ancient Serendib and Taprobane - has always been at the crossroads of the busy sea lanes of the Indian Ocean, a rich, bountiful, teardrop-shaped land of ancient history and culture where a wealth of wildlife and a beautiful environment have historically been preserved by the strong influence of Buddhist culture. And because of the beneficial Buddhist influx, not

only wildlife is confident and abundant everywhere, but many stunningly beautiful archaeological sites - still vibrant in the daily observance of cult by the locals - survive and are carefully preserved today in the island. Given their proximity to each other and ease of visiting, the ancient cities of Anuradhapura (the closest to Wilpattu) and Polonnaruwa and the mountain fortress of Sigiriya - all three exceedingly abundant in spectacular works of art, sculpture and architecture and forming the so called "Cultural Triangle"- are an absolute must for all discerning travellers. The ancient capital of Kandy and the hill station of Nuwara Eliya are also not to be missed. The flat, palm-fringed island coastline also offers excellent opportunities for relaxing at some of the world's most beautiful beaches. Sri Lanka has a wonderful hospitality tradition, and some of the most beautiful, well-furnished, romantic hotels we have ever visited are found here. ●



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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

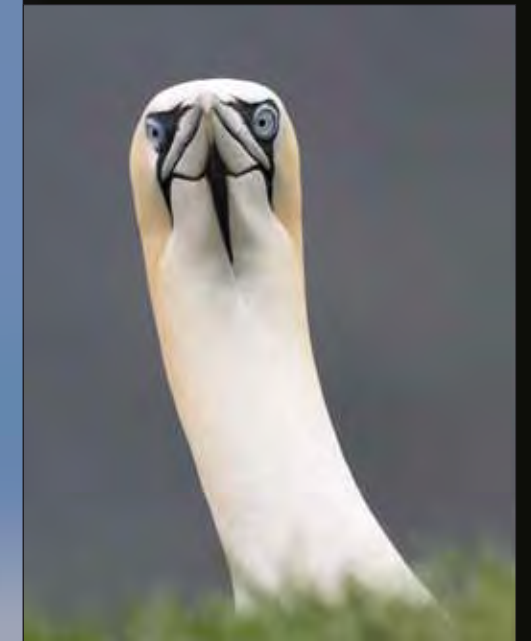
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ITALY'S ENDANGERED CHELONIANS

TESTING TIMES FOR TERRAPINS



Barely but tenaciously surviving in isolated populations with a patchy distribution, the European pond turtle is a threatened species in need of protection



Italian herpetologist Daniele Seglie checks if there are movements in the fish trap. Checks are carried out once or twice a day depending on the location.



A female specimen after being released in the capture location. Sometimes, before fleeing, the animal will remain still as to observe us.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY RICCARDO CAVALCANTE

The *Emys orbicularis*, commonly called the European pond turtle or European pond terrapin, is a Chelone belonging to the family *Emydidae*. A timid inhabitant of wetlands, marshes and sluggish streams, it feeds on arthropods, occasionally supplementing its diet with algae and vascular plants. This species lives mainly in the western Palaearctic, but land reclamation, climate change, agricultural expansion and construction have dramatically reduced the surfaces of the natural environment suitable for its survival. This is the reason why *Emys orbicularis* is inserted into the Red List drawn up by the IUCN, and is classified as a species vulnerable to extinction. It is a species quite sensitive to environmental changes and pollution, and it is therefore to be considered - as several other animal and vegetable species - a reliable biological indicator of the overall health of ecosystems.

Unfortunately, because of the fragmentation of habitats, in large part of its range *Emys orbicularis* is present in small populations only, which survive in isolated areas, putting them at risk of

local extinction. In fact, habitat fragmentation is one of the main causes of population decline - by preventing individuals from migrating from one area to another the percentage of inbreeding will increase, producing as a result the genetic impoverishment of the populations. In the long term this can lead to the extinction of entire populations.

Another phenomenon to be reckoned with is the presence of alien species which have been introduced into our ecosystems. An example worth mentioning is that of the American pond terrapin, *Trachemys scripta*. When babies these tortoises are small as a coin, quite colorful and apparently undemanding. They used to be sold - and still are - as pets at fairs, country festivals and in shops. In fact *Trachemys scripta* can reach a considerable size - up to 28cm for an adult female - in 3 to 6 years, depending on feeding and temperature. It can live up to 30/35 years of age, so it is an animal that needs special attentions when kept as a pet in a home. This is the reason why many people free these terrapins in the

continued on page 68 ➤



A young specimen photographed during the release into the water and back to freedom in its natural habitat.



An adult female, about 8 years old, is preparing to flee after having been released. This beautiful specimen was found in an old abandoned quarry, where a project of re-naturalization is being successfully implemented.



Herpetologist Daniele Seglie transcribes the data collected during the measurements taken on the specimen portrayed in the photo.

environment thinking it is the right thing to do, unaware of the serious ecological damage that these animals, not present in our ecosystems in the past, can cause, competing with native species and interfering with the balance of our already highly stressed natural habitats. Even though there is no reliable evidence that the European pond terrapin is damaged by its coexistence with *T. scripta*, recent experimental studies show that, if the two species lived in the same area, there would begin a competition which would cause damage to the indigenous one (Cadi & Joly, 2003, 2004). Researchers reported cases where *Trachemys scripta* is dominant on *E. orbicularis* in the choice of thermoregulation sites, segregating the local species to poor basking spots.

In Piedmont, a North-Western region of Italy, the populations of this testudinate are significantly threatened so as to have it classified as a species in danger of extinction. Therefore the European pond terrapin is defined as "priority", and it requires systematic monitoring of the populations in the area. This is the purpose of the regular monitoring which has been required by the river Po and Orba Park authorities and authorized by the Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea. For this reason, Daniele Seglie, herpetologist and expert in wetlands, and I, are monitoring some groups in order to correctly understand the current state of the health of the populations and to safely decide how to act in order to preserve them. Our

monitoring is a CMR type, which stands for "capturing, marking and recapturing". Net traps are then placed to capture animals with the minimum possible of stress. Trapped specimens are monitored, their state of health is assessed and then we carefully weigh and measure the length and width of the carapace and plastron (the dorsal and ventral components that make up the shell of the turtle), the tail is measured, then the animals are sexed and the age is determined. To count its years we use the growth lines which are present on the shields that make up the carapace. After all the necessary measurements have been taken, the turtles are marked by making notches on the marginal shields, according to a precise pattern that allows the recognition of each terrapin. This step is very important because it allows to estimate the growth, the movements and the health of each individual specimen. Everything is done on location, in the field, and all terrapins are set free where they have been captured.

This kind of field work has its advantages and its disadvantages, as it forces us to work in all types of weather conditions and in close contact with bloodsucking creatures - such as mosquitoes, horseflies and leeches - and all kinds of parasites, but the desire to give a new hope to animals populations in dire need of it and the unique opportunity to work closely with animals which are otherwise very difficult to see makes this job exciting!



After having identified the right location, the herpetologist positions the fish net trap used to catch the terrapins.



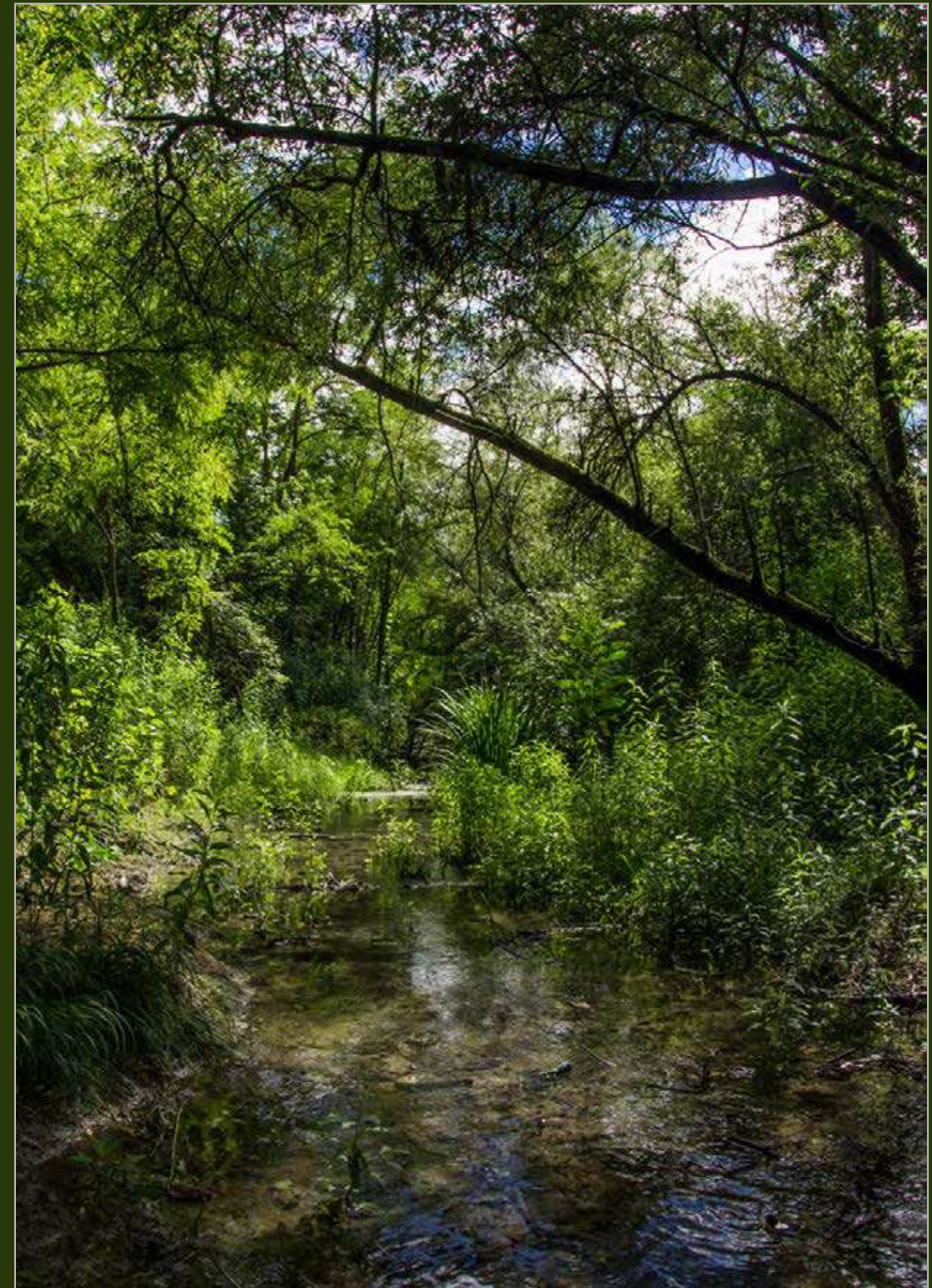
A specimen photographed in its natural habitat during thermoregulation.



Measurement of the tail and the distance between its base and the cloaca.



Typical forested wetland habitat. In the foreground, behind the fallen tree trunk, a plant typical of these habitats, the bullrush *Typha latifolia*.



A small watercourse flows through the woods. There are no *Emys orbicularis* here, but they possibly use these brooks to move from one wetland to another.



A specimen is being carefully measured and checked, while two others try to escape. This is our field office and workstation!



Larval stages of the newt *Triturus carnifex* are commonly found in monitoring sites. These animals are a potential food source for *Emys orbicularis*.



Field measurement of the shell. Length and width of the carapace and plastron of each specimen are dutifully and carefully noted.



A female specimen of the Painted turtle *Trachemys scripta elegans*, most probably a former and illegally released pet. This extremely adaptable species, native to the central and southern USA, competes with native species, exposing *Emys orbicularis* to additional threats of extinction.

The same specimen of a previous photo as it is being released. The animal seems intrigued by the photographer and is reluctant to leave.



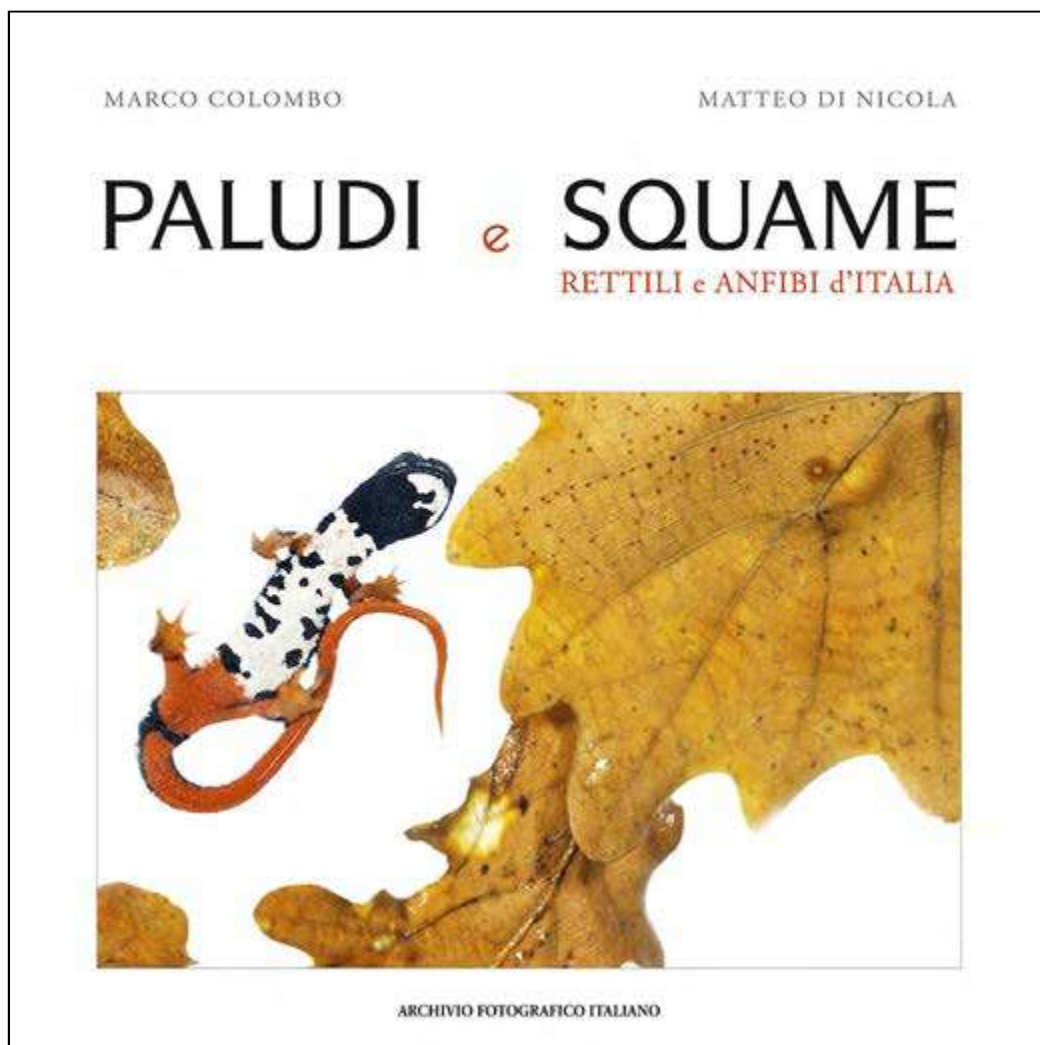
A young specimen of *Emys orbicularis*, about 4 years old, basking on a patch of moss. Young terrapins can be quite colorful.



A water-level shot attempting to show how *Emys orbicularis* sees its own environment.



The typical habitat of *Emys orbicularis* in Italy - an oxbow lagoon covered by Yellow Water-lily *Nupha lutea* in bloom, with a stretch of hydrophile woodland in the background.



NEW HERP BOOK

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Published by the Italian Photographic Archive, this book comes from a great love for Italian herps, from the wish of making them known to the public in all their beauty and fascination, and last but not least their need of protection. This is the first strictly photographic book about Italian frogs, toads, newts, salamanders, turtles, lizards and snakes in their natural environments, through shots obtained over many years by the authors. This work has been published with the sponsorship of Rile-Tenore-Olona Local Park (Lombardy) and the patronage of Societas Herpetologica Italica (SHI). The book is in Italian but don't be afraid, there are much more photographs than texts!

Authors: M.Colombo & M. Di Nicola

Product details: 28x28 cm, hardcover, 112 pages

Publisher: Punto Marte

Price: 25 euro (shipping costs excluded)

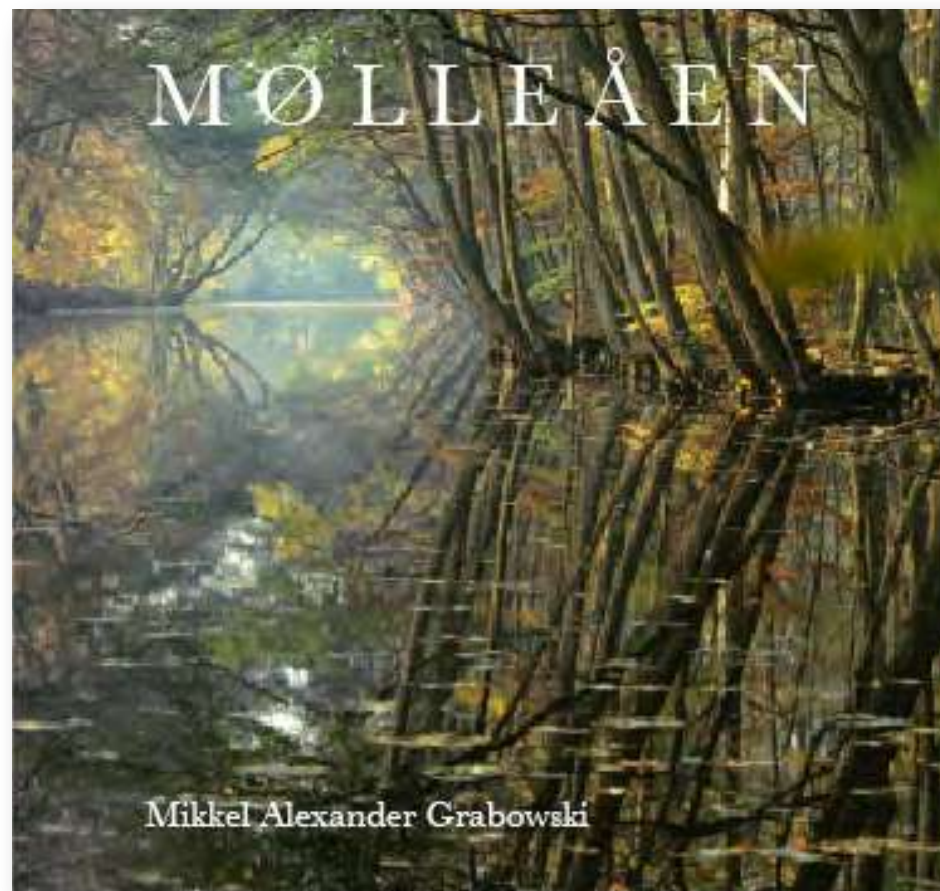
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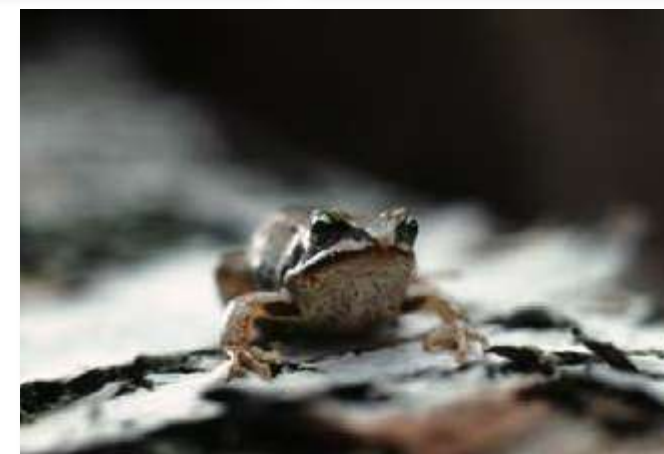
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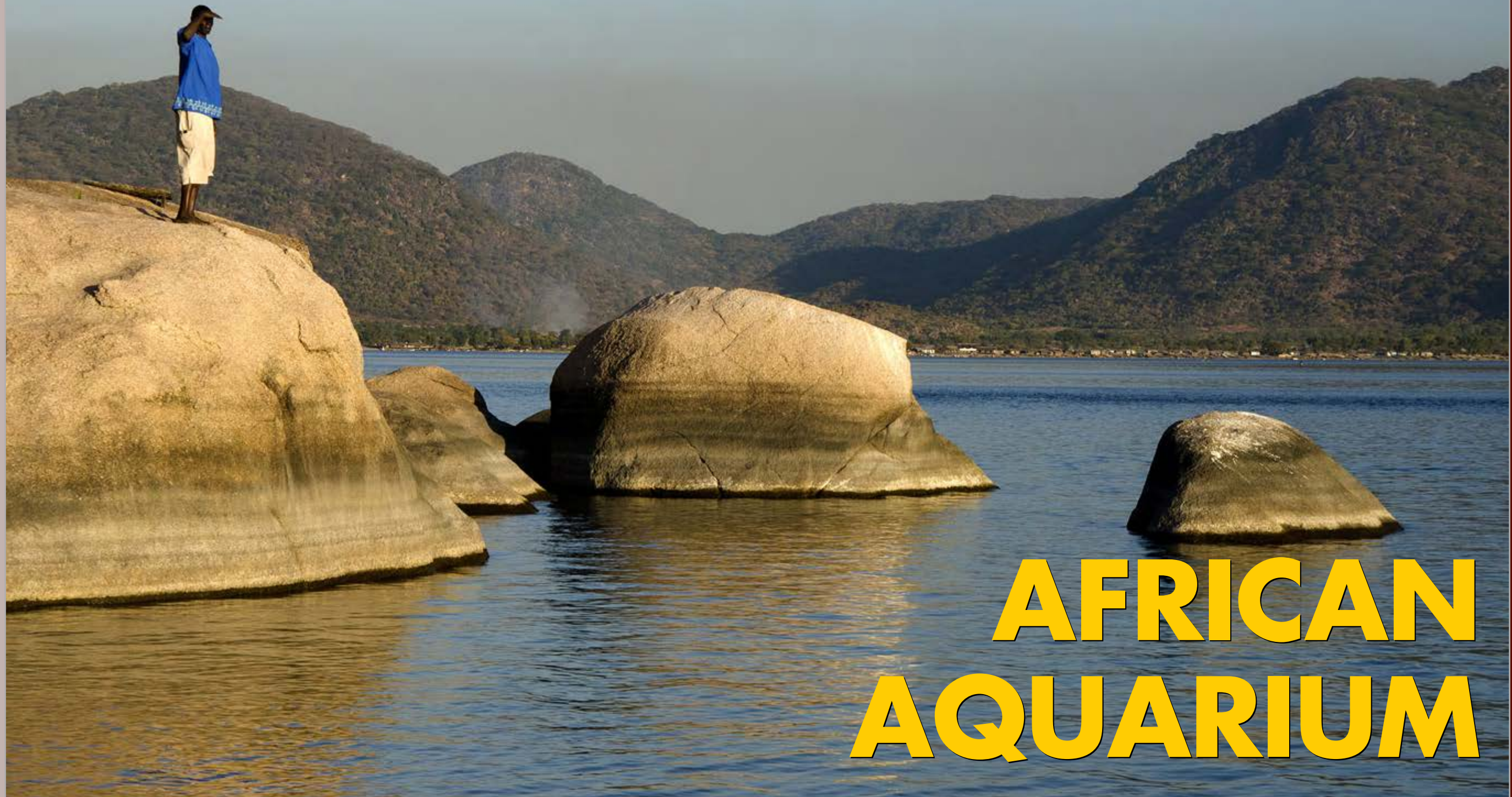
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Trip Report

DIVING WITH CICHLIDS IN LAKE MALAWI

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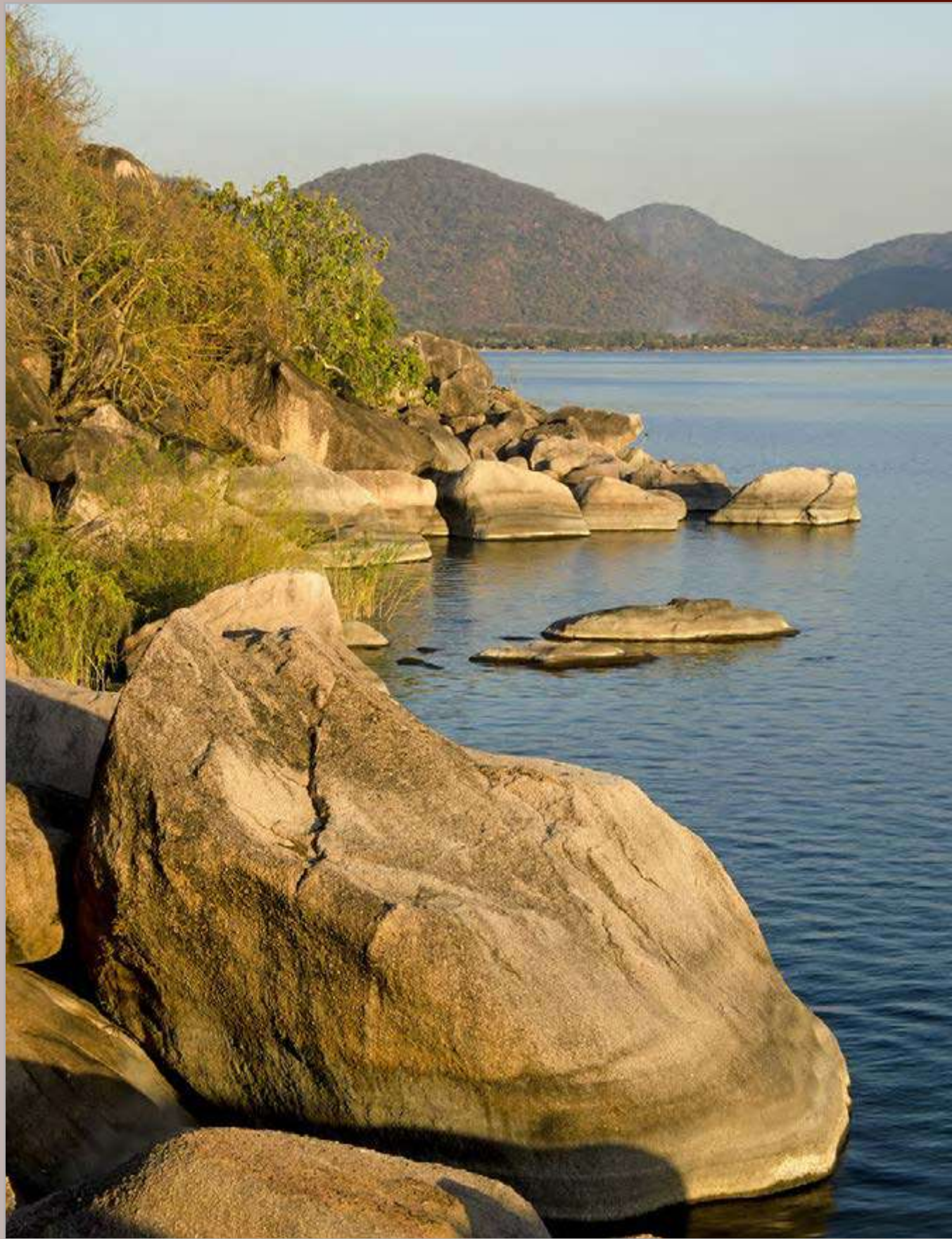


AFRICAN AQUARIUM

Exploring the barren, rocky bottoms of a veritable freshwater inland sea -
in search of fascinating, colorful fish among hippos and Nile crocodiles



Maylandia sp.
This cichlid is flashing its bright blue sidebars, possibly as a sign of aggression or territorial display.



Domwe Island

The rocky shoreline of Domwe Island.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY SCOTT BENNETT

For some reason, many people attach an unwarranted stigma to Africa. Whenever there is trouble somewhere, many assume the entire continent is hazardous simply by geographic association. As African nations go, however, Malawi remains refreshingly innocuous; it doesn't make the news for all the wrong reasons. Make no mistake; the country's small size belies its multitude of attractions. Known as the warm heart of Africa for its friendly people, I quickly realized it could also be called the land of surprises.

Proclaimed a National Park in 1973, Liwonde features a diverse range of habitats and abundant wildlife despite its relatively compact size of 580 sq km. Mopane woodland dominates approximately three-quarters of the park along with candelabra trees and numerous baobabs. Reed swamps and marshland fringe the Shire River while the south features floodplain grassland, mixed woodland on the hills and semi-deciduous riverine forest. After paying the park fees, we set out for Mvuu, the sole lodge located within the park boundaries. En route, game was abundant with impala, bushbuck, waterbuck, warthogs and kudu. A herd of elephants was an unexpected surprise with quite a few juveniles present.

Discreetly nestled on a small lagoon off the Shire River, the camp was simply stunning. Resting on a raised platform high beneath an imposing thatched roof, the main lodge featured an open-air reception / dining area offering views of both the lagoon and Shire River beyond. Lodge facilities included a dining room, pub, lounge area, library and swimming pool. Accommodation consists of eight luxurious tents for a maximum of 16 guests, each with ensuite bathroom facilities and a private viewing platform overlooking the water. It didn't take long to spot some wildlife. Egrets waded through the lagoon's shallows while some imposing crocodiles basked on the muddy riverbank. Mvuu means "hippo" in the local Tonga language and the name couldn't be more fitting. Approximately 2000 reside in the Shire River and seeing them is a 100% certainty. To me, their snorting and bellowing is a sound synonymous with the African bush. A short drive brought me to a lookout over the Shire River, where I enjoyed a glass of wine as the setting sun transformed the still waters to liquid gold. Afterwards, a night drive yielded kudu, white-tailed mongoose, genets, scrub hares and even a bushbaby hopping along the ground. Over dinner, I was asked what I wanted to do the next morning. Activities included guided bush walks, game and boat drives. I opted for

continued on page 82 ➤



African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*
Peacefully grazing in knee-deep water by the lake's edge.



Masimbwe Island

The rocky, barren bottom of Masimbwe Island is home to countless, colorful cichlids.



Maylandia aurora
Most Malawi cichlids display a brightly iridescent and very colorful livery.

the latter, which provided tremendous photo ops, especially for birds. Over 300 of the country's 650 species reside within the Park, which includes a copious number of waterbirds.

Getting up for sunrise, we crossed the river just in time for the clouds to roll in. Bird species included open-billed and yellow billed storks, African spoonbills, fish eagles, African pied kingfishers, little bee eaters, reed cormorants and African jacanas to name but a few. Golden and brown-throated weavers congregated amongst the reeds fringing the waterways, while wire tailed swifts were constant companions, perching on the boat's bow or under the canopy barely an arm's length away. Hippos were everywhere. Fortunately, my guide knew exactly which ones to approach or which ones to avoid. Elephants grazed in the marshy areas surrounded by cattle egrets, eager to snap up insects disturbed by their enormous companions. Within Liwonde is a 4000 ha fenced area called "The Sanctuary," where a number of rare species have been introduced including buffalo, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, zebra, roan, eland and black rhino. The Liwonde Black Rhino Project, initiated in part by Wilderness Safaris, has established a small breeding population to provide a source of animals to establish in other Parks. Although we didn't see any, they were definitely around, with middens

(rhino latrines) indicating their presence. Elephants were much easier to find. One massive bull standing astride the track necessitated a monumental detour! Lots of birds were on view, including yellow-billed and crowned hornbill, Livingstone's flycatcher and Lillian's lovebird. Liwonde is the only place in Malawi where the latter has been observed. We were also lucky to spot sable antelope, several hundred of which reside in the sanctuary's mopane woodland. Another first was a bush pig, a close relative of the red river hog found in the central African rainforests. Distinguished by less colourful markings, coarser hair and a larger size than their jungle cousins, bushpigs are usually nocturnal. However, during the dry season, they emerge prior to dusk when temperatures are cooler.

The following morning, a second boat cruise revealed more, filling my flash card to the bursting point. Waterbirds were especially tolerant, allowing a close approach for frame-filling images. The crocs were far more skittish, sliding into the water the moment the boat got anywhere close. One massive male in the river raised his head above the waterline and emitted a deep booming call to attract females. Although brief, my stay at Mvuu was spectacular. Although Malawi isn't regarded as a safari destination, Liwonde's wildlife was most impressive.

continued on page 84 ➤



Mumbo Island

Water and savannah meet along the rocky, wooded shores of Mumbo Island.



Maylandia callainos

Most cichlids of Lake Malawi have no common name outside the aquarium trade.

A drive of several hours brought me to Cape Maclear in the Lake Malawi National Park. A World Heritage Site, it encompasses the Cape Maclear peninsula as well as the lake itself and islands up to 100 metres offshore. Upwards of 23 dive sites are located within the Park's boundaries. Situated within the Park limits, Cape Maclear is a resort area with a really interesting vibe. Abounding with overseas backpackers and souvenir vendors, I felt like I was in Southeast Asia rather than Central Africa! Bordering Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania, Lake Malawi is no ordinary body of water. One of Africa's Rift Valley lakes, its vast basin was created by titanic geological forces that continue tearing the continent apart. Plummeting to a depth of 800m, the world's fifth-largest lake features the largest number of fish species of any lake in the world. Along with its namesake country, the lake borders western Mozambique and southern Tanzania. At the southern end, the Shire River flows outwards towards the Zambezi River in Mozambique. The lake is about 350 kilometres southeast of Lake Tanganyika, another Rift Valley giant that is Africa's largest.

Incredibly, all but a few of Lake Malawi's fish species are endemic. The vast majority are cichlids, the most colourful of which are locally known as "*mbuna*". Like an

undersea Galapagos, an initial colonizer has evolved into upwards of a thousand known species, with more undoubtedly awaiting discovery. In comparison, Lake Tanganyika possesses a fraction of the species count despite being substantially larger. The remarkable endemism is due to a number of factors, with isolation from other major bodies of water having a significant impact. In addition, cichlids are highly territorial, generally residing in one compact area for their entire lives.

My first night would be spent in Cape Maclear at Mgoza Lodge. Situated right on the beach, the lodge was basic but comfortable. The morning after I met Patrick, who would be my divemaster for the next two days. With luggage and dive gear aboard, our destination was Tumbe Island a 30-min boat ride away. Gearing up proved especially interesting. In the ocean, I normally require 7-8kg of weight with my 3mm suit but here, with a steel tank combined with less buoyant fresh water, I only needed 3kg. With a water temperature of 23 degrees, I was hoping my 3mm would be warm enough. (Patrick had on 5mm). Plunging in, I noticed an initial chill, but that quickly subsided. The morning's first dive site was The Wreck. A 15m steel-hulled vessel sunk specifically for diving, it rests upright at a depth of 30m. Heading down the slopes to the wreck, visibility was limited to less than 10m, so I



African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*

Elephants are commonly encountered along the lake's shores.

ensured that Patrick always remained in close proximity. Cichlids were everywhere in a staggering array of shapes and colours. It was hard to believe they had descended from a solitary species. The dominating feature of the terrain was granite boulders, some which were the size of houses. A large blue crab peered out from under a rock, scuttling to the safety of a deep recess as I approached. Despite the lake's immense size, the crabs are the premier scavengers. Vegetation was surprisingly absent however, but every surface was shrouded with algae, the primary food for many cichlid species. A few however, eat, other cichlids. Arriving at the wreck, it proved to be a magnet for cichlids. Descending to the stern, we encountered a pair of *kampango* catfish. Dwarfing the cichlids, they are the biggest fish in the lake, with some attaining lengths of 2 m. Unfazed by our presence, they allowed a close approach for wide-angle photography. Our bottom time maxed out, we then ascended the gradual slope, marveling at the huge boulders and abundant cichlids. After, the challenging conditions I had just encountered in South Africa, diving Lake Malawi seemed like being in a pool! Completing our surface interval, we motored around to the other side of the island to our next site called The Aquarium. I quickly realized the name couldn't be more apt, being instantly enveloped by cichlids of even greater numbers and varieties.

The next morning, Patrick arrived right at 9:00 and we set out for Mumbo Island. While much smaller and flatter than Domwe, it proved no less dramatic. The island's rugged circumference was a jumble of massive boulders spilling down to the water's edge, with baobab and candelabra trees jostling each other for space. Underwater, the scenery was equally dramatic. Tooth Rock featured a series of pinnacles descending down to 50m. Descending to 18m, visibility was only 5m at the start. While photography was limited by the conditions, there were plenty of overhangs and swim throughs to explore. Ascending for our safety stop, the water became crystal clear, with immense boulders dwarfing the never-ending cichlids. Mpipi Bay proved similar, with rocky slopes descending gradually to 100m. Here, we encountered some fish species I hadn't encountered further south. Silvery *chambo* are a favoured food species in the lake as are the non-cichlid *usipa*, the latter swarming in great numbers near the surface. Having finished diving by mid afternoon, we headed back to the resort on Mumbo.

Bidding Cape Maclear farewell, it was time to embark on the final leg of my Malawian adventure to Likoma Island. Ahead lay a four-hour road trip to Lilongwe airport where I would catch my Ulendo Airlink flight to Likoma Island. After an airport layover of several hours,



Hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius*

Hippos are among some of Africa's most dangerous animals, being prone to sudden, fast, unannounced charges and being responsible for a number of fatalities every year.

the hour-long flight delivered me the island and Kaya Mawa Resort by late afternoon. Situated on the northern portion of the lake, just off the Mozambique coast, Likoma is something of an anomaly. The island, along with neighbouring Chizumulu, is part of Malawi due to the British. In 1880, established their headquarters on the island and in the early 20th century, erected a large Anglican cathedral. As a result, the island was ceded to Malawi rather than Mozambique when national borders were established after World War II.

The first day, we did a pair of dives in the morning with a third in the afternoon after lunch. Situated off the northwest side of Likoma, Masimbwe Island quickly became a favourite. Featuring shallows on the east side with deep drop-offs on the west, the fish life was abundant and the scenery spectacular. Like colossal steps, huge boulders tumbled to a depth of 26m. I even observed a freshwater sponge, something I didn't even know existed. Visibility at the safety stop was outstanding and I was able to get numerous cichlid portraits. However, one subject remained maddeningly elusive.

Many Malawi cichlids are mouth brooders, with the juvenile fish protected within their mother's mouth. Keeping a mindful eye on her free-swimming offspring, she will gulp the babies back in at the first sign of danger. Having missed them at Cape Maclear, I really wanted to see this phenomenon in action. Happily, our second dive at Christian's Point proved more

Tropheops membe

Many Lake Malawi cichlids feature a varying amount of barring on their sides.



successful. The key was to look for a school of juveniles, which indicated the mother must be close by. Before long, we witnessed the mouth brooding behaviour in action. Back at the dive shop, species classification proved equally demanding as many species not only looked similar but also had no common names. It didn't help that the id book had the girth of a dictionary!

After getting a lot of macro shots the first day, I switched to wide angle for a return visit to Masimbwe Island. Visibility was at least 15m, the best I had seen on the trip. I managed to get another *kampango* image. Switching back to macro for my final dive, I finally managed to photograph juvenile cichlids inside their

mother's mouth. Regrettably, some cichlid mothers won't be winning any parenting awards. On several occasions we saw predatory cichlids decimating the juveniles with the mother nowhere in sight.

Before I knew it, my adventure had come to a close. While lacking the megafauna and colourful reefs of a tropical ocean, Malawi's subtropical waters were truly unique, offering dramatic scenery and remarkable biodiversity unlike anywhere else on earth. However, one of the week's biggest surprises was the ease of the diving. With no currents, calm conditions and good visibility, Lake Malawi is an ideal destination for divers of all skill levels. I'm sure that when I return, the warm heart of Africa will continue to dazzle with more surprises.



Tropheops "Red cheek"

The cichlids of lake Malawi are much sought after for the aquarium trade.



Pseudotropheus saulosi

Several cichlid species from lake Malawi are a very bright yellow.



Nile crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus*

Nile crocodiles are large, fast, cunning and extremely dangerous predators - a constant threat to human or animal getting close to the water's edge.

Kampango catfish

A huge bottom-dwelling freshwater species which can get 2 meters long.



Melanochromis parallelus

This is a somberly colored juvenile of the species.



African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*

A large and beautiful bird of prey and a common sight along water bodies in Africa. Its shrill cry is unmistakable.



Underwater photography

The freshwater environment of Lake Malawi offers unique opportunities to the discerning, experienced underwater photographer.



Mumbo Island

Scores of *mbunas* - colorful cichlids - are to be found among the boulders of the dive site locally known as "Tooth Rock".

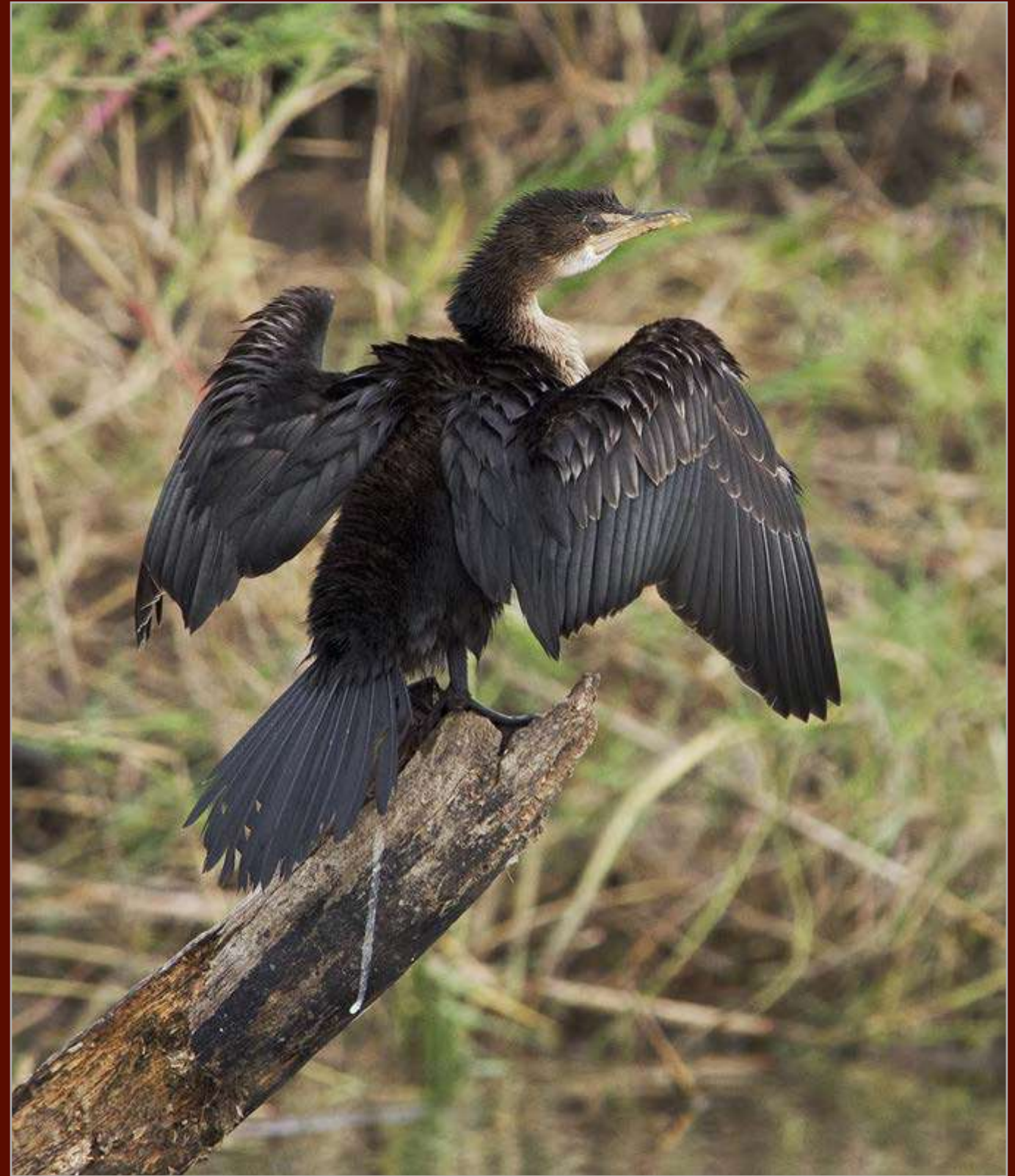


Mumbo Island

The local resort features thatched bungalows perched on the massive boulders overlooking the lake's edge.



Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*
A large-headed, short-tailed day raptor, often observed along rivers from Senegal to Zimbabwe.



Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus*
Also known as the long-tailed cormorant, a common water bird with a wide distribution range in Africa and Madagascar.

Protomela taeniolatus

Not all cichlids from lakes Malawi and Tanganyika are brightly colored.



Maylandia zebra

One of the most colorful and brightly patterned species from lake Malawi.



Dimidiochromis kiwinge

This specimen shows the oral care of its progeny typical of many cichlids.



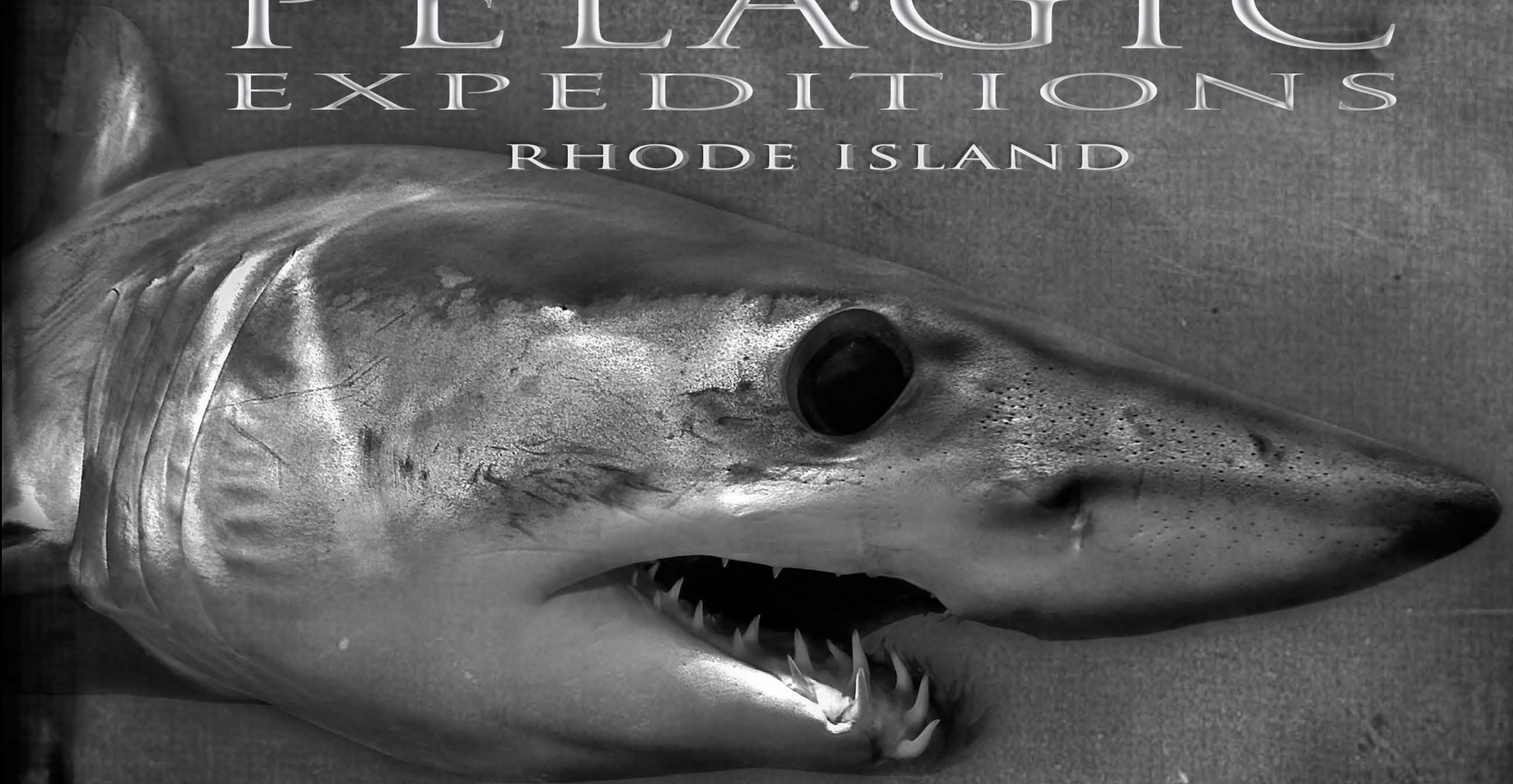
Melanochromis parallelus

Another brightly patterned cichlid species from lake Malawi.

**Shire River**

Sunrise along the palm-lined shores of the slow-moving Shire River of Malawi.

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

The Parting Shot



We have developed of late a soft spot for Jumping spiders, those apparently funny little wind-up toy-like members of the family *Salticidae*: tiny big-eyed arachnids, often colorful, always active and on many occasions enjoyably challenging to photograph. Truth must be said, once magnified by our 105mm macro lens these little predators lose much of their furry cuteness, appearing more like some sort of Martian war machines, sitting and strutting around on their hydraulic piston-like legs, their eight eyes strategical-

ly positioned around the crown of their turret-like head to offer a permanently panoramic view of their surroundings. But never we had experienced the uneasy feel of being actually scrutinized by a cold, calculating, alien intelligence as when we found this huge (for a Salticid!) and still unidentified *Hyllus* sp. in the forest understory of the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in North-eastern India's state of Assam. As we circled it - trying to frame it at eye-level to maximize its queer shape - the 2cm spider jerkily and rapidly

pivoted on its axis, mechanically balancing on its legs, shuffling to and fro - as if undecided between jumping on the enormous lens looming above or opting for flight - all the time keeping its unrelenting beady gaze on us, turning and bending without pause. And we humans were equally divided between a mild amusement at its antics and the disconcerting feeling of being actually observed and judged by our subject - the tiny soulless predatory terror of a truly alien world still unknown to us. ●

IN ANIMA MUNDI'S NEXT ISSUE No.21, 1st Quarter, January 2016

INDIAN DETAILS

Bhavya Joshi's
personal portfolio



ROAD TO MOROCCO

Marco Sassoe's successful
herping trip to North Africa



FIELD WORK IN LAWACHARA

Discovering
rare species
in Bangladesh

LAND OF LEOPARDS

Sri Lanka's Wilpattu
National Park - Part 2



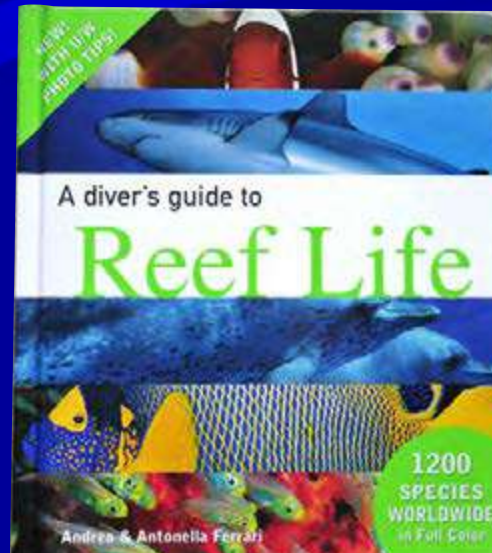
A Diver's Guide to Reef Life

1200 TROPICAL MARINE SPECIES WORLDWIDE in Full Color featuring 1300 spectacular color photos with full details on distribution, habitat, size, life habits and underwater photography tips

THIS IS WHAT THE DIVING COMMUNITY SAYS

JANE MORGAN, DIVE MAGAZINE: A stunning tropical marine life reference guide which is bursting at the seams with outstanding photographs. • WILLY VOLK, WETPIXEL.COM: No marine guide in the world will excite you with this much color, thrill you with this much variety, and fascinate you with this much information. This is an absolute must-have for any diver who has eyes and plans on using them while diving. • TIM ECOTT, author of *Neutral Buoyancy*: With 1200 tropical species, ranging from coral polyps, gorgonians, sea squirts, sponges, nudibranchs and all of the main fish groups, this is a truly comprehensive work, and probably the only reef guide most divers will need to take with them on a trip. The

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A Diver's Guide to the Art of Underwater Photography

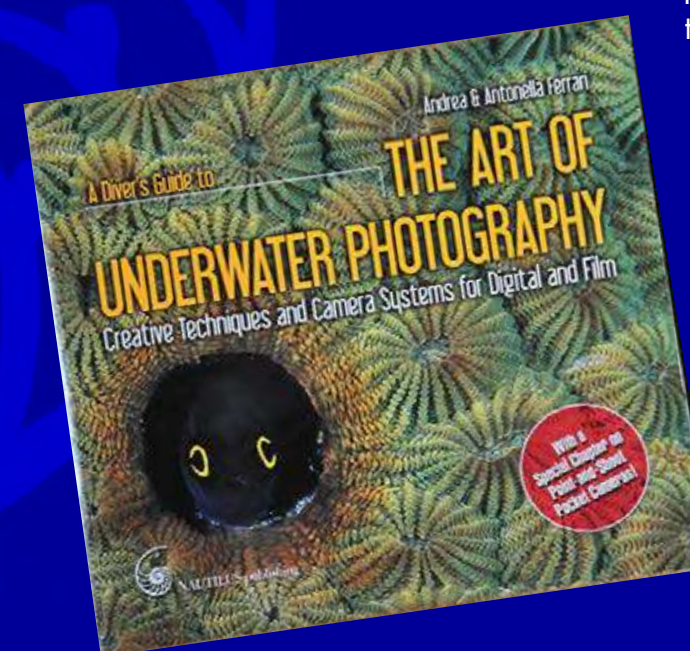
Creative Techniques and Camera Systems for Digital and Film

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

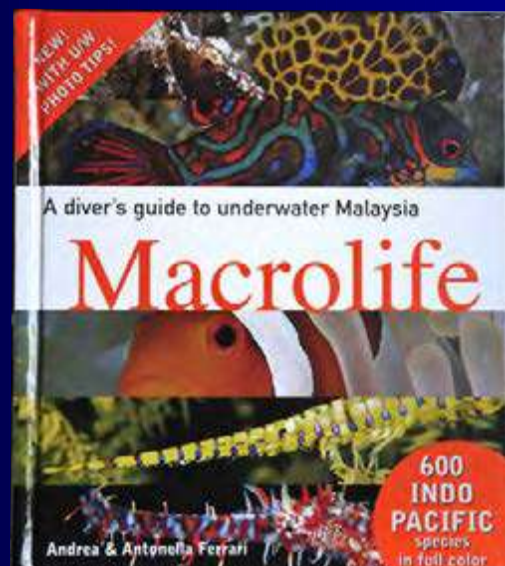
THIS IS WHAT THE DIVING COMMUNITY SAYS

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.



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