

ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

Issue 30, Year 8 - April 2018

In This Issue:

SCOOP Vietnam's endangered primates

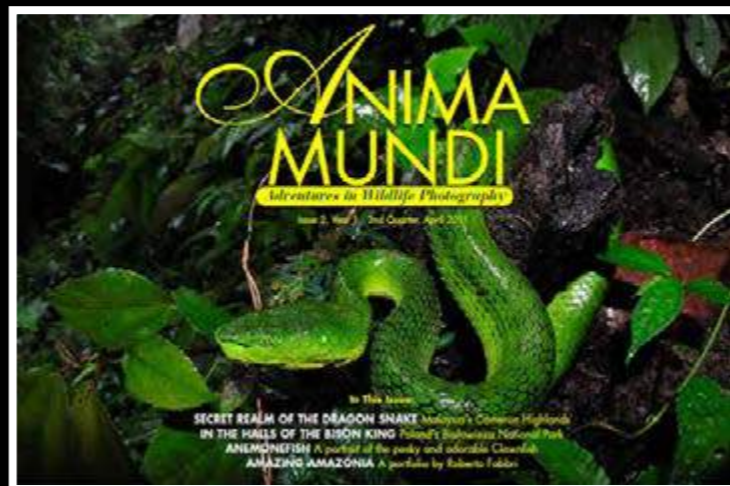
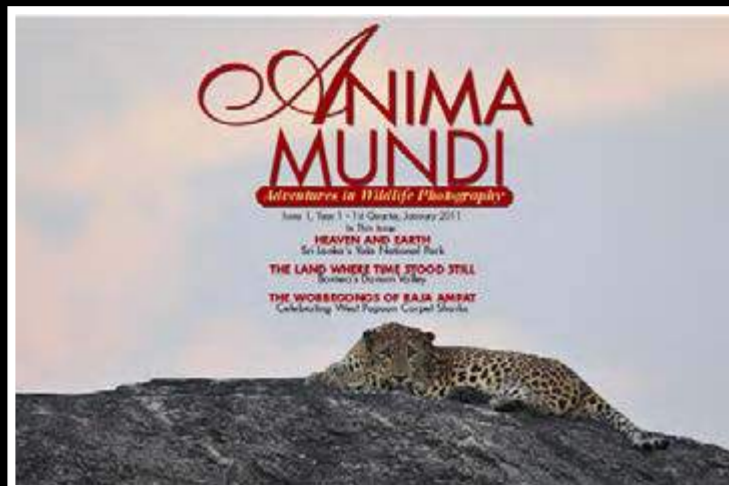
AMAZON ADVENTURE Ecuador's Napo Wildlife Ecolodge

DESERT ELEPHANTS Namibia's Brandberg-Daures reserve

THE DUTCH MASTER Rinie Luykx's Personal Portfolio

EUROPEAN MONKEYS The macaques of Gibraltar



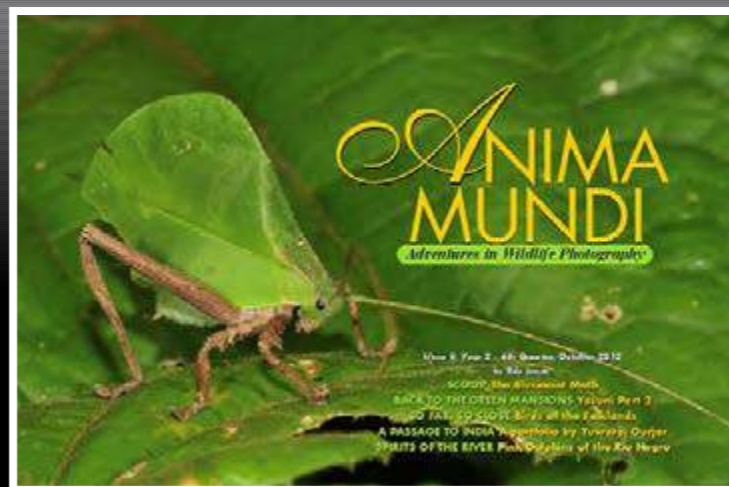
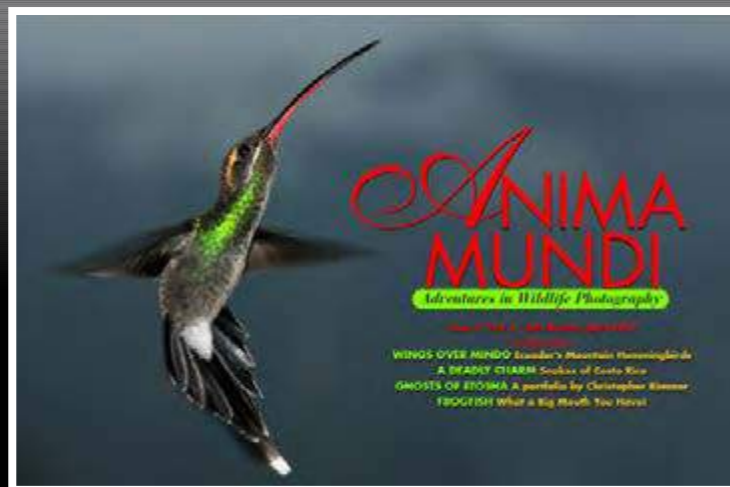


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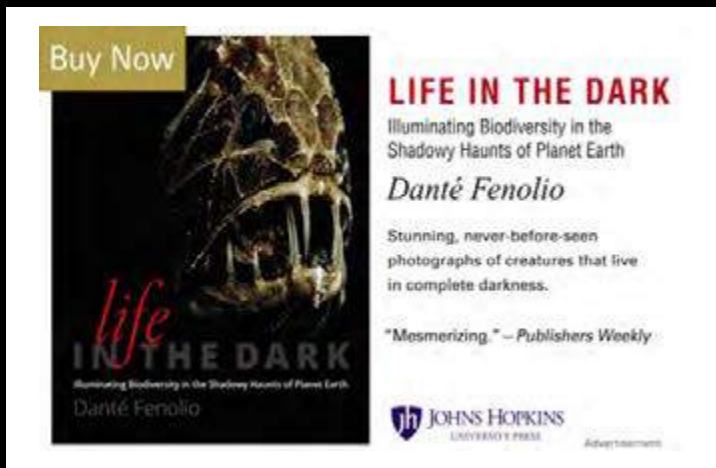
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Dear Andrea & Antonella,

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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Contact us for details at editor@animamundimag.com

■ Ecuadorian mantled
howler *Alouatta
palliata aequatorialis*,
Napó Wildlife Center
Ecolodge, Yasuni
National Park, Ecuador
- see page 11.



ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

A shining ecotourism example

The main article in this issue is our trip report devoted to Ecuador's Napo Wildlife Center and Ecolodge - a place we really believe deserving to be qualified as a shining example of ecotourism and habitat and wildlife conservation worldwide. The world is full of wonderful, luxurious lodges set in the planet's remotest, wildest and most beautiful corners, of course - but what sets Napo apart is the rather unique fact that it was born out of the local Kitchwa community's vision - a vision devoted to conserving their natural Amazon environment for future generations to see, understand and enjoy, to strenuously defend it against the local politicians' and oil companies' rapacious appetites, and to make a good income out of it to provide a better quality of living and a better education to their sons and daughters. This is what sets Napo apart - it is a very successful eco/economical venture first envisioned, then created with an iron will and incredible stubbornness, and presently fully owned and - last but not least - brilliantly, professionally managed by a local indigenous community. Sadly, many other indigenous communities whose land borders with the Kitchwa's do not share their vision and are instead opting for immediate monetary gain and short-term profit, selling their ancestral rainforest to Chinese oil companies, whose monstrous, destructive, highly polluting heavy equipment can be seen daily barging along the Napo river.

So, who can tell what the future will bring? Will the Napo Wildlife Center Ecolodge be an oasis, assaulted on all sides by logging, digging, drilling, hunting and polluting? Probably so - but in the meantime, they shine bright and strong as a true beacon of conservation. But this issue is not all about the Napo - you can feast your eyes with many more features, including our contributor Jayaprakash Bojan's article on the highly endangered primates of Vietnam, our own tribute to the desert elephants of Namibia's remote Brandberg-Daures Nature Reserve, Dutch underwater photographer Rinie Luykx's splendid Personal Portfolio and Italian wildlife photographer Luca Giordano's fascinating, highly informative and brilliantly photographed story on the Rock of Gibraltar's unique Barbary macaques, Europe's only monkeys. Finally, let us remind you once more that our Parting Shot column is now open for publication to reader's photos. So if you would like to be featured in our coming Parting Shots and think you have clicked an interesting wildlife image worthy of publication, just send an email to editor@animamundimag.com and we'll gladly take a look at it!



In the meantime...

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

We appreciate your feedback
- constructive criticism, useful
suggestions and interesting
contributions are welcome.
Please drop us a line at
editor@animamundimag.com

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■ Convict treefrog *Boana calcarata*, rio Añangu, Napo Wildlife Center Ecolodge, Yasuni National Park, Ecuador.

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PRIMATES OF VIETNAM **ON THE BRINK**

JAYAPRAKASH BOJAN OFFERS A UNIQUE LOOK AT SEVERAL HIGHLY ENDANGERED AND VERY RARELY OBSERVED MONKEYS OF INDOCHINA

*The Red shanked Douc
Langur *Pygathrix nemaeus*
is critically endangered
and found exclusively
in Central Vietnam on a
seaside mountain.*



■ *Delacour's Langur*
Trachypithecus delacouri - rarest of the rarest. Critically endangered and predominantly arboreal, this species occurs in a very restricted area of north-central Vietnam that totals about 6,000 sq/km. Population is approx 200 - 250.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY JAYAPRAKASH BOJAN

About a year ago I saw some of the most beautiful Old World primates in a Singapore zoo and I kept thinking if I would ever be able to see them in the wild some day. A year later I had the opportunity to visit Vietnam and travel across the country searching for some of these elusive, highly endangered primates. Indochina, between Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos is home to about 25 species of primates; unfortunately over the years we have lost a large population of these special creatures to poaching across Indochina, and that has made them endangered and very rare today. Vietnam is not your typical wildlife

watching location and wildlife tourism is almost non-existent except for a few birdwatchers who travel looking for birds. Vietnam has a very diverse landscape with mountains, plains, tropical rainforest & wetlands. I had to travel to south, central and northern Vietnam to try and see some of these primates because they are spread across different habitats and each of the primates is unique to a certain habitat. Not all species can be found in a single location. During my stay I met a few local conservationist and western NGO's who are working relentlessly with the local communities and government to save these species

from extinction. I am usually a lone traveller, and over the years every journey in the wilderness has made me realise how tiny and insignificant I am in the larger scheme of nature, and it has made me a better person and given me the ability to appreciate all creation. I sincerely hope enough is done to save these precious species for the future generations to come. I truly believe every species on earth is meant to be there and has a unique role to play in the ecosystem; with the loss of every species, the greater the imbalance to the ecosystem that directly impacts the survival of us "humans" eventually.



The Golden-cheeked  gibbon *Nomascus gabriellae* is found across Indochina with a larger population in Cambodia and it is a highly endangered species as well. The author saw them in the wild at Katniem National park, Vietnam.



The Black shanked
Douc Langur
Pygathrix nigripes is
critically endangered
and probably the
hardest one to see and
photograph, being
extremely shy and
predominantly arboreal.



■ Assamese macaque *Macaca assamensis* - a threatened species spread across forests of higher altitude across Asia, highly endangered in Vietnam. Right, Red shanked Douc Langur *Pygathrix nemaeus* - also named the "Mountain monkey" by US troops during the Vietnam war.





A rare look at two Red-shanked Douc Langur *Pygathrix nemaeus* clearly shows their exquisitely beautiful livery.



Red shanked Douc
Langur *Pygathrix
nemaeus*.

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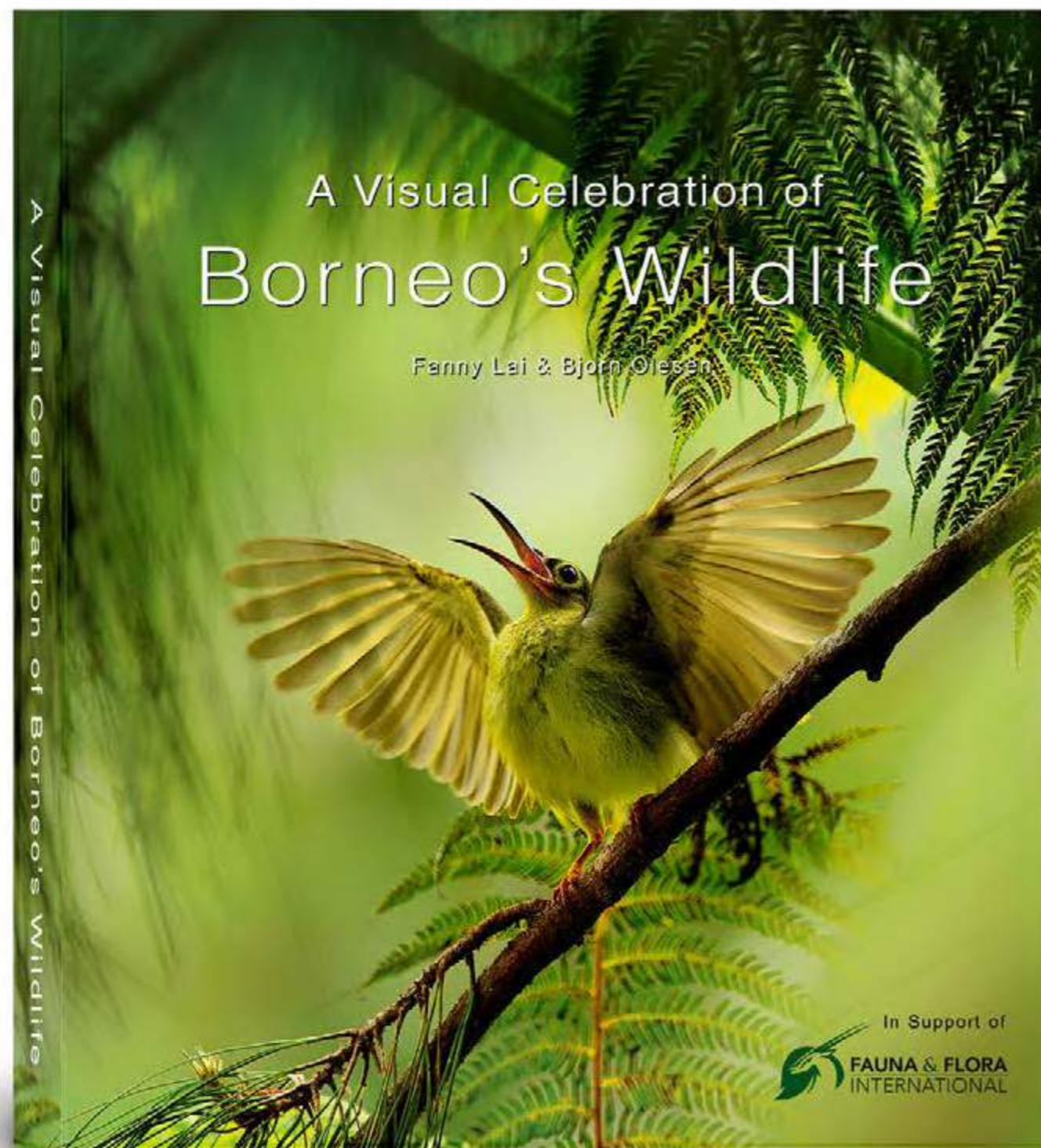
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of the benefits of ecotourism in the heart
of the world's richest rainforest



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■ The Napo Wildlife Center Ecolodge, rio Añangu, Yasuni National Park. On the opening spread, a Scarlet macaw *Ara macao* at the Napo clay lick.

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

Yasuni National Park is located in Ecuador, covering an area of 9,823 km² between the Napo and Curaray Rivers in Napo and Pastaza Provinces in the Amazon region. The National Park lies within the Napo moist forests ecoregion and is primarily rainforest. The park is about 250 km from Quito and was designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1989. It is within the claimed ancestral territory of the Huaorani indigenous people and home to two uncontacted indigenous tribes, the Tagaeri and the Taromenane. Yasuni National Park is arguably the most biologically diverse spot on earth. The Park is at the center of a small zone where amphibian, bird, mammal, and vascular plant diversity all reach their maximum levels within the western hemisphere. Moreover, the Park breaks world records for local-scale (less than 100 sq/km) tree, amphibian, and bat species richness, and is one of the richest spots in the world for birds and

mammals at local scales as well. The Park holds a world record 150 amphibian species for places with comparable landscapes. It also is at the top for amphibian diversity compared to other sites sampled in the western Amazon. The total of its amphibian species is more than the United States and Canada combined. Reptile species diversity in the Park is also very high, with 121 documented species found. In spite of covering less than 0.15% of the Amazon Basin,

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Giant river otter
Pteronura brasiliensis.



■ A male
Ecuadorian
mantled howler
Alouatta palliata
aequatorialis
getting minerals
at the Napo
salt lick.



Yasuni is home to approximately one-third of amphibian and reptile species. The Park also harbors high levels of fish diversity with 382 known species, and it is home to at least 596 bird species - which comprises one-third of the total native bird species for the Amazon. The Park is also rich in species of bats: on a regional scale, the Amazon Basin has an estimated 117 bat species, but on a local scale, Yasuni is estimated to have comparable richness. In a single hectare, Yasuni has over 100,000 different species of insects which is roughly the amount of insect species that can be found in all of North America. The Park also boasts one of the world's richest levels of vascular plants. It is one of nine places in the world that has over 4,000 vascular plant species per 10,000 sq/km. The Park contains many species of trees and shrubs and holds at least four world records for documented tree and liana richness as well as three world records for diversity in woody plant species. Yasuni also hosts a list of endemic species such as 43 different species of vertebrates and 220-720 different plant species. A species of bat, *Lophostoma yasuni*, is endemic here and the Treefrog *Osteocephalus yasuni* is named after it. Sadly, Yasuni National Park is also home to an estimated 1.7 billion barrels of crude oil - 40 percent of Ecuador's reserves - in the Ishpingo-Tiputini-Tambococha (ITT) oil fields, so colonization, deforestation, illegal logging, and unsustainable hunting are severely affecting its area at the moment.

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Convict treefrog ■
Boana calcarata.



Common squirrel monkey *Saimiri sciureus*. Troops of this iconic species are often encountered along the Añangu river.

■ Agami heron
Agamia agami.
This is a
stunningly
beautiful but
exceedingly
wary species.



A PIONEERING VISION COME TRUE

There are several ways to visit Yasuni, but the Napo Wildlife Center is the ultimate alternative luxury ecohotel in Amazonian Ecuador. This pioneering ecotourism project includes the conservation of approximately over 53,000 acres (over 21,400 hectares) of the most pristine Amazon rainforest within the National Park, being located on the banks of the Añangucocha Lake, within the unique and ancestral territory of the Kitchwa Añangu local community. In the early 90s members of the Kitchwa Añangu community envisioned building a lodge that could attract tourists from all parts of the world. This project would be an opportunity to provide jobs for the community and to protect their land and its wildlife, so they built with great effort a few cabins and a large main house for the dining room and the kitchen. However, at that

continued on page 20 ➤



Left, Hoatzin
Opisthocomus hoazin;
top right,
Red-capped
Cardinal
Paroaria gularis;
bottom right,
Yellow-rumped
cacique
Cacicus cela.





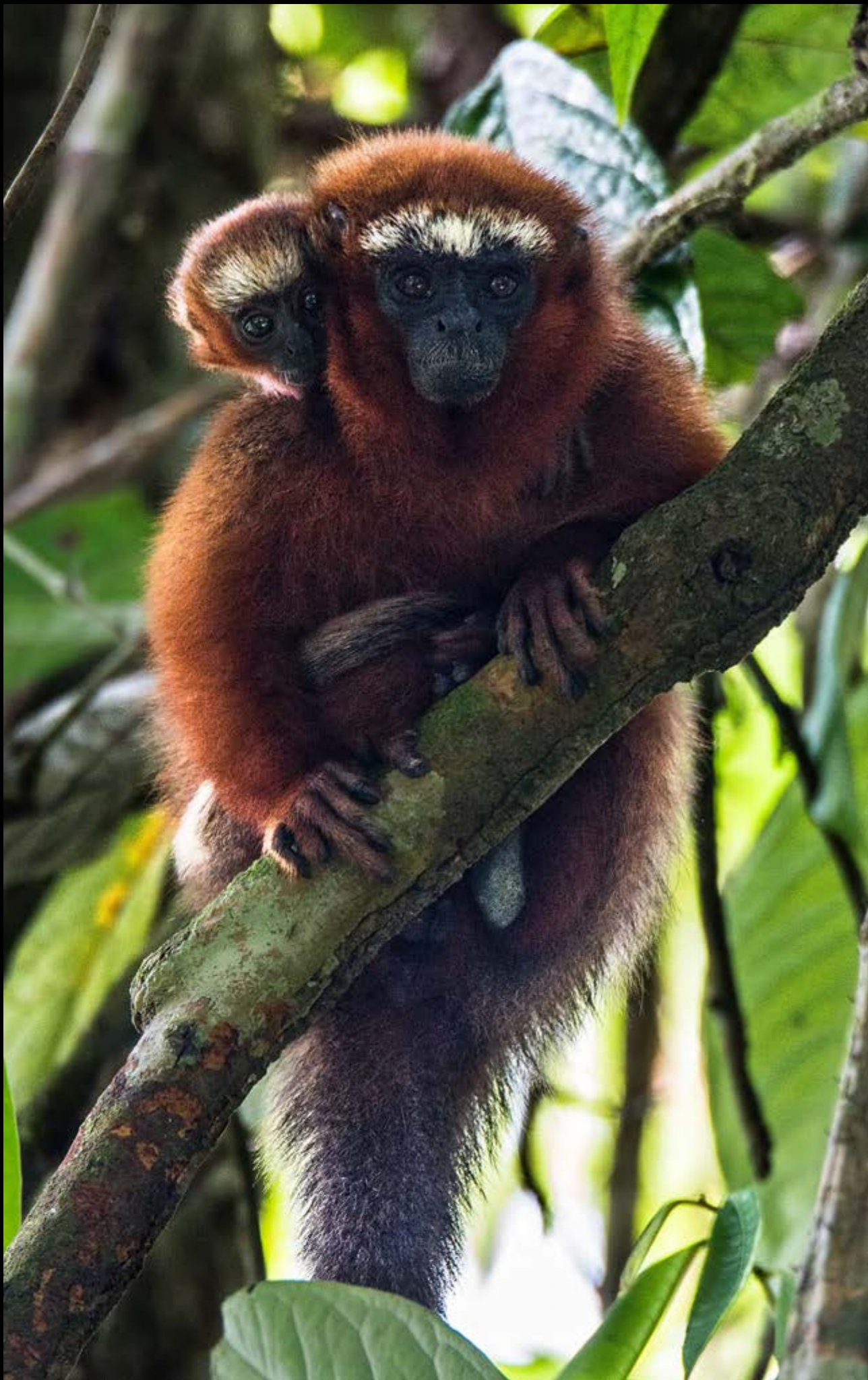
A flock of Dusky-headed Parakeet *Aratinga weddellii* at the riverside Napo clay lick.

early stage they needed more money to finish the building, which remained incomplete. They wanted to build a larger infrastructure, and ultimately be the biggest and best luxury hotel in the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador. This would be a place with first class facilities and accommodations, providing visitors with great comfort and offering them an intimate wildlife experience in the middle of the Amazon. Then, in 2000, with the support of several national and international organizations, the Napo Wildlife Center project was finally able to move forward. And the community's dream became true. In 2004, thanks to the community initiative and the financial and technical assistance of different organizations, the Napo Wildlife Center was born and started to welcome visitors from all parts of the

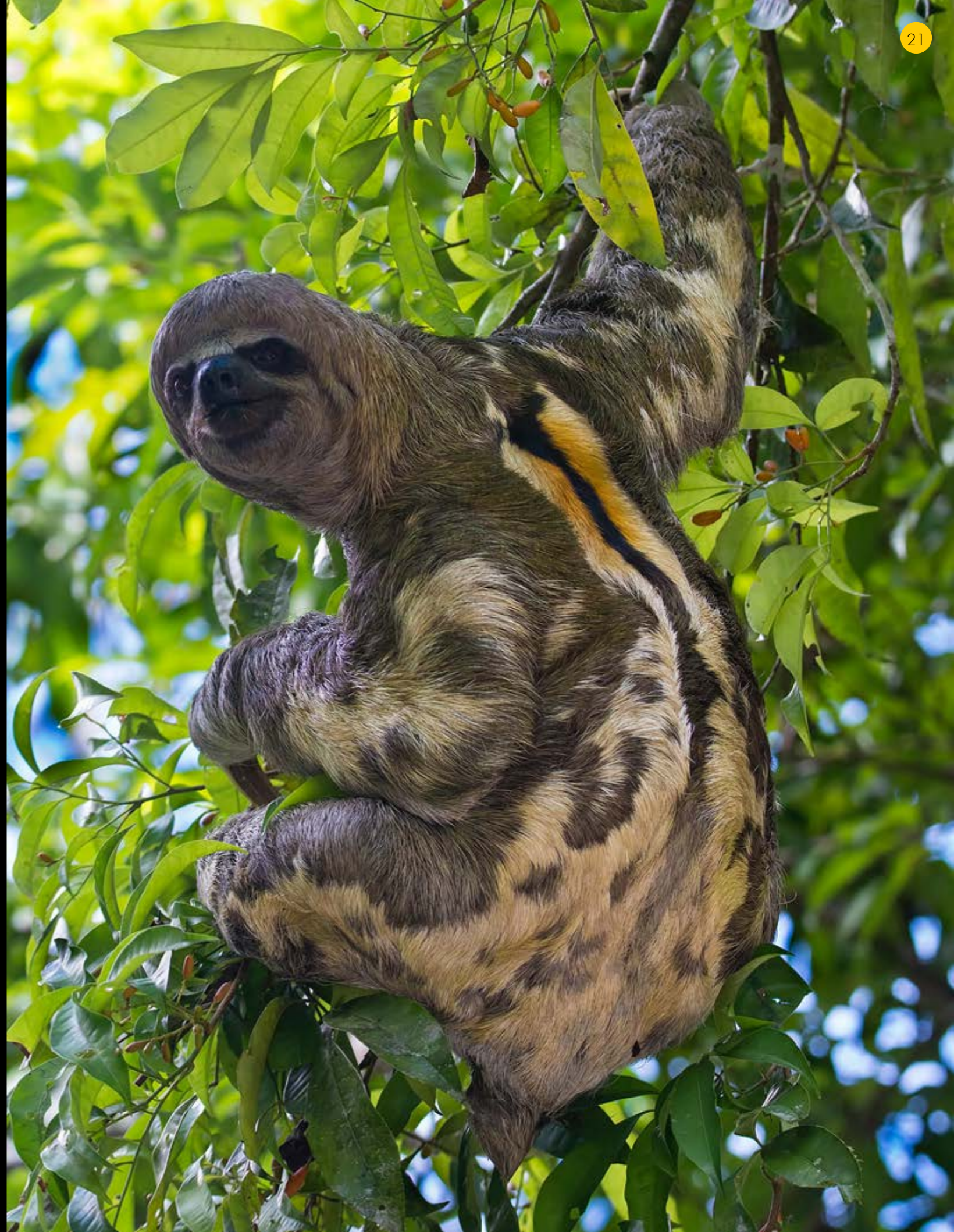
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Black caiman
Melanosuchus niger
are commonly seen
in the waters of the
Añangucocha.



■ Left, White-browed titi monkey or White-tailed titi *Callicebus discolor*. Right, Brown-throated sloth *Bradypus variegatus*.





The incredibly beautiful, peaceful Añangucocha seen from the observation tower of the Napo Wildlife Center Ec lodge.



Far left,
Crested Owl
*Lophostrix
cristata*.
Left, *Rufescent
Tiger heron
Tigrisoma
lineatum*.

world. Today, the Napo Wildlife Center is considered the foremost luxury Amazon lodge in Ecuador and the Añangu Community has been nationally and internationally recognized by guests and companies for its great organization and operation, service and for the great experience provided to guests. The Añangu community is truly a shining, admirable example of community-based ecotourism. This project not only protects more than 82 square miles of pristine rainforest, but also makes it possible for the community to be auto sustainable, as all profits are for the members of the community and to build other projects for tourism, conservation, health and education.

EXPERIENCING THE AMAZON IN SAFETY AND COMFORT

The Napo Wildlife Center experience really begins on Añangu's black-water creek ride, as we paddle our way through waters that look like fine black tea, under the shaded canopy of the rainforest. This almost two-hour ride gives visitors one of the best chances of watching several bird, primate, reptile and large mammal species in Añangu, quickly spotted by our guides as they silently paddle through the water. Electric eels and stingrays can be seen swimming past the boat as it silently slides through this always stunning trip (jaguars, tapirs, peccaries and anacondas have also been spotted here by groups of arriving visitors). This is the perfect introduction to the Amazon ecosystems and wildlife - there are amazing trees and vegetation

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Ecuadorian capuchin ■
Cebus albifrons aequatorialis
are opportunist feeders.



Cobalt-winged Parakeets
Brotogeris cyanoptera and
Orange-cheeked Parrots
Pyrilia barrabandi at the
forest Napo clay lick.



■ Top left, *White-bellied Spider monkey* *Ateles belzebuth*; top right, *Great Kiskadee* *Pitangus sulphuratus*. Bottom left, *Smooth-billed Ani* *Crotophaga ani*; bottom right, *Russet-backed Oropendola* *Psarocolius angustifrons*.



Ecuadorian mantled
howler *Alouatta palliata*
aequatorialis.



■ Roseate spoonbill
Platalea ajaja are often
sighted along the shores
of the main river.

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■ Top left, Gray-bellied hawk *Accipiter poliogaster*;;
 top right, Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*.
 Bottom left, Black-capped *donacobius*
Donacobius atricapilla;
 bottom right, Green-and-Rufous Kingfisher
Chloroceryle inda.

■ Leaf-footed bug,
Family Coreidae.



adapted to this flooded ecosystem. Keep a watchful eye for any movement in the branches, undergrowth or water: it may be a troop of monkeys, a pair of raucous macaws, crazy-looking hoatzins as one gets near the Añangu lake, or a family of endangered Giant Otters leading one's canoe's path with their loud calls and curious look at the canoes. The lodge also offers canoe rides down other fascinating black-water streams, and at night dozens of medium and large Black caimans can be safely approached as they patrol the waters. The creek gradually widens, opening into the stunningly beautiful, serene waters of Añangu Lake. You can finally see the lodge's beautiful construction on the opposite side of the lake. The lake is home to hundreds of freshwater fish species (including piranhas, giant Arapaimas, lung fish, stingrays and peacock bass), otters, aquatic birds and endangered turtles. Swimming in the lake is however banned due to the increasing Black caiman population, an outcome of Napo's conservation policies that have helped so many endangered species recover in Añangu territory and its waters: an important genetic reserve for all the Yasuni area, as these species have been depleted elsewhere by hunting and developments. One of the highlights at NWC is going out on a very early excursion to reach two of Ecuador's most accessible parrot clay licks along the Napo region. These parrot clay licks are exclusive part of the reserve and lodge territory and are just two of the over a dozen clay licks found on the Añangu Community

continued on page 35 >



Giant river otter ■
Pteronura brasiliensis.



■ Left, Demerara Falls Treefrog *Boana cinerascens*; right, Clown tree frog *Dendropsophus reticulatus*.





The Amazon
rainforest landscape
at dawn, see from
the Napo Wildlife
Center Ecolodge.



Left, Scarlet macaw *Ara macao*; right, Cobalt-winged Parakeets *Brotogeris cyanoptera* and Orange-cheeked Parrots *Pyrrhuloxia barrabandi* at the forest Napo clay lick.




Black caiman
Melanosuchus niger - notice the blood-filled tabanid flies behind its eye.

territory. The parrot clay licks can be reached by following the Giant Otter creek downstream on dugout canoe near the Napo river - there are well established and comfortable blinds in each parrot lick in order to provide visitors best viewing and high quality photo/video opportunities. The riverside clay lick is commonly visited by Mealy, Blue-headed, Yellow-crowned, Orange-winged and Orange-cheeked parrots, Cobalt-winged, Dusky-headed and White-eyed parakeets, with the occasional rarities like Scarlet-shoulder parrotlet

continued on page 40 ➤



Top left,  Clown tree frog *Dendropsophus reticulatus*; top right, Convict treefrog *Boana calcarata*. Bottom left, Demerara Falls Treefrog *Boana cinerascens*; bottom right, Smoky jungle frog *Leptodactylus pentadactylus*.



*Exploring a mystical system of
rainforest waterways by canoe*



■ Amazon
rainforest
landscape with
Kichwa boatmen,
rio Añangu.


Common squirrel
monkey *Saimiri sciureus*;
right, Brown-throated
sloth *Bradypus*
variegatus.





Giant river otter ■
Pteronura brasiliensis.
This is a very fast,
quite vocal and
exceptionally active
predatory species
which feeds on fish.



Left,  the Añangucocha seen by the observation tower; right, Hoatzin *Opisthocomus hoazin*.

and Scarlet macaws; the blind in the forest (*Saladero de Pericos*) is typically visited by a thousand or more Cobalt-winged Parakeets. From late October through early April, hundreds of Orange-cheeked Parrots are also found in the mix, as are rarities such as the Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet and occasional Scarlet and Red-and-Green macaws. Evening paddle boat rides offer an excellent opportunity of safely getting closer to the caimans, watch night-monkeys and other wildlife of the margins of the lake: a unique experience under the stars with the back-music of hundreds of frogs, toads, insects, nocturnal birds and the splashes of fish and caimans as they feed and mate. This beautiful lake will always remain an ideal, picture-perfect backdrop for our trip to the Napo Wildlife Center. The Añangu have also wisely invested in an environmentally sustainable sewage system, the best in the Napo region and probably the best in the Amazon. All waste water is treated to the highest standards in order to keep the swamps clean of human activity. Quality of effluent water is actually higher than the lake environment. Power is generated by a top-of-the-line hybrid system featuring solar panels, industrial batteries and noiseless generators - an efficient system that generates energy with almost no impacts. ●





Numbers of ■
Black caiman
Melanosuchus niger
cruise the still waters
of the Añangucocha
in front of the Napo
Wildlife Center
and Ecolodge.

■ Cobalt-winged Parakeets *Brotogeris cyanoptera* and Orange-cheeked Parrots *Pyrilia barrabandi* at the Napo forest clay lick.

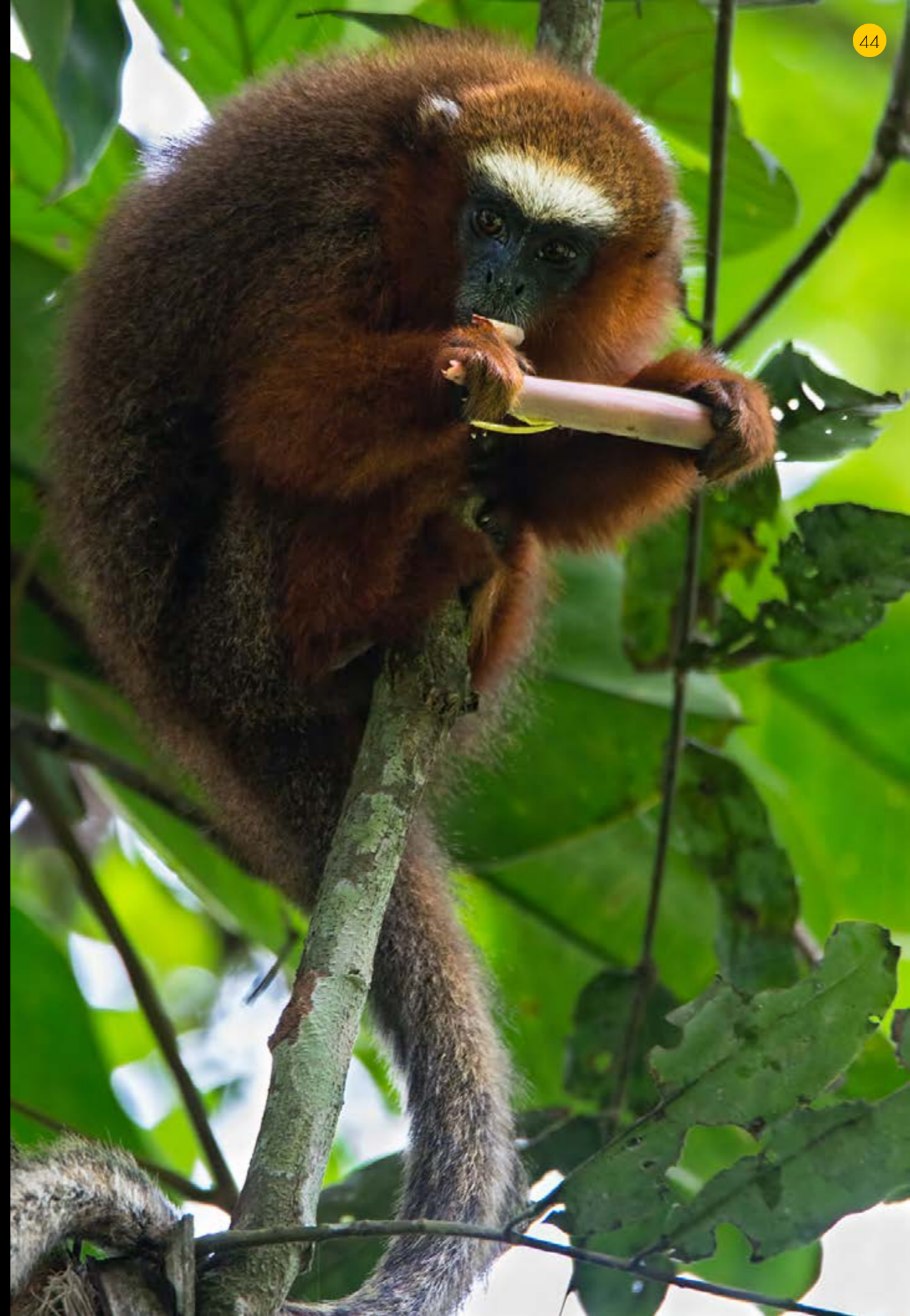




■ *Giant river otter*
Pteronura
brasiliensis feeding
on its freshly-
caught fish prey,
rio Añangu, Napo
Wildlife Center
Ecolodge.

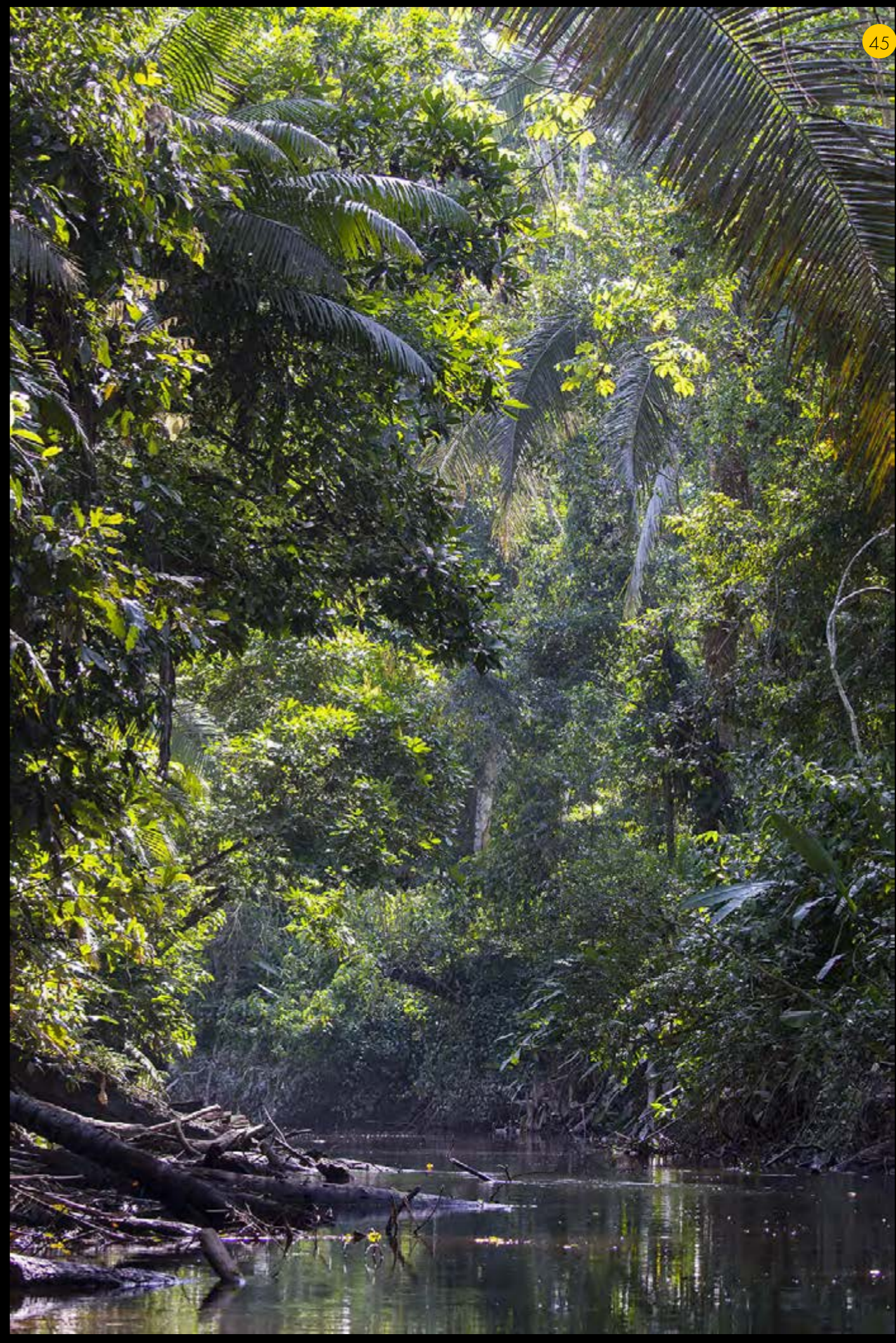


■ Left, Amazon rainforest landscape, rio Añangu; right, White-browed titi monkey or White-tailed titi *Callicebus discolor*.





■ *Left, Ecuadorian mantled howler *Alouatta palliata aequatorialis*; right, the unmistakable Amazon rainforest landscape along the rio Añangu.*



*A colorful, rowdy, noisy
spectacle on the clay cliffs*



■ Yellow-crowned Amazon or Yellow-crowned Parrot *Amazona ochrocephala*, Blue-headed Parrot *Pionus menstruus* and Dusky-headed Parakeet *Aratinga weddellii* at the Napo riverside clay lick.



Alarmed by the arrival of our canoe, a very large Black caiman *Melanosuchus niger* launches itself in the black waters of the rio Añangu.



■ Crested Owl
Lophotrix cristata.
This is a very wary,
uncommonly
sighted species
which usually
perches in deep
shadow.

*Black caiman ■
Melanosuchus niger are
commonly observed cruising
the still waters of the
Añangucocha, especially at
dawn and sunset.*





*The peaceful, mist-
shrouded landscape of the
Añangucocha at dawn.*



■ Left, a Giant river otter *Pteronura brasiliensis* feeding on an armored catfish *Plecostomus* sp. right in front of the Napo Wildlife Center Ecolodge; right, Russet-backed Oropendola *Psarocolius angustifrons* in its typical call-bowing pose.



*Black caiman ■
Melanosuchus niger. Notice
the very large and colorful
tabanid flies feeding
off its blood.*





■ Left, Masked
crimson tanager
*Ramphocelus
nigrogularis*; right,
Convict treefrog
Boana calcarata.





The stunningly ■
beautiful, peaceful
Amazon rainforest
landscape one can admire
from the rio Añangu.

*Always keeping eyes open
for a possible predator*



■ Ecuadorian mantled
howler *Alouatta
palliata aequatorialis*
getting minerals at
the forest salt lick of
the Napo Wildlife
Center Ecodge.



■ Left, Tree runner
Plica plica;
right, an unusual
portrait of
a Agami heron
Agamia agami.





Ecuadorian capuchin ■
Cebus albifrons aequatorialis
displaying its huge canines in
a threat posture.



■ Left, Demerara Falls
 Treefrog *Boana*
cinerascens; center,
 Clown tree frog
Dendropsophus
reticulatus;
 right, Demerara Falls
 Treefrog *Boana*
cinerascens.

■ A typical Amazon rainforest riverside landscape along the shores of Añangucocha in front of the Napo Wildlife Center Ecolodge.



At-a-glance travel guide



COUNTRY OF DESTINATION: **ECUADOR**



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 Mariscal Sucre International Airport of Ecuador's high-altitude capital Quito. From there it's a short domestic flight to the Amazon gateway of El Coca, followed by a 2- 2½ hour (depending on river's water level) very comfortable motorized canoe trip down the Napo River which ends at the **Napo Wildlife Center** landing port, entry point to the Añangu territory and Yasuni National Park. From there it's small paddle boats only (motorized transport is not allowed within the Añangu Reserve) that will take you to the lodge via Añangu Creek.

MEANS OF TRANSPORT: Once at Napo visitors

get around mostly by paddle canoe and less frequently by walking on short trails radiating from the lodge. An English-speaking Kitchwa guide - very professional and reliable - is always present.

CURRENCY: Since the year 2000 Ecuador has opted not to have a national currency of its own – all transactions are done in US dollars.

ACCOMODATION: The main hall of the **Napo Wildlife Center** is a central structure where visitors and staff meet and dine. In this main house there are several comfortable social areas including a full-stocked bar; a library where you can borrow books

to read during your stay; the restaurant where all meals are served; and a 20 ft high observation tower that provides an incredible 360° view of the surrounding forest, lake and passing wildlife. The **Napo Wildlife Center** complex has sixteen luxury cabins. The spacious cabins are comfortable and spotless-clean. Room facilities include a king-sized bed and a twin-sized bed, a safety deposit box, private bathrooms with hot water, a private balcony with views of the lake and the surroundings, electricity provided by a solar panel system and silent power generators, 120v outlets to recharge gear, mosquito nests and screened windows, ceiling fans. Bookings: <https://www.napowildlifecenter.com>

Quite possibly the most spectacular and comfortable lodge in the Amazon



FOOD: Simple but basically healthy and filling. Ecuadorians love soups (try the delicious *Locro de Queso* – potatoes, cheese and avocado), meats and fish and are blessed all-year round with fantastic vegetables and fruit. The food served at Napo is very abundant, healthy, quite tasty and - most importantly in this kind of environment - perfectly sanitized. No health worries there!

LANGUAGE: Ecuadorian Spanish and English.

WORRIES: Ecuador used to have a pretty bad (and rather well-deserved) reputation regarding street muggings and tourist-related crimes. Things are much better now, but - like in so many other big cities worldwide - it's always better to be accompanied by local friends when visiting Quito's beautiful historical areas. When in Yasuni - as in any other truly wild equatorial/tropical rainforest environment - you'll

have to be really careful with venomous snakes and stinging insects such as wasps and ants. Ticks and mites can also be very bothersome. In any case, never wander alone in the forest, especially at night.

HEALTH: Yasuni - like the rest of the Amazon Basin - is a hotbed of tropical diseases and unpleasant parasitic ailments. To enter the Park you'll need a Yellow Fever certificate, and the danger of catching Leishmaniosis (a very serious, disfiguring disease transmitted by phlebotomine sandflies) is quite real, especially in waterlogged areas. Never forget to use insect repellent and remember to wear long-legged trousers and long-sleeved shirts, always, even if the area around Napo is apparently perfectly safe. Landing in Quito (2.800 meters, 9000 feet) upon one's arrival might also cause altitude sickness to the unaccustomed, so it's advisable to plan spending a couple of days there to better acclimatize.

CLIMATE: Ecuador - especially at altitude - is blessed with an eternal spring, and they say one can experience the four seasons in a single day in Quito. Climate in Yasuni however is very hot and humid, with frequent torrential downpours and strong sunlight.

BESIDES: Don't forget to visit the historical center of the capital Quito, which has been extensively and lovingly restored and features some spectacular examples of colonial architecture from the Spanish domination. Ecuador is a rather small but exceptionally diverse Country, and it's almost impossible summarizing it in a few lines – a few hours's travelling will have one passing through high-altitude plateaus and valleys, stunning Andean landscapes and elfin cloud forests – descending to the dry Pacific coast (and the Galapagos Islands) if going West and to the rainforest of the Amazon - including Yasuni - if going East. ●

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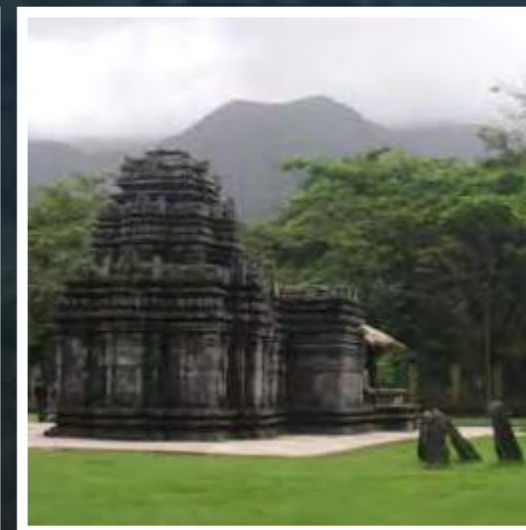
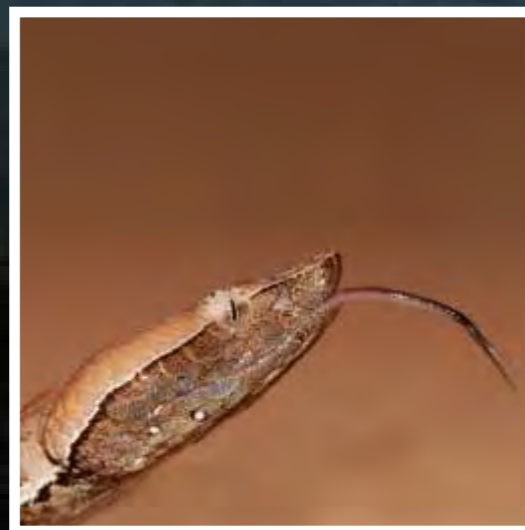
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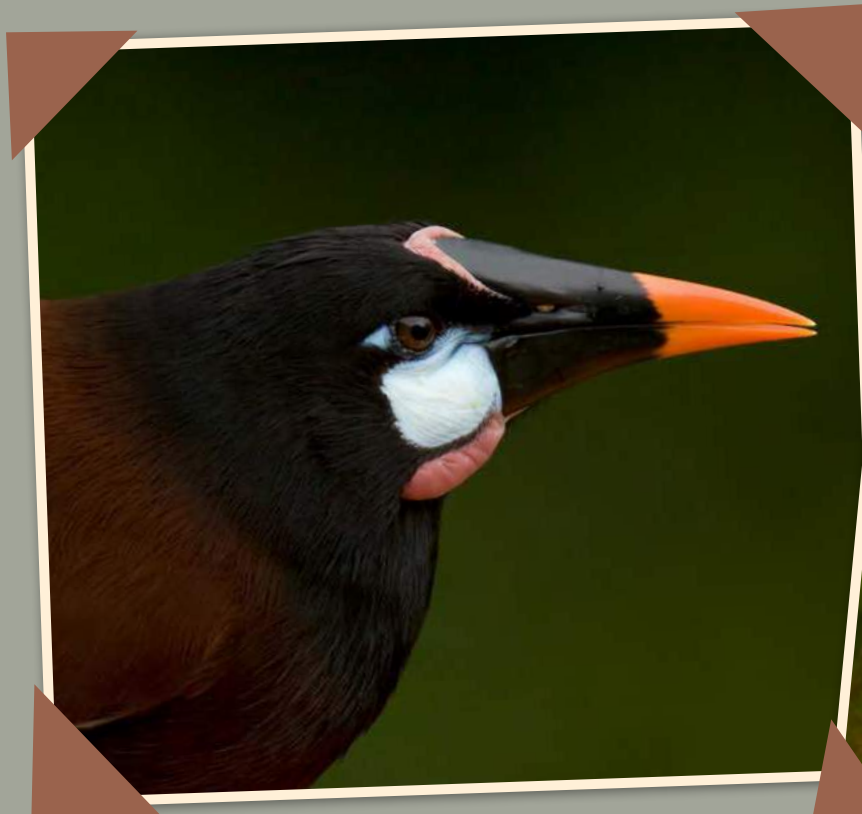


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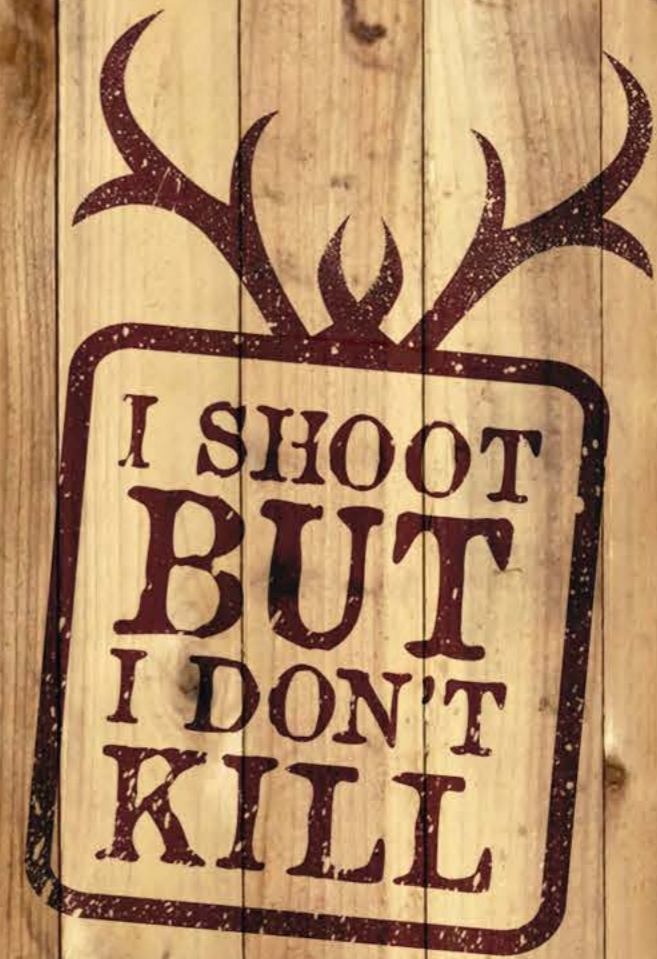


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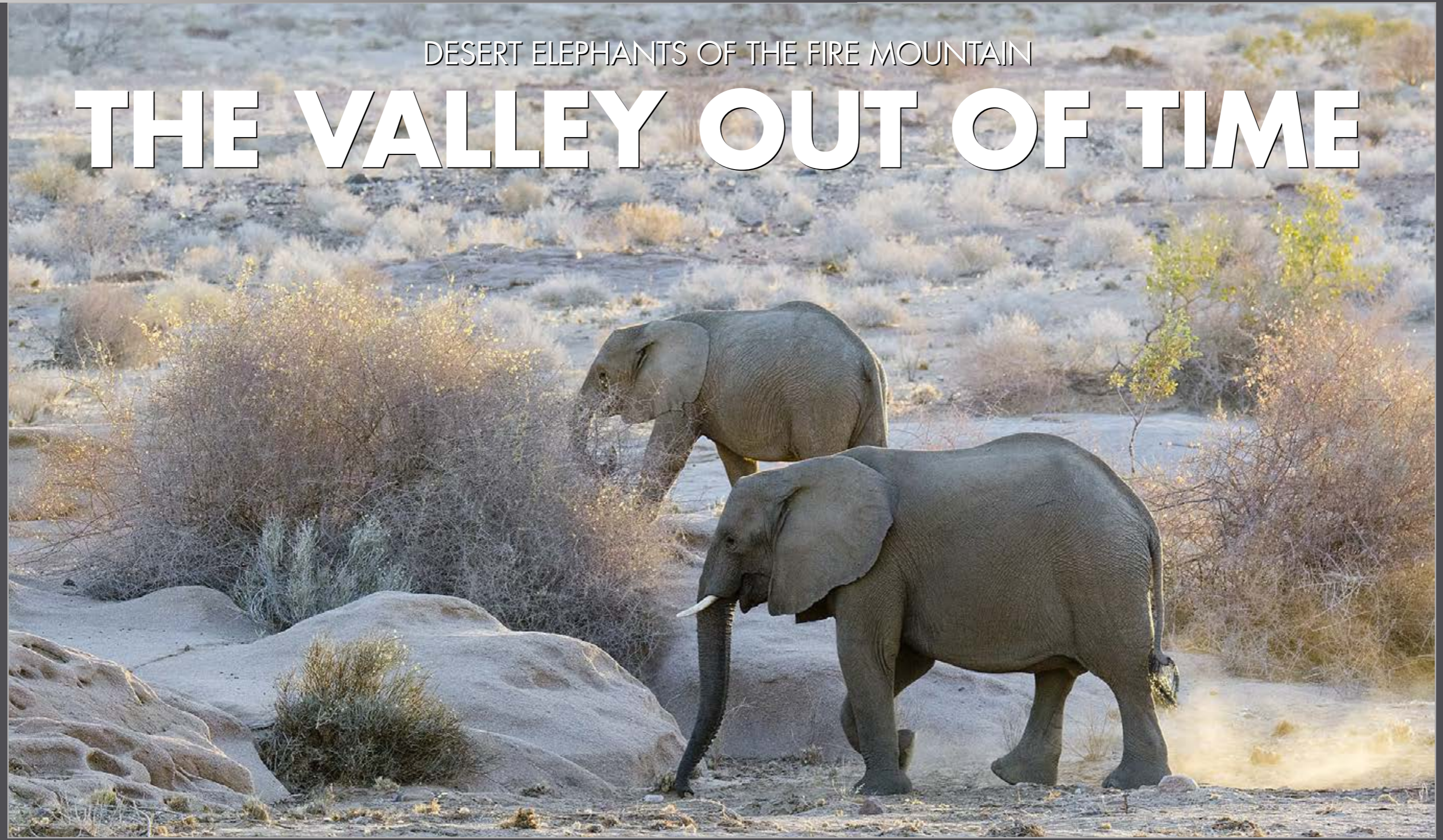


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DESERT ELEPHANTS OF THE FIRE MOUNTAIN

THE VALLEY OUT OF TIME

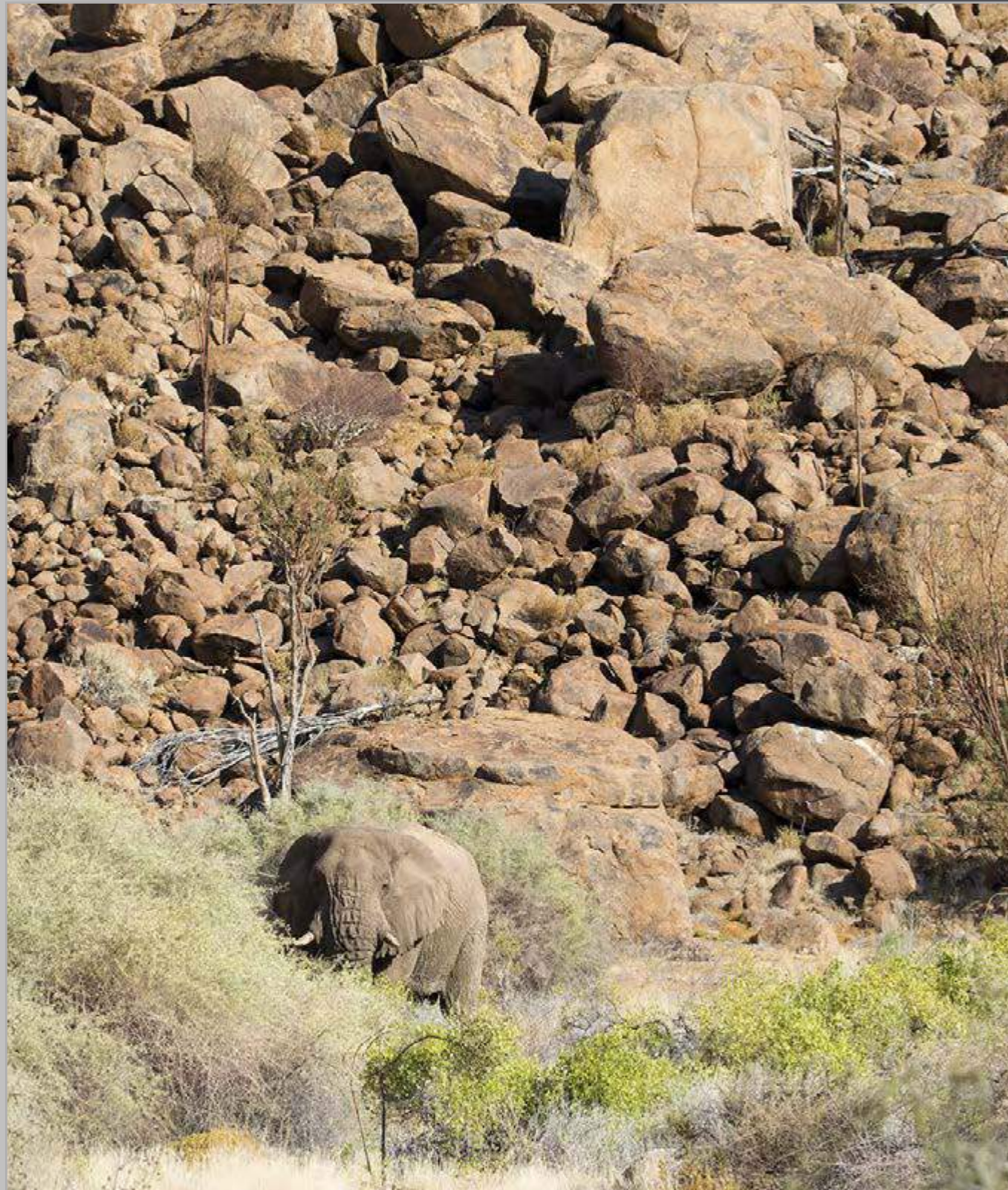


A mysterious rock painting hidden deep in a forbidding gorge is guarded by Namibia's legendary and dangerous pachyderms



Brandberg panorama

Namibia's desert elephants live in the Kunene Region, encompassing 115,154 sq/km of mostly sandy desert, rocky mountains and arid gravel plains in Namibia's northwest. As our image shows, this is a very dry and inhospitable environment - especially for large animals which need lots of water and food daily.



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*

A full-grown male (bull) elephant can weigh up to 6 tons (~6000 kg) and be 4m high at the shoulder. Females are usually a little more than half that weight.

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI

PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

The Brandberg is Namibia's highest mountain. Its name is Afrikaans, Dutch and German for "Fire Mountain", coming from its glowing red color at sunset. The Damara name, *Dâures*, means "burning mountain", while the Herero one, *Omukuruvaro*, means "mountain of the Gods". It is located in the Damaraland, in the northwestern Namib Desert, near the coast, and covers an area of approximately 650 km². With its highest point standing at 2,573 m (8,442 ft) above sea level, and located on flat gravel plains, on a clear day it can be seen from a great distance. The Brandberg is a spiritual site of great significance to the San (Bushman) tribes: its main tourist attraction is the White Lady rock painting, found with other art work under a small rock overhang in the Tsisab ravine at the foot of the mountain. The White Lady group portrays several human figures as well as oryxes, on a rock panel measuring about 5.5 m x 1.5 m. The "White Lady" is the most detailed human figure in the group, and measures about 39.5 cm x 29 cm. It is usually assumed that the painting shows some sort of ritual dance, and that the "White Lady" is in fact a shaman. The figure has white legs and arms, which may suggest that the body was painted or that it was wearing some sort of decorative attachments on the legs and arms. It holds a bow in one hand and possibly a goblet in the other. Because of the bow and the oryxes, the painting has also been interpreted as a hunting scene. The painting was probably made of ochre,

charcoal, manganese, hematite, with blood serum, egg white and casein used as binding agents. The painting has long been an archaeological dilemma, and several different hypotheses have been put forth on its origins, authorship and dating. It is now usually accepted to be a bushmen painting, dating back at least 2000 years ago. To reach the White Lady it is necessary to hike for about 40-60 minutes over rough terrain, following the ancient watercourses threading through the mountain, along the gorge of the normally dry Tsisab river. The area is uninhabited, wild and very arid; in summer, temperatures over 40 °C are routine. Despite this, the Dâures Nature Reserve is home to a diversity of wildlife (the insect taxon *Mantophasmatodea* was first discovered here in 2002, and the scorpion fauna of the Brandberg massif is probably the richest in southern Africa). The numbers of animals are obviously small because the arid environment cannot support large populations, however visitors will occasionally observe elephants, leopards, baboons, rock hyrax, snakes and even Black rhino. But above all, this area and its surroundings are a great spot to meet Namibia's fabled desert-dwelling elephants, highly adapted to surviving in an arid, barren, forbidding environment - difficult to spot among the rocky terrain, highly unpredictable and very dangerous when trekking up the gorge, they are the ancient, wise, wrinkled guardians of the mysterious White Lady of the Brandberg. ●



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*

Although not a separate species, and not much different from other savanna elephants *Loxodonta africana africana*, Namibia's desert-dwelling elephants are special nonetheless. They are of high national and international conservation priority, and have been designated as top priority for protection by the IUCN.



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*

Namibia's desert elephants have adapted to their dry, semi-desert environment by having a smaller body mass with proportionally longer legs and seemingly larger feet than other elephants. Their physical attributes allow them to cross miles of sand dunes to reach water.



Meerkat *Suricata suricatta*

Meerkat or suricate *Suricata suricatta*, digging out reptile eggs, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site valley, Namibia.



The White Lady

"The White Lady of Brandberg" bushmen rock painting, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site valley, Namibia.



Sandstorm at sunset

The barren, forbidding wasteland at the foot of the Brandberg is often swept by dramatic sandstorms. Despite being quite uncomfortable, such storms offer wonderful opportunities to the dedicated landscape photographer.



Damara Red-billed hornbill *Tockus damarensis*
Damara Red-billed hornbill *Tockus damarensis*, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site, Namibia



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*
See also <http://www.desertelephant.org/elephant-conservation-volunteer/desert-elephants-namibia.html>.



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*

The elephants living in the Brandberg area survive by eating moisture-laden vegetation growing in ephemeral riverbeds and with their ability to go several days without drinking water. Sometimes they must travel long distances to reach a water source. To find out more see also <http://www.desertelephantconservation.org/index.html>



Namibian Rock agama *Agama planiceps*

Namibian Rock agama *Agama planiceps*, male, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site valley, Namibia.

**An oasis in the desert**

Shallow, rocky gorges in the arid Kunene region offer the only possibility of finding semi-permanent water in this remote area. It is in such verdant environments that the sparse wildlife of the Namibian north-west often congregates.



Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis*

Rock hyrax or Dassie *Procavia capensis*, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site valley, Namibia. Interestingly, the closest living relatives to hyraxes are the modern-day elephants and sirenians.



Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus nigricans*

African red-eyed bulbul or Black-fronted bulbul *Pycnonotus nigricans*, Grootberg, Damaraland, Namibia

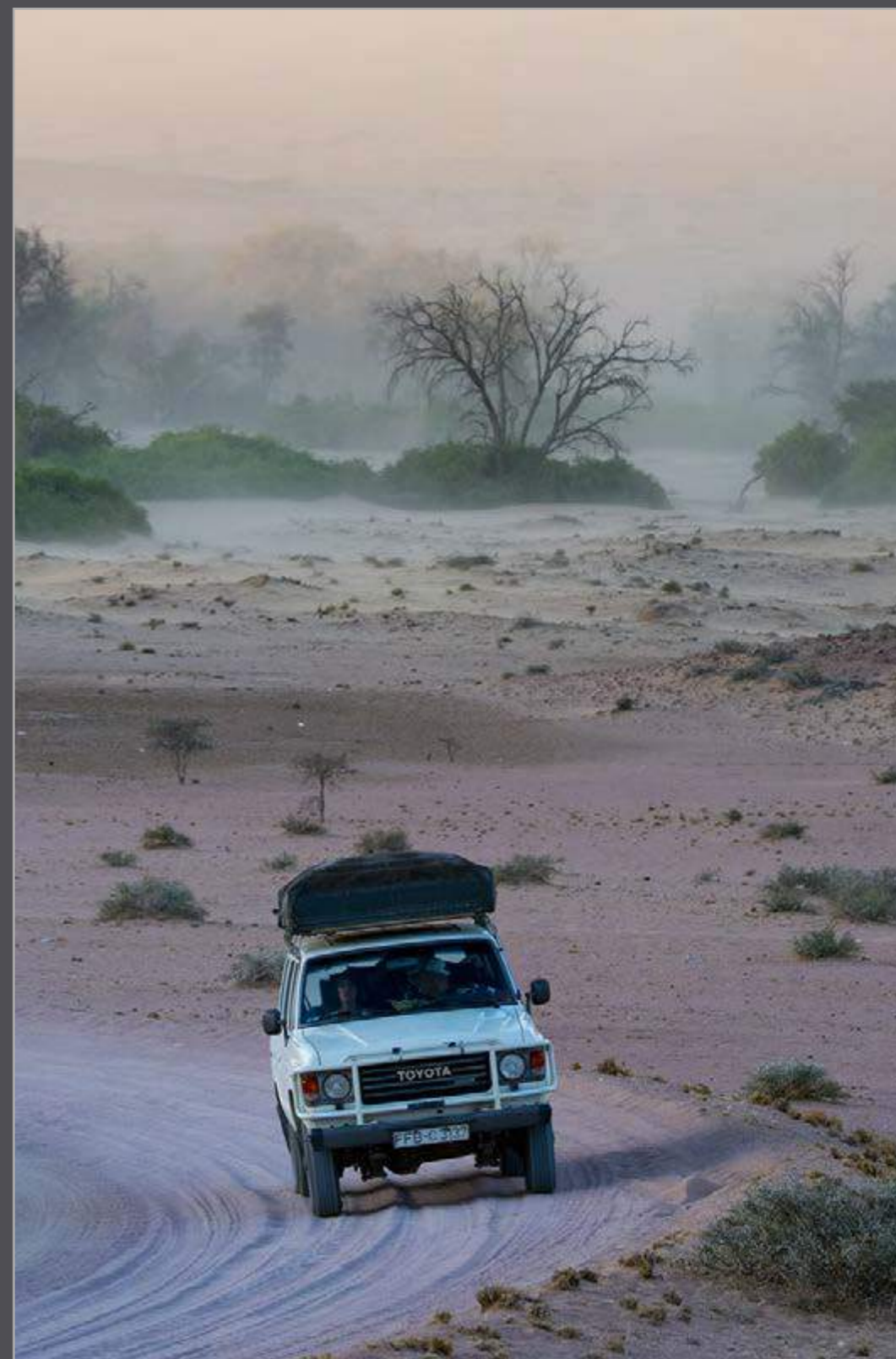


African elephant *Loxodonta africana*

By living in smaller than average family units of only two or three animals, Namibia's desert elephants decrease pressure on food and water resources. Researchers have noted that they destroy fewer trees than elephants living in higher rainfall areas in other parts of Africa.



Grey loerie *Corythaixoides concolor*
Grey Go-away-bird or Grey loerie *Corythaixoides concolor*, Brandberg.



Sandstorm at sunset
Driving safely on the Brandberg gravel trails requires particular care.



Namibian Rock agama *Agama planiceps*

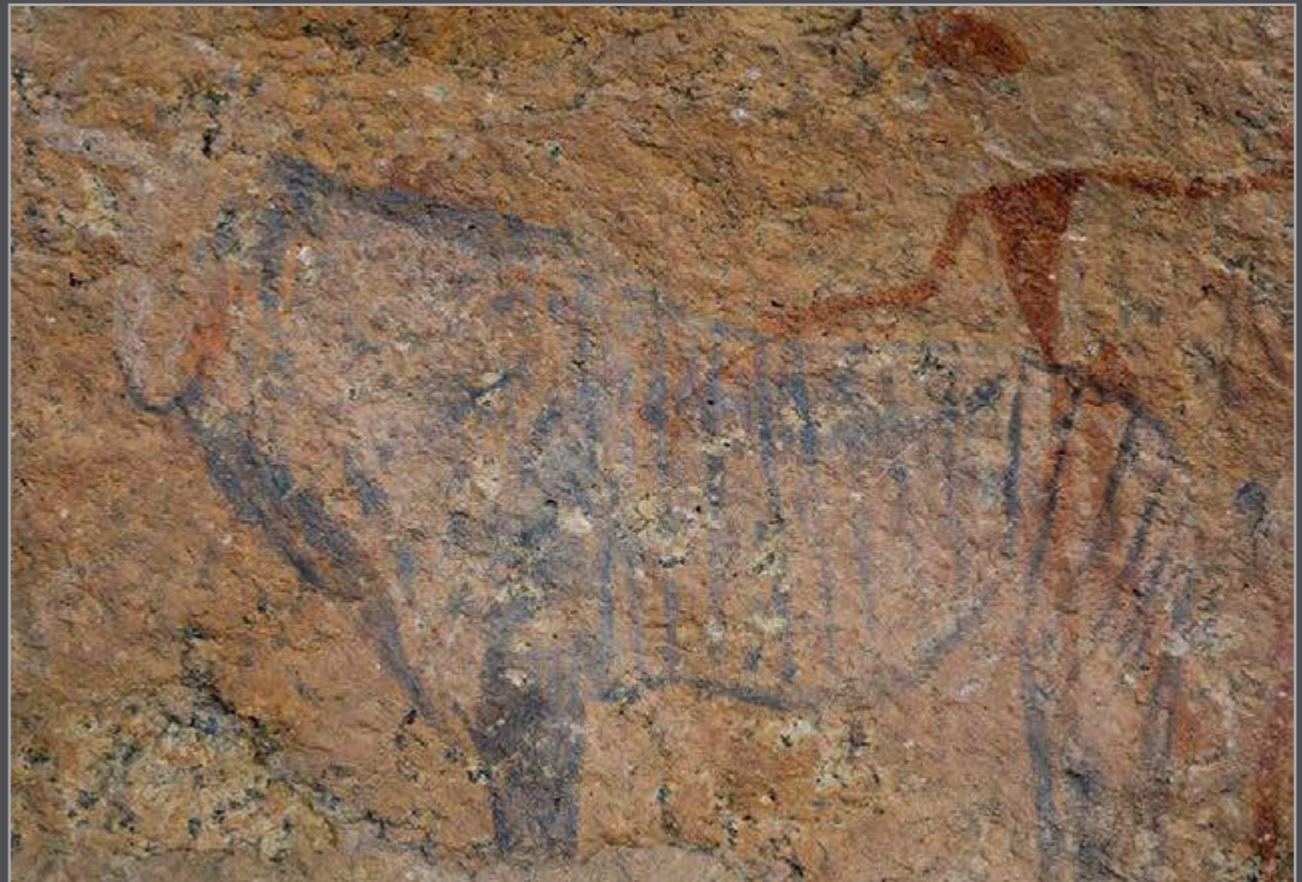
Namibian Rock agama *Agama planiceps*, female, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site valley, Namibia.



Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis*
 Rock hyrax or Dassie *Procavia capensis*, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site valley, Namibia.



Oryx
 Oryx from the "The White Lady of Brandberg" bushmen rock paintings group, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site valley, Namibia



Wildebeest
 Wildebeest from the "The White Lady of Brandberg" bushmen rock paintings group, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site valley, Namibia



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*

Beside Namibia's, there is only one other group of desert-dwelling elephants in the world. They live in Mali, North Africa, where they were forced into their desert habitat by human population expansion. These also belong to the species *Loxodonta africana africana*.



Sandstorm at sunset

Being based at the White Lady Lodge offers the opportunity to explore the greater Brandberg area - the desert elephants are not always found easily as they move around a lot depending on the water availability situation.



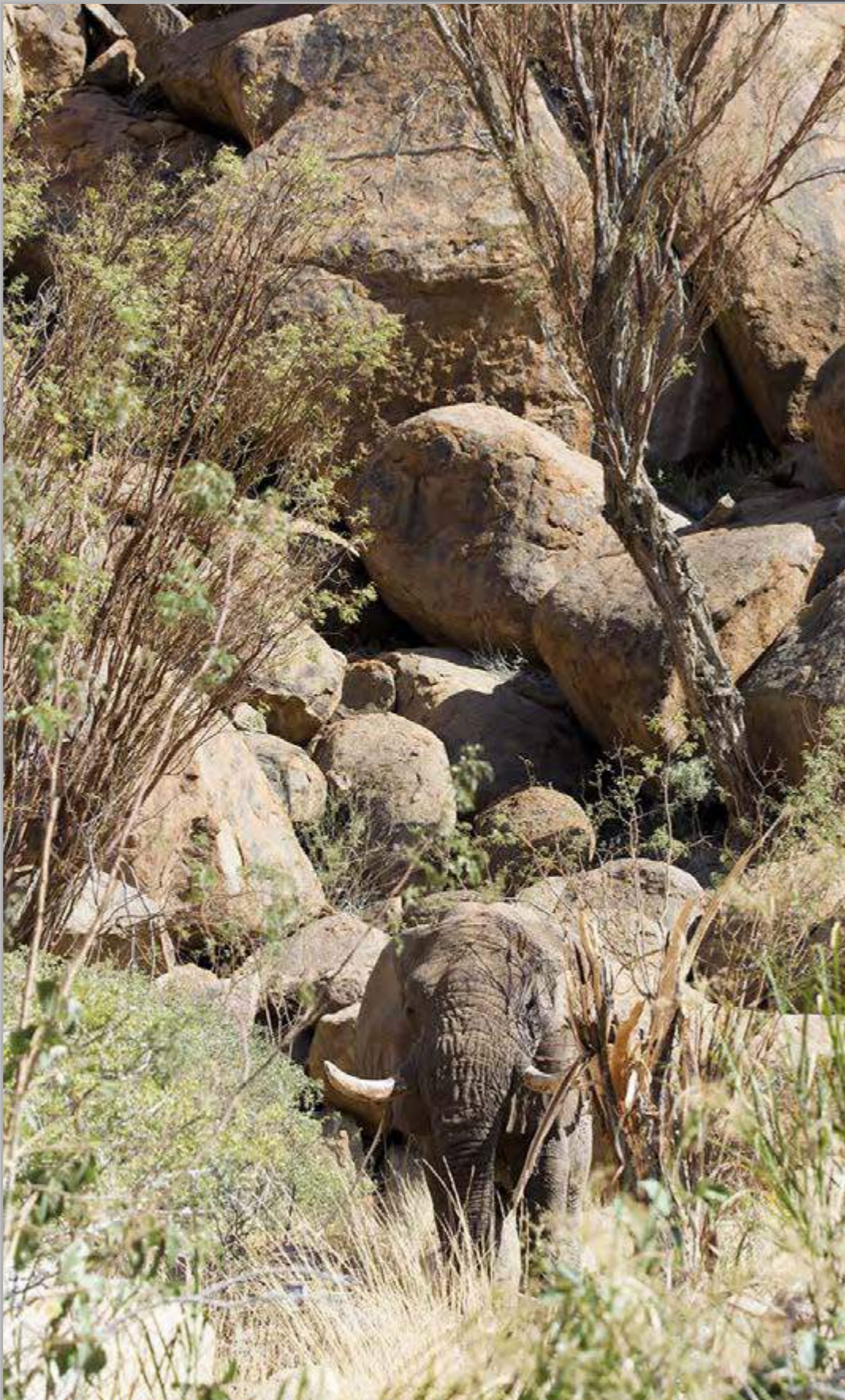
Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis*

The rock hyrax *Procavia capensis*, also called Cape hyrax, is commonly referred to in South African English as *dassie*. It is one of the four living species of the order *Hyracoidea*, and the only living species in the genus *Procavia*. Like all hyraxes, it is a medium-sized (~4 kg) terrestrial mammal, with short ears and tail.

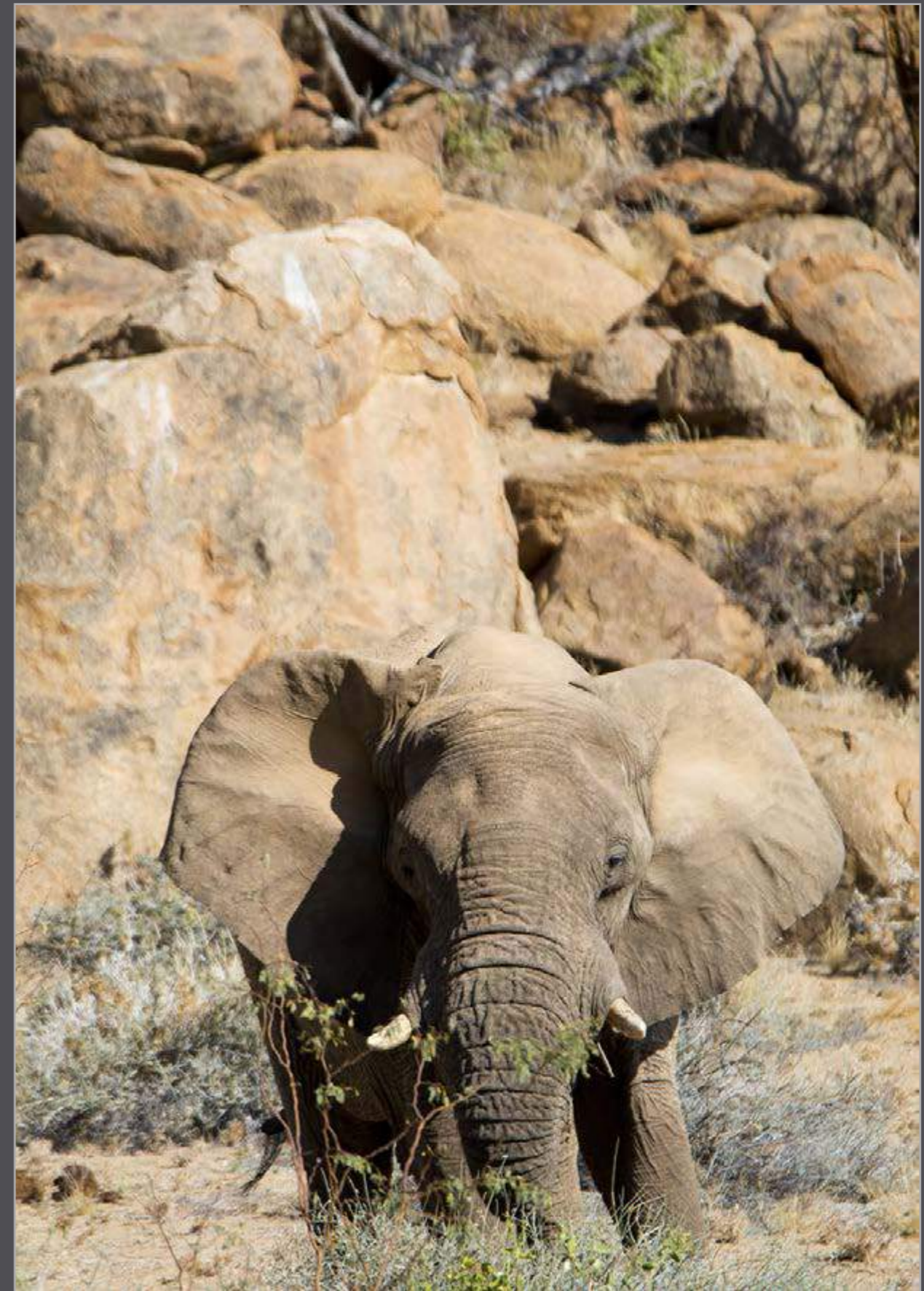


African elephant *Loxodonta africana*

Elephants enter puberty around 10 to 12 years of age, when females can become pregnant, are considered adults by age 18, and can live into their 60s. The youngsters learn all they need to know from their family members: mothers, aunts, sisters and brothers.



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*
Desert elephants are very difficult to spot in the Brandberg.



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*
Elephants are well known for their long lifespans, intelligence and memory.



African elephant *Loxodonta africana*

After a gestation of 22 months, a baby requires mother's milk for two years.



The black bane of the Rock hyrax

Verreaux's Black eagle *Aquila verreauxii*, Grootberg, Damaraland.



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White Lady tourist lodge, Brandberg Daures National Heritage Site

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The Dutch Master

Rinie Luykx – A Wildlife Photographer in His Own Words

Like the past great painters of Holland, an underwater artist who loves to play with light and shadow in his unending search for the perfect image

My name is Rinie Luykx and I was born in 1968 in a small village in the Netherlands. I am a passionate diver since 1990, when I had my first experience in Curaçao with the underwater world. I love to travel around the world a lot (that's how we met Andrea and Antonella, the publishers of this magazine, years ago) with my wife Brigitta. Together we freelance for several diving magazines - I as a photographer and Brigitta as a writer. Magazines we published in are *Duiken* (Netherlands), *National Geographic*, *Sport Diver* (Korea), *Hypocampus* (Belgium), *Onderwatersport* (Netherlands), *Dykking* (Norway), *Divetec* (Russia), and of course

Anima Mundi. Sometimes I like to participate in competitions and I have won some big prizes, especially with my pictures from Dutch waters. This is the place where I dive whole year round. Dutch waters are not the easiest place to dive, but for me this makes it an extra big challenge. From the smallest things to the biggest things I like it all. My greatest challenge is to make a special picture by playing with light. I am very persistent to get the perfect picture. Since a couple of years I became the face of Seacam in the Benelux. I am working with a Canon 5D MIII and a Canon 7D MII with Seacam housings and 2 Seacam flashes. ●

<https://www.facebook.com/rinie.luykx>





Swimming crab in the sun

Canon EOS 7D Mark II

10-17mm

f/20

ISO 100

1/250

Fighting cuttlefish

Canon EOS 5D Mark III

EF15mm f/2.8 Fisheye

f11

ISO 1600

1/20





Backlit egg of a cuttlefish

Canon EOS 5D Mark III
MP-E65mm f/2.8 1-5x
f/16
ISO 500
1/160

Skeleton shrimp with babies

Canon EOS 5D Mark III
EF100mm f/2.8 Macro USM
f/32
ISO 200
1/200





My big friend the Grey seal

Canon EOS 5D Mark III

15mm

f/13

ISO 800

1/160

Seahorse (uncommon in the Netherlands)

Canon EOS 5D Mark III

15mm

f/13

ISO 800

1/32

Mating Squid

Canon EOS 5D Mark III

EF50mm f/2.5 Compact Macro

f/18

ISO 800

1/200





**Amphipod
in a small jellyfish**

Canon EOS 5D Mark III
EF100mm f/2.8 Macro USM
f/22
ISO 400
1/200

Baby bullrout hatching

Canon EOS 5D

65 mm

f/16

ISO 100

1/200



Grey seal playing with Brigitta

Canon EOS 5D Mark III

15mm

f/13

ISO 800

1/160





Cuttlefish eating crab

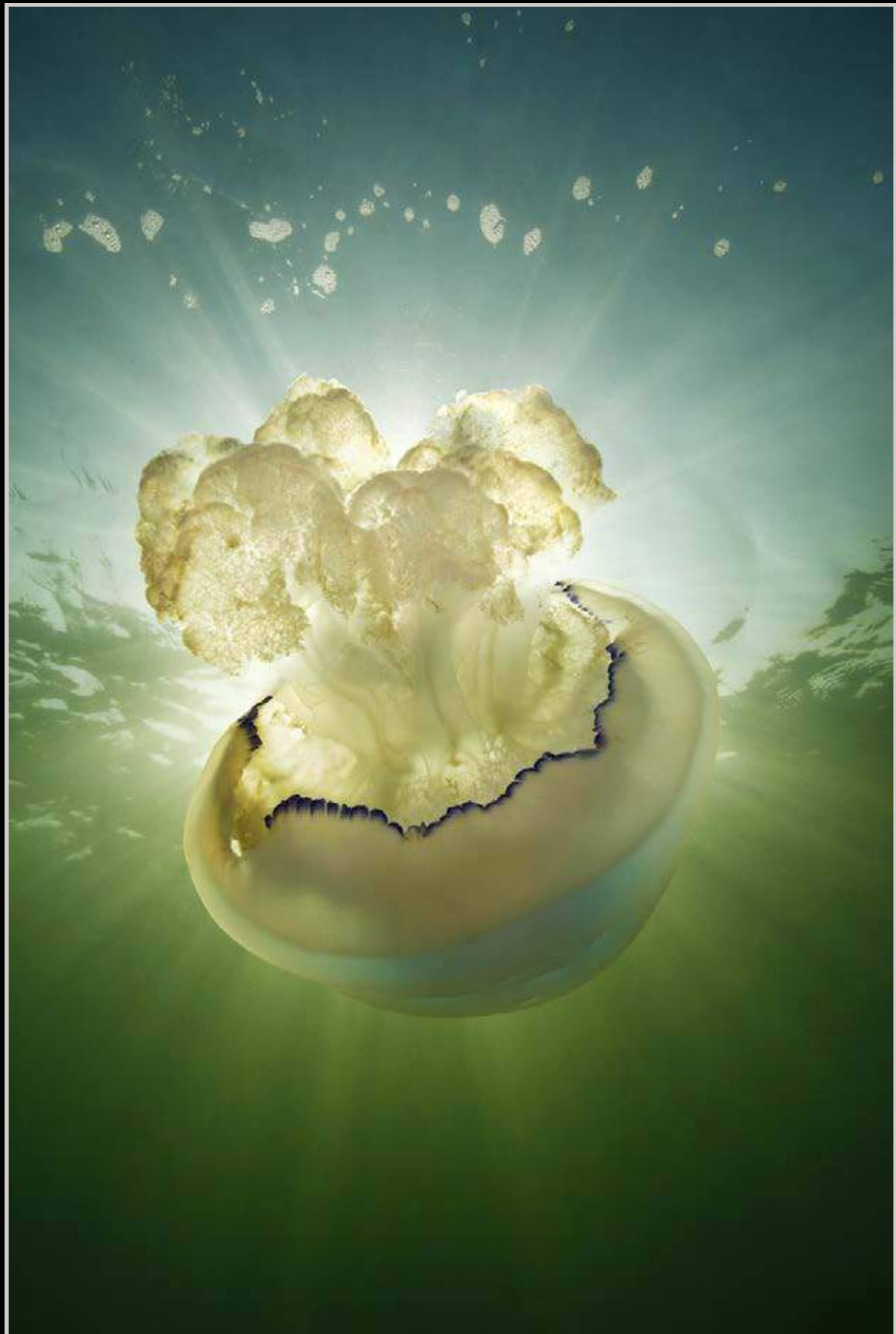
Canon EOS 7D Mark II

EF50mm f/2.5 Macro

f/18

ISO 250

1/200



Barrel jellyfish on the surface
Canon EOS 5D
19,0 mm
f/16
ISO 100
1/200

Horny lump sucker
Canon EOS 5D Mark III
15mm
f11
ISO 1600
1/40



**Crab on the surface
playing with my bubbles**

*Canon EOS 5D Mark III
EF50mm f/2.5 Compact Macro
f/18
ISO 250
1/200*

Male cuttlefish protecting their females

Canon EOS 5D Mark III
EF15mm f/2.8 Fisheye
f11
ISO 1600
1/20



Squid laying eggs

Canon EOS 5D Mark III
EF17-40mm f/4L USM
f11
ISO 1250
1/40



**A Grey seal
named Happy**

Canon EOS 5D Mark III

15mm

f11

ISO 800

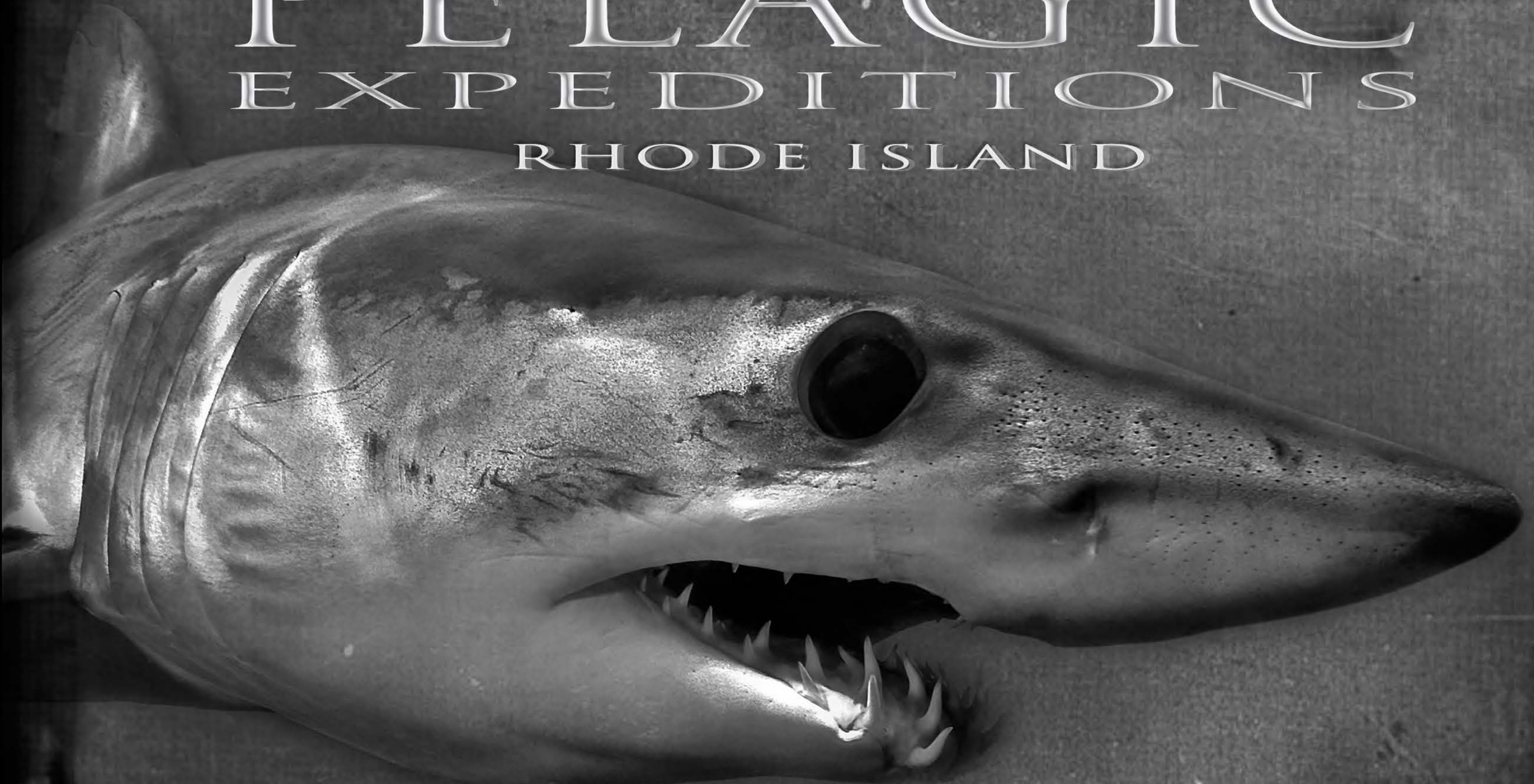
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Bobtail squid

Canon EOS 7D Mark II
EF50mm f/2.5 Compact Macro
f/20
ISO 250
1/200

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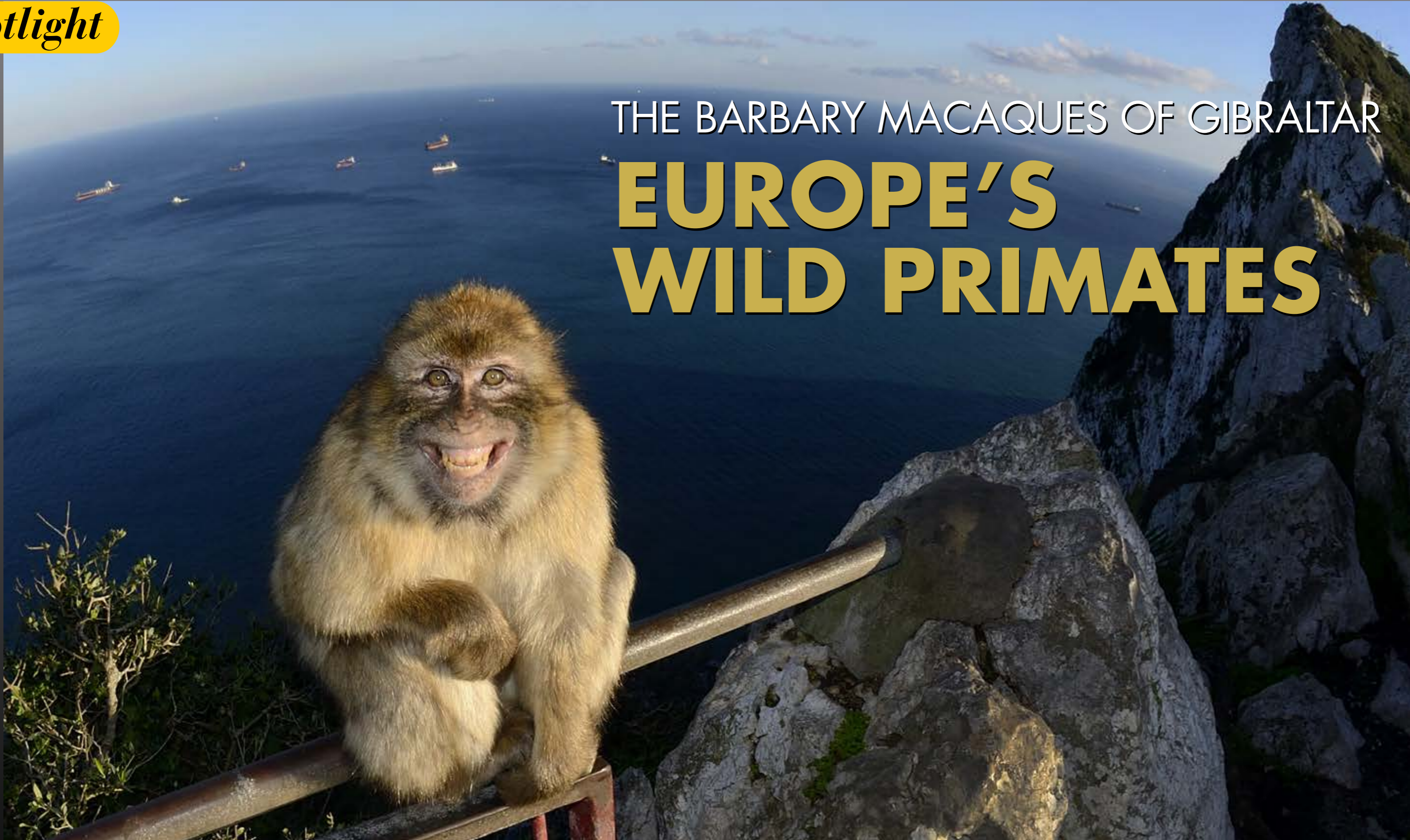
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■ A family group
of Gibraltar Barbary
macaques
Macaca sylvanus.



As I join the queue into Gibraltar in the small Spanish town of La Línea de la Concepción just south of the border, I can't help but look up at the Rock. The majestic promontory of Jurassic limestone, dominating the surrounding lowland 426 meters high appears to be glistening at me in the morning sunshine. I now find myself entering Gibraltar, one of the British Overseas Territories, a little strip of land located on the southern extremity of the Iberian Peninsula, covering no more than 7 square kilometres. Around 30,000 people live here from British, Spanish, Portuguese, Maltese and even Genoese descent. I'm here to take pictures of primates, but as a professional wildlife photographer I'm not so interested in humans. Instead I will focus on another incredible primate: the Barbary macaque *Macaca sylvanus*. These animals represent the only wild population of monkeys in Europe, and have lived here from « *time immemorial* », long before Gibraltar fell under British control in 1704, at least according to Hernandez del Portillo (often dubbed as Gibraltar's first chronicler), who famously wrote about the presence of the macaques in 1610. One theory suggested that they directly descend from the macaques that lived in Southern Europe during the Pliocene, up to 5.5 million years ago. However, DNA samples have established, that at least today's Gibraltar macaques descend

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■ According to the latest census, some 250-300 animals split in five or seven troops occupy the Upper Rock area of the Gibraltar Nature Reserve.





from North African populations of this species, pointing towards the Gibraltar macaques having been replenished by later importations from Morocco and Algeria by the British in the 1940s. Nowadays, the Upper Rock Nature Reserve offers shelter to almost 250 individuals, divided into seven extended family groups, each occupying their own territory. The macaques are synonymous with the Rock and are arguably Gibraltar's biggest tourist attraction. Although free-ranging, the macaques are habituated to human presence and appear to be extremely confident in and around people. In specific areas, they often approach humans and interact with them. However, it is important not to forget that these animals are not tame and that we remain strangers: when provoked or threatened,

the monkeys can bite! For this reason, the authorities are continuously trying to discourage hand feeding. Anyone caught doing so is liable to be fined up to £4,000 upon summary conviction. Moreover, the macaques are closely provisioned and monitored by a designated Macaque Management Team, who provide them with a daily supply of water, fresh vegetables, fruit and seeds. In any case, the provisioned food is not the only food resource for the monkeys: the Upper Rock Nature Reserve is covered by a thick coat of vegetation, characterised by several hundred different species of plants. The macaques' largely folivorous natural diet means that they regularly forage on many of these plants, particularly when the tourists head back down. The animals are monitored 365 days a

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The macaques' contact with large numbers of tourists was causing the integrity of their social groups to break down, as they began to become dependent on humans. This induced the monkeys to forage in the town, resulting in damage to buildings, clothing, and vehicles. Close contact with humans has also led to the macaques learning how to open pockets and unzip handbags and rucksacks in order to steal food from humans. For these reasons, deliberately feeding the macaques in Gibraltar is now an offence punishable by law. Anyone caught feeding the monkeys is liable to be fined up to £4,000.



■ The Barbary Macaque population in Gibraltar is the only wild monkey population in the European continent. Although most populations in Africa are facing declining populations due to hunting and deforestation, the population of Barbary monkeys in Gibraltar is actually growing.


The macaque population had been present on the Rock of Gibraltar long before Gibraltar was captured by the British in 1704 and according to records, since prior to reconquest of Gibraltar from the Muslims. It was during the Islamic period when a purported introduction may have taken place.



year by the Management Team, who occasionally trap animals to vaccinate, tattoo and microchip them for identification purposes. Other vital statistics such as body size and weight are also taken to check upon their health. During my visit, I spent most of the time with Barbary macaque enthusiast Brian Gomila. Brian completed a Masters in Primatology at the University of Roehampton in 2004 and he has been studying macaques for many years now. His association «Monkey Talk – Gibraltar» is constantly working with the public in order to show monkeys in all their wild beauty and above all as a resource for Gibraltar. In fact, macaques are not always seen in this way: occasional forays into town, that often result in damage to property and

vehicles, do not help the monkeys' reputation. However, Brian is sure that a compromise can be reached and he believes in educating local tour guides so that they are able to showcase the macaques in a non-intrusive and sustainable way. To this effect, the Department of the Environment has recently launched a programme offering Brian's Macaque Educational Outings to all licenced guides. *"It is imperative that our guides become conversant on the macaques. One cannot talk about the macaques in the same way as you would about a historic monument. The macaques are dynamic animals and so it pays off for guides to be able to interpret their behaviours in order to be able to captivate tourists and provide them a safe and educational*

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A photograph of a Gibraltar Barbary macaque sitting on a rocky ledge, looking out over the city of Gibraltar. The macaque is in the foreground, slightly to the right, with its body angled towards the left. The background shows a panoramic view of the city, including buildings, a harbor with a red-roofed structure, and a large body of water. The lighting suggests a bright, sunny day.

■ The Gibraltar Barbary macaques are considered by many to be the top tourist attraction in Gibraltar. The most popular troop is that of Queen's Gate at the Apes' Den, where people can get especially close to the monkeys. They will often approach and sometimes climb onto people, as they are used to human interaction. Nevertheless, these are still wild animals and will readily bite if frightened or annoyed.



experience", says Brian.

It is extremely interesting to speak with this enthusiastic man and to learn about the macaques' social behaviour, facial gestures and body postures. Towards sunset, away from the masses of tourists, we have a unique chance to spend some time among the macaques in their natural habitat, including wooded areas and cliff faces, and to observe their natural behaviours. Barbary macaques live in multi-male, multi-female societies of around 40 individuals, whereby each animal has a dominance rank. Grooming is one of the behaviours that contribute to reinforce the strict bonds existing among group members: the meticulous act of cleaning a relative from parasites and other organic matter is used to reinforce their relationships and reduce stress levels.

As the sun is disappearing beyond the horizon, we climb on a cliff where macaques usually come to spend the night. While we watch the animals in their last interactions of the day, Brian tells me about a popular belief of Gibraltar. This tale holds that, as long as Barbary macaques remain on the Rock, Gibraltar will remain under British rule. A simple, foolish belief, one could say. However, an important person, in the past, showed real trust in this statement. In 1942, an outbreak of disease caused the population of macaques on Gibraltar to plummet to just a handful, and Prime minister Winston Churchill himself ordered to immediately import some macaques from Morocco, thereby boosting the moral of the troops. The risk of being left without their furry lucky charms was becoming too high to bear...



Gibraltar's Barbary macaque population was under the care of the British Army and later the Gibraltar Regiment from 1915 to 1991, who carefully controlled a population that initially consisted of a single troop. The "Keeper of the Apes" would keep the official records, maintaining an up-to-date register for each ape, listing their births and names and supervising their diet, which they drew officially every week. Following the withdrawal of the British garrison, the Government of Gibraltar took over responsibility for the monkeys.



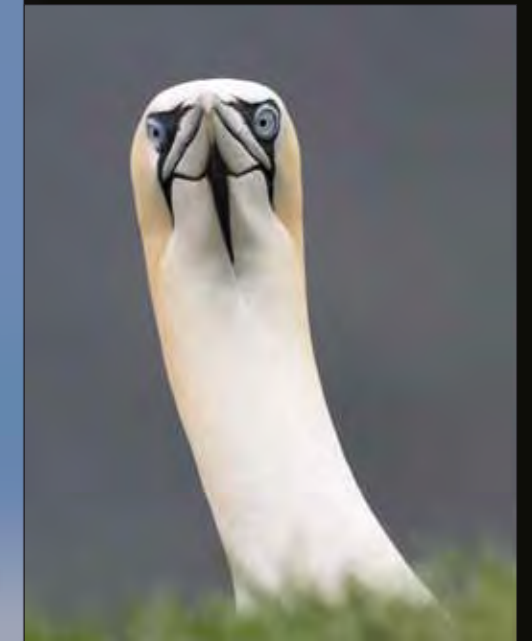
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"My experience was EXCEPTIONAL! The trip exceeded my expectations in all areas. I hoped to get in a position to see owls and couldn't possibly have been happier. It was abundantly clear that David invested significant time and effort prior to the arrival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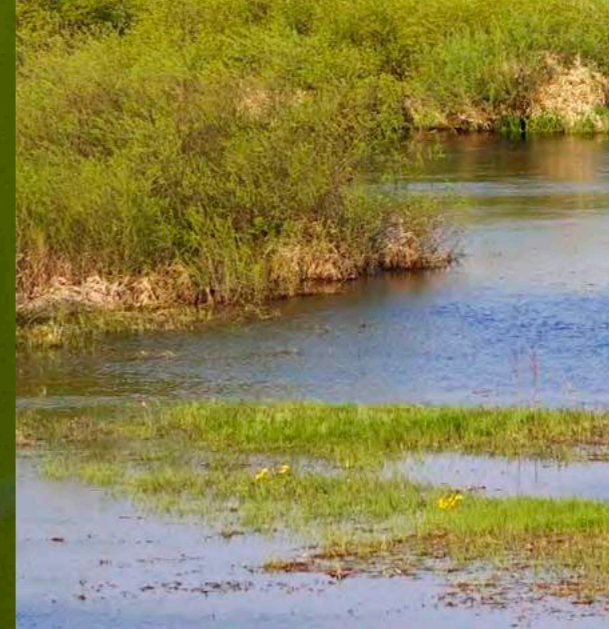
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The Parting Shot



Many of our readers seem to be greatly enjoying our snake images, so here's another nice portrait we recently took during a trip to South Africa - a beautiful Cape cobra *Naja nivea*, on this occasion in a dazzling and highly unusual purplish and burnt orange color phase, rearing up in a very convincing threat display by the Atlantic ocean's shoreline near Yzerfontein in the Western Cape Province. A rather common locally, obviously very venomous species, and truly an impressi-

ve animal in a spectacular location. For those technically inclined, this portrait was taken, like the great majority of our wide-macro (also known as "habitat") shots, utilizing our usual rig - a Nikon D500 camera body mounting a Sigma 15mm f/2.8 DG EX Diagonal Fisheye Lens, with fill-in flash lighting being provided by one camera-mounted SB700 and two side-placed SB-R200 mounted on an extensible Albatros bracket, designed and produced in Italy by <http://www.agnos.com>.

The photo was taken in manual, matrix metering, at 1/160 sec, f/13, ISO 100. The cobra was about 120cm (4 feet) long, so the front of the lens was about 30cm (1 foot) away from the snake. This is obviously quite close when dealing with a venomous animal which is defensive and is ready to strike, so please do not attempt to do the same if you are not experienced in dealing with dangerous, potentially deadly subjects and are not familiar with the animal's body language. ●

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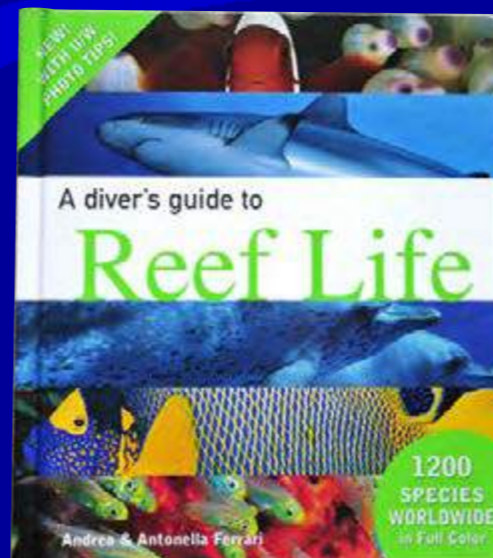


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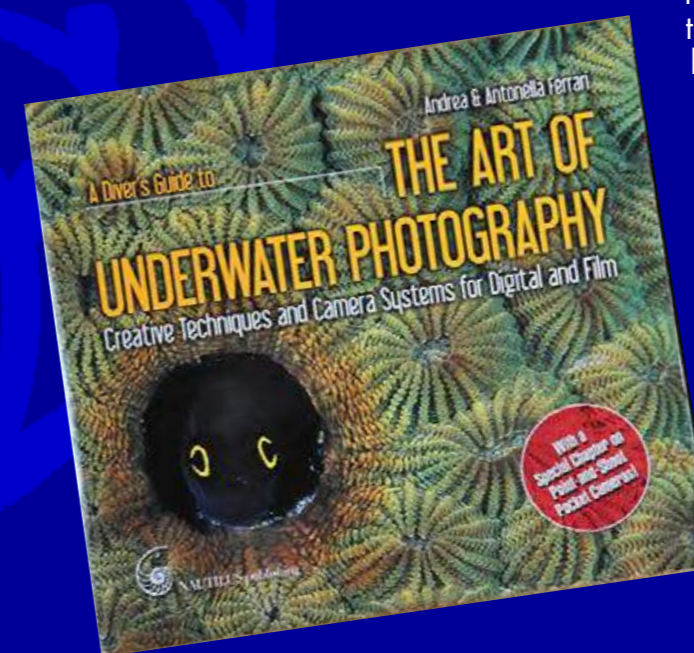
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