



# ANIMA MUNDI

*Adventures in Wildlife Photography*

Issue 32, Year 8 - October 2018

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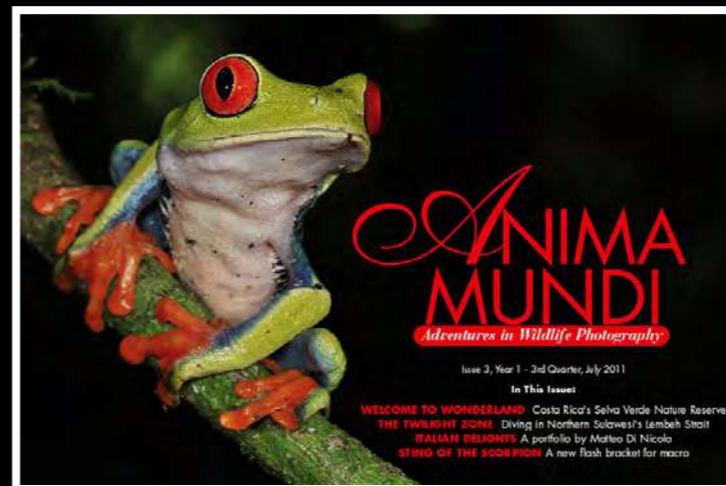
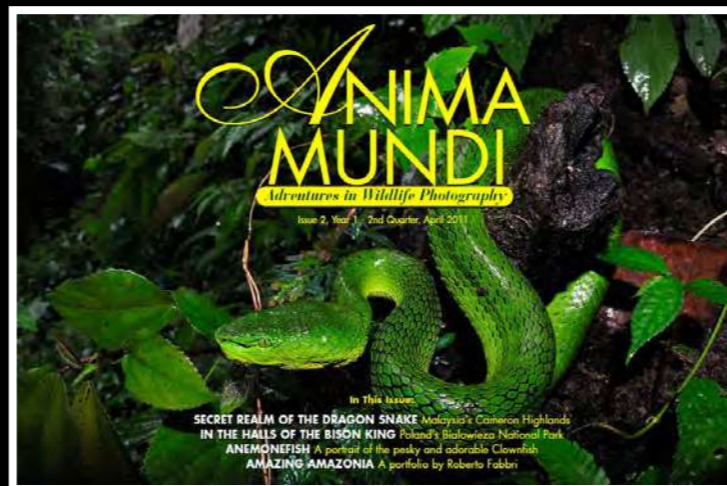
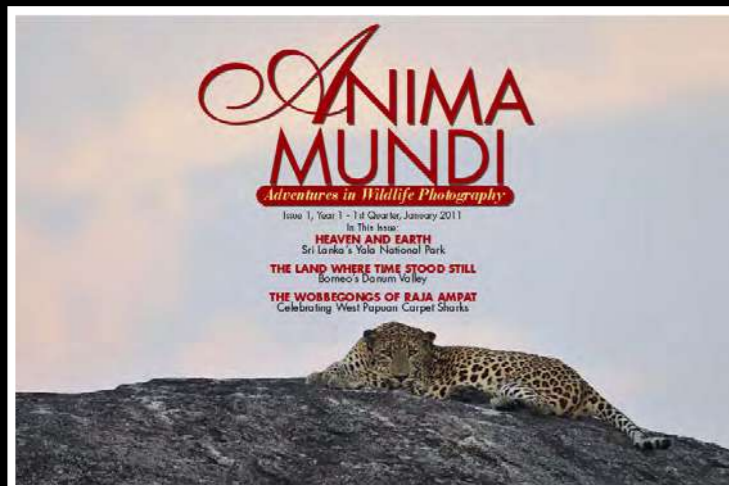
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With more than 30,000 downloads worldwide per issue (as per January 2017), ANIMA MUNDI has seen its readership consistently and rapidly growing in the span of six years of life and twenty-five published issues. Its authoritative and unbiased travel 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](http://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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■ *Pinocchio anole*  
*Anolis proboscis*, male,  
humid montane forest,  
Mindó, Ecuador -  
see page 11.

# ANIMA MUNDI

*Adventures in Wildlife Photography*

## From cloud forest to deep ocean

This summer's umpteenth, blistering and very worrying heatwave has not deterred us from putting together for our readers joy and pleasure another stunning issue of *ANIMA MUNDI - Adventures in Wildlife Photography*, once again full of fascinating facts and incredible images. But don't believe those who keep insisting climate change is not taking place worldwide! Anyway, we survived the heat, so off we go...

On page 4 we start - as usual - with a Scoop (rather more of a Photogallery this time, in fact) devoted to one of the African bush's most impressive birds of prey, a fierce martial eagle we had the rare luck of observing at length and at close quarters in Etosha, Namibia. A truly intimidating raptor! We follow up at page 11 with our own travel story from one of our favorite neotropical destinations - the birdwatching capital of Ecuador, lovely Mindó. On this occasion we stayed at the equally lovely **Septimo Paraiso Nature Reserve and Lodge** - a marvelous little place we have to thank our friend Lucas M. Bustamante of **Tropical Herping** for. *Gracias, amigo!* Our stay there was full of hummingbirds, toucans and rare reptiles. From the dripping wet cloud forests of South America we then dive deep in the watery abyss of the Gulf of Mexico on page 50 and find out about the monstrous, mysterious and elusive oceanic anglerfish thanks to field researcher, staunch conservationist and *ANIMA MUNDI*'s

regular contributor Dante Fenolio's fascinating report. On page 64 we surface again and, leaving the cold dark depths of the open ocean, explore the world of India's rebellious, strong and passionate *maharani* of wildlife photography, Archana Singh - you'll love the wonderful images she has chosen for her Personal Portfolio. Finally, on page 78, wildlife photographer, conservationist and book author Bjorn Olesen leads



us on a demanding expedition to Southern Chile's Torres del Paine National Park in search of the elusive - and stunningly beautiful - pumas of Patagonia. We have seldom seen such good photos of these felines in truly wild surroundings - most of the portraits of pumas (cougars or mountain lions in the USA) people are familiar with are of tame, trained and overweight

individuals taken in North American "wildlife refuges". 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](mailto:editor@animamundimag.com) and we'll gladly take a look at it!

In the meantime...

Have a good trip!  
*Andrea & Antonella Ferrari*  
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We appreciate your feedback  
- constructive criticism, useful  
suggestions and interesting  
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■ *Green-crowned Woodnymph  
hummingbird* *Thalurania  
colombica fannyi*, male,  
Mindó, Ecuador - see page 11.

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### THE PARTING SHOT



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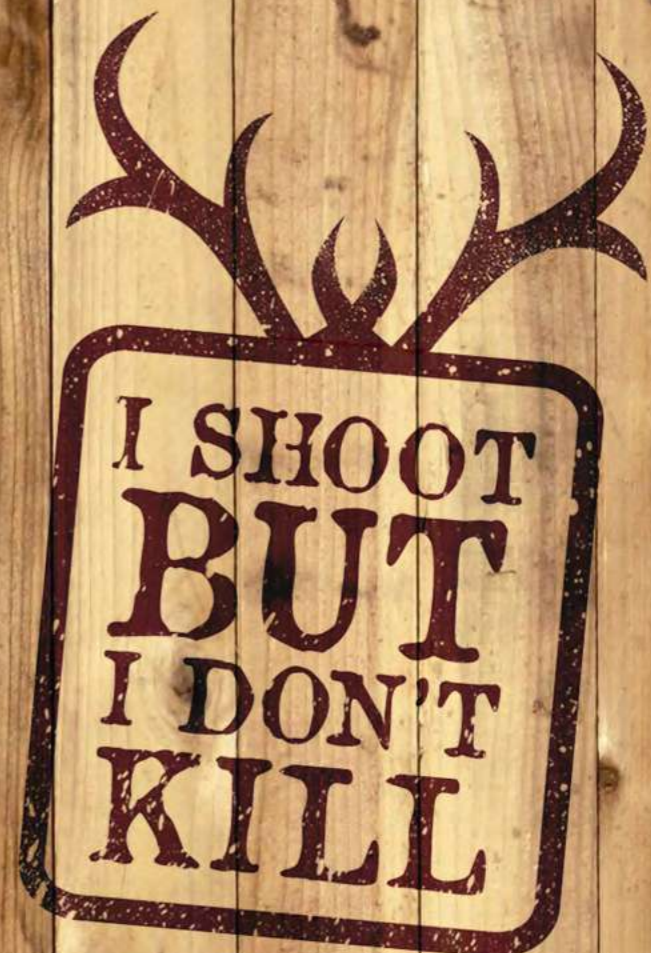
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# THE MARTIAL EAGLE **TERROR OF THE AFRICAN BUSH**

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH A NEAR-LEGENDARY  
AND SEVERELY THREATENED PREDATOR



The martial eagle is a very large eagle. In total length, it can range from 78 to 96 cm (31 to 38 in), with a wingspan from 188 to 260 cm (6 ft 2 in to 8 ft 6 in).



The martial eagle is one of the world's most powerful avian predators. Prey may vary considerably in size but for the most part, prey weighing less than 0.5 kg (1.1 lb) are ignored, with the average size of prey being between 1 and 5 kg (2.2 and 11.0 lb).

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI  
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

During a lifetime of explorations we have met and photographed the huge, intimidating martial eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* quite a few times - despite being currently severely threatened and not really common anywhere, it still is relatively easy observing one in the African plains. This bird is a large eagle native to sub-Saharan Africa and the only member of its genus - as a species of the booted eagle subfamily *Aquillinae*, it has feathering over its tarsus. One of the largest and most powerful species of booted eagle, it is a fairly opportunistic predator that varies its prey selection between medium-sized

mammals, large birds and reptiles. An inhabitant of wooded belts of otherwise open savanna, this species has sadly shown a precipitous decline in the last few centuries due to a variety of factors as it is one of the most persecuted bird species in the world. Due to its habit of taking livestock and regionally valuable game, local farmers and game wardens frequently seek to eliminate martial eagles, although the effect of eagles on this prey is almost certainly considerably exaggerated. Currently, the martial eagle is classified with the status of Vulnerable to extinction by the IUCN, so watching one up close as we did on this

occasion - while it was gorging itself on a fresh duck or goose kill by a waterhole in Etosha NP, Namibia - was rather special. Luckily most martial eagles don't seem too shy when feasting (if properly approached, of course - we had already photographed another eating a mongoose in Kruger NP), and this big adult obliged us with a variety of beautiful poses, staying put even when a light but bothersome drizzle started. Nothing particularly rare or unusual, as we already said - simply a collection of interesting images of this imposing and endangered species, which we are glad to share with our readers. ●

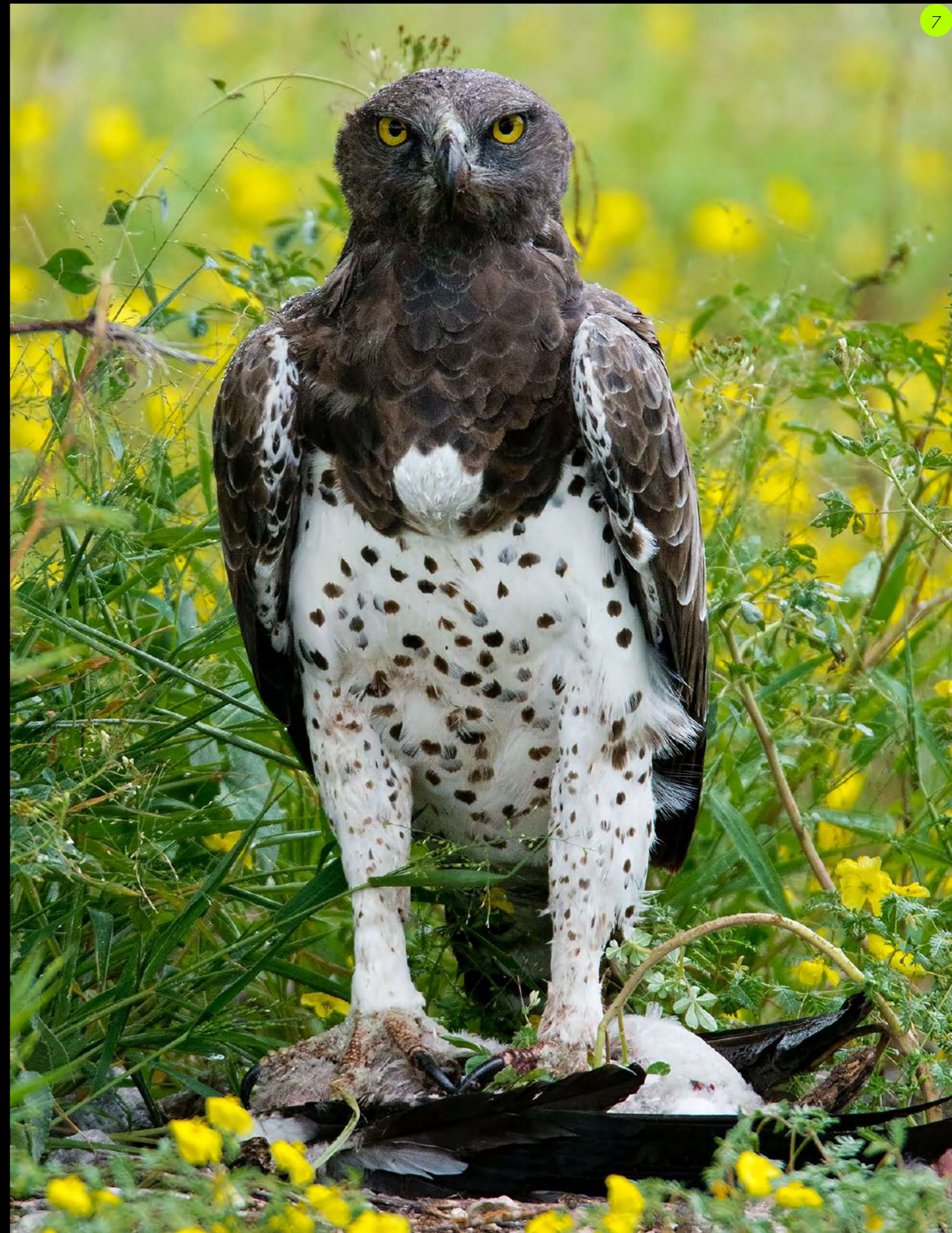


The martial eagle is probably naturally scarce in the wild due to its requirement for large territories and low reproductive rates.





This species has been experiencing a major decline in numbers in recent years, due largely to being directly killed by humans. Its conservation status was uplisted to Near Threatened in 2009 and to Vulnerable in 2013, with another uplisting already expected.





■ The martial eagle continues to be strongly disliked by farmers and shot at on sight. The preservation of this species depends on education of farmers and other local people, and the increase of protected areas where the species can nest and hunt without excessive disturbance.



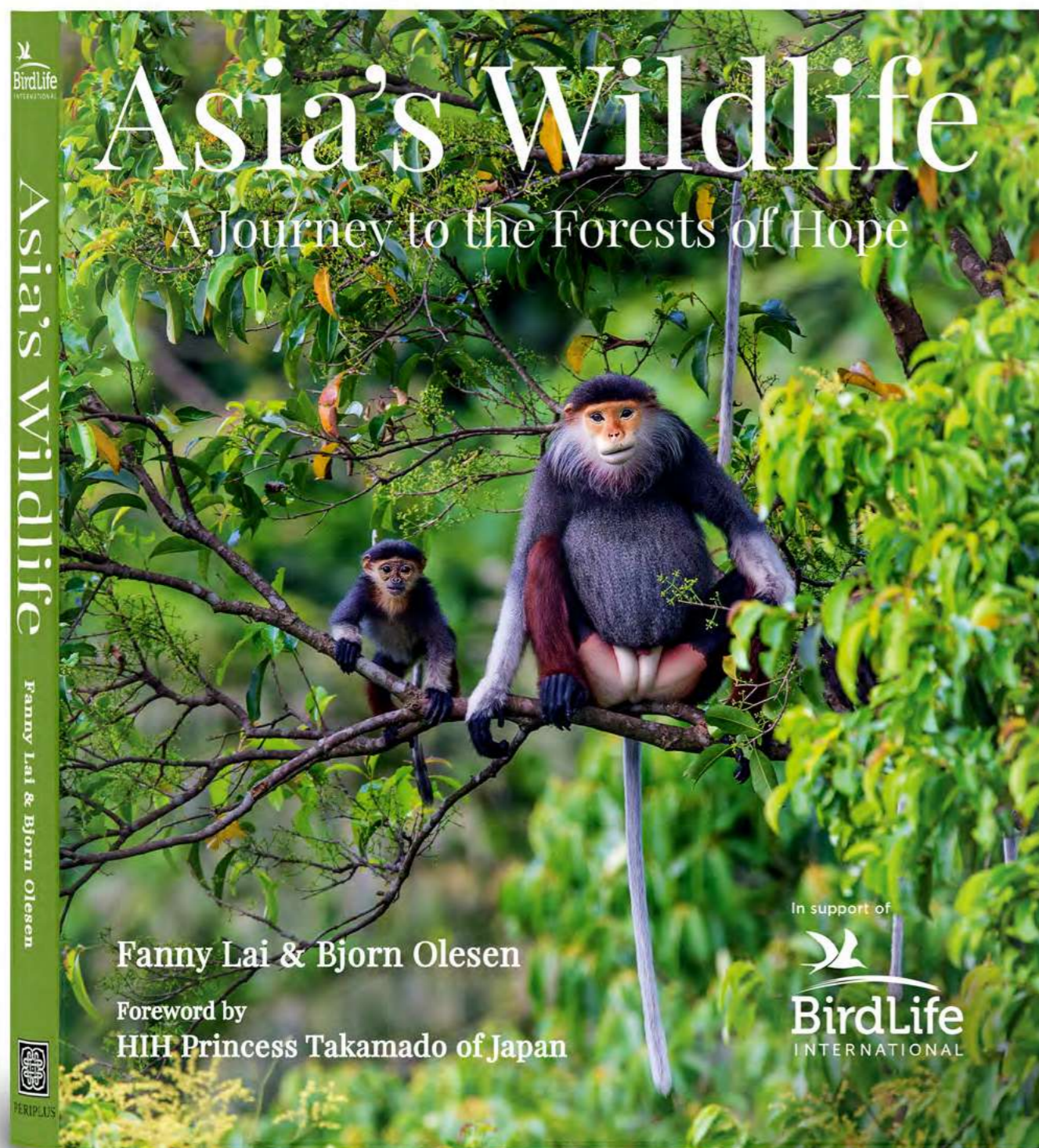
The morphology of the martial eagle - large wing surface areas, pronounced sexual dimorphism and relatively long toes - shows that the species is at least partially specialized to hunting avian prey. More than 50 bird species have been identified as the prey of martial eagles.





The martial eagle ■ tends to hunt in a long, shallow stoop. The speed of descent is controlled by the angle at which the wings are held above the back. At the point of impact, it shoots its long legs forward, often killing victims on impact.





## Asia's Wildlife: A Journey to the Forests of Hope

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*Hope is the life force we all share. Hope is the thing with feathers. It perches in our souls.'*

HIH Princess Takamado of Japan. Honorary President of BirdLife International.

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Dr. Nigel Collar, Leventis Fellow in Conservation Biology, BirdLife International.

*This book features some of the world's least known species like Vietnam's Saola and the Sumatran Tiger in their natural environment. It weaves high quality photography of these species and inspiring conservation stories from forest sites across Asia together through the lenses of lead photographer, Bjorn Olesen. I recommend it highly to anyone interested in saving Earth's biodiversity.'*

Prof. Paul R. Ehrlich, President, Center for Conservation Biology, Stanford University.

*Wildlife of Asia's Forests of Hope has been produced to raise funds in support of BirdLife International, and to increase awareness of nature conservation and their Forests of Hope programme in Asia. The authors have contributed their time and resources on a pro bono basis for the production, research and travelling for this one-of-a-kind publication.*

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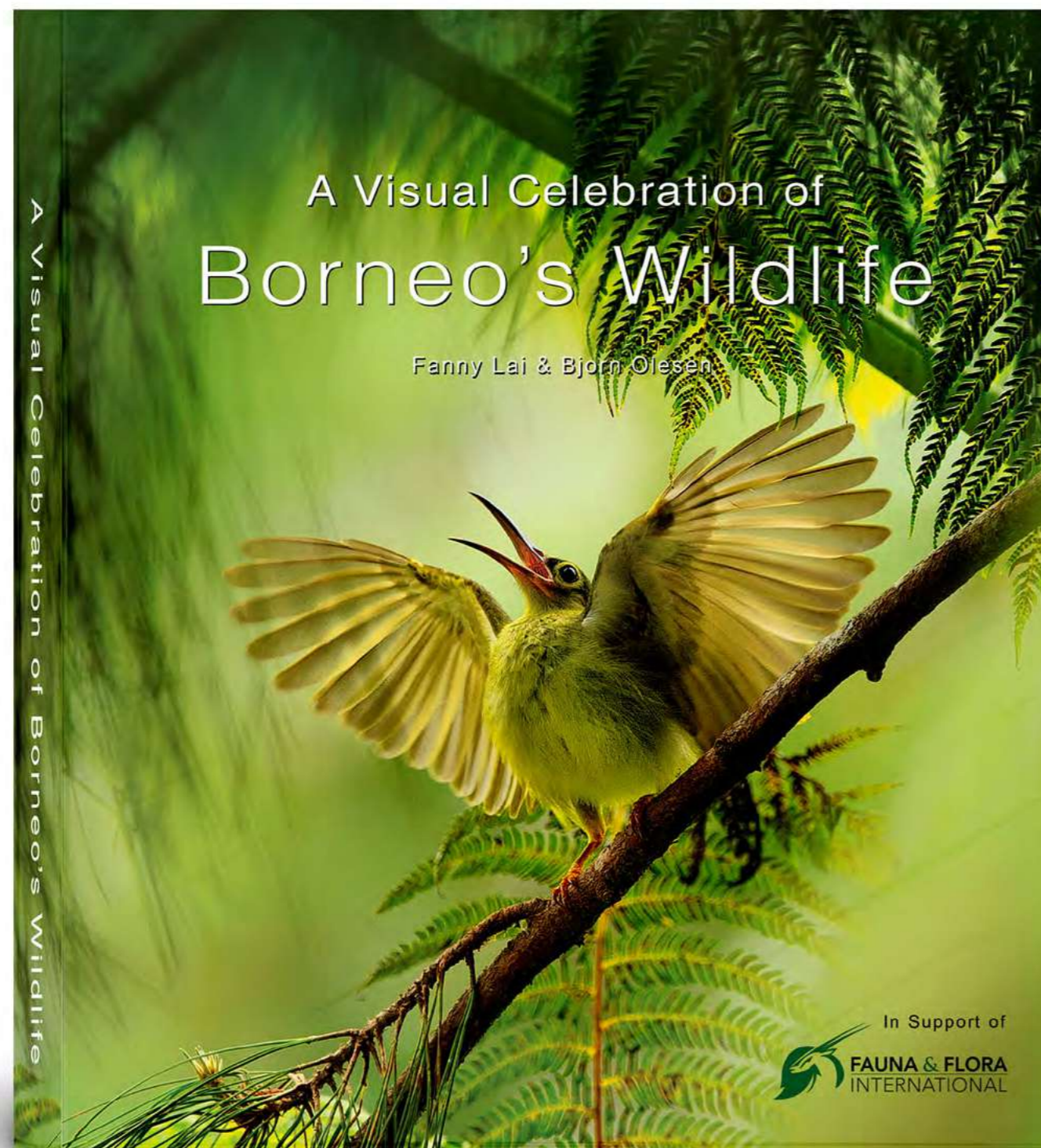
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*Glimpses of winged rainbows  
in the cloud forest canopy*



■ Plate-billed  
Mountain-toucan  
*Andigena  
laminirostris*,  
montane forest,  
Mindo, Ecuador.  
On the title  
spread, *Pinocchio  
anole Anolis  
proboscis*, male.



■ Green-crowned Woodnymph hummingbird *Thalurania colombica fannyi*, male, Mindo, Ecuador.


TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI  
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

*W*e seldom return twice to the same wildlife photography destination - simply because there's so much to see in the world given our limited amount of time on this planet - so when we do there must be a very good reason for it. We had already been to Mindo, Ecuador, in 2011 (see *Anima Mundi - Adventures in Wildlife Photography* issue 6, April 2012) and we had fallen in love with the place, but when our friend Lucas M. Bustamante of Tropical Herping offered us the opportunity to return there we could not really refuse it. With its astounding natural beauty and biodiversity, Mindo is a delightfully short trip from the capital of Ecuador, Quito, with much to see and do. Nestled into the lush cloudforest, Mindo grew up as a small outpost of scientific researchers interested in Mindo's incredible biodiversity, especially the roughly 350 bird species native to the area. Today Mindo remains a small

community, but it now features a variety of excellent accommodations and restaurants, making it an incredibly pleasant and relaxing place to spend a few days birdwatching, hiking along meandering streams, and enjoying the outstanding local hospitality. Mindo (also known as the Mindo Valley) is a mountainous watershed in the western slopes of the Andes, where two of the most biologically diverse ecoregions in the world meet: the Chocoran lowlands and the Tropical Andes. In this transitional area — which covers an area of 268 square kilometers (103 sq mi) and ranges from 960–3,440 metres (3,150–11,290 ft) above sea level — three rivers (Mindo, Saloya and Cinto) and hundreds of streams irrigate the landscape, which is a patchwork of cloud forests, secondary forests, agricultural land, and human settlements. Politically, Mindo is a collection of rural parishes (Guala,

*continued on page 15* ➤



 Toucan barbet  
*Semnornis*  
*ramphastinus*,  
montane forest,  
Mindo,  
Ecuador.



Nanegal, Nanegalito, Pacto) that make up the Noroccidental Administrative Zone of Quito Canton, within Pichincha Province in the northern sierra region of Ecuador. The Mindo Valley is among the most heavily visited tourist locations in Ecuador. Nearly 200,000 tourists visit the area annually to enjoy activities such as rafting, tubing, trekking, mountain biking, canyoning, horseback riding, birdwatching, chocolate making and herping. Besides its well-developed tourism infrastructure, it offers several private reserves and lodges known for their montane forests, waterfalls and unique cloud forest biodiversity. Much of the land is privately protected, and an additional 86 square kilometers (33 sq mi) falls within the Mindo-Nambillo Ecological Reserve or Bosque Protector Mindo Nambillo.



*Pinocchio anole* ■  
*Anolis proboscis*, male,  
humid montane forest,  
Mindo, Ecuador.

■ *Andean cock-of-the-rock*  
*Rupicola peruvianus*,  
male displaying  
on lek.



### **BIRDWATCHING IN MINDO**

Home to over 350 species of birds, Mindo is one of the most gratifying places in Ecuador for birdwatching. Just outside of Mindo proper, the Bosque Protector Mindo-Nambillo and the Amigos de la Naturaleza de Mindo boast incredible varieties of hummingbirds and other species. Among the birds native to Mindo are the rare and exotic cock-of-the-rock, the toucan-barbet, and the golden-headed quetzal. Partially because the scientific community has a considerable presence in Mindo, birdwatching tours here are usually very successful. At a considerably lower altitude than Quito, Mindo's climate is milder than the climate in Quito and other Andean cities. Generally temperatures range from 15°C – 24°C (60°F – 75°F) all year, with no real rainy or dry seasons, although it tends to be driest from May through September. Mindo is also one of those fortunate and rare places where a network of private

*continued on page 20* ➤



■ Masked trogon *Trogon personatus*, male offering caterpillar to female during courtship.



Left, Violet-tailed Sylph *Aglaiocercus coelestis*; top right, Green-crowned Woodnymph hummingbird *Thalurania colombica fannyi*; bottom right, Empress brilliant hummingbird *Heliodoxa imperatrix*, female.



Osborne's  
Lancehead Pit-  
viper *Bothrops  
osbornei* sitting  
in ambush by  
a forest trail,  
Septimo  
Paraiso.





Green-crowned Woodnymph hummingbird  
*Thalurania colombica fannyi*.

properties accessible to the public interconnect seamlessly to conserve the existing habitat. Most of the local lodges feature their own private forest preserve, and lots of wonderful observations can be made just by leisurely strolling along the property itself, without the need to stray afar deep into the forest. One of these lodges is the well-known, award-winning and highly recommended Septimo Paraiso Cloud Forest Reserve, which is where we stayed this time.

**SEPTIMO PARAISO FOREST RESERVE**

Septimo Paraiso Cloud Forest Reserve is a beautiful private protected area, created in 2001, with the aim of saving and preserving the forest and the diverse ecosystems that are contained within it. It is managed by the Green Mindo Foundation, which is in charge of the conservation and the study of its 420 hectares of pre-montane and montane cloud forest. The Reserve has one of the largest bird counts of the north-western area of Pichincha, with 328 species of birds. Several species of mammal have been observed here, such as puma, spectacled bear, black howler monkey, capuchin monkey, Andean coati, armadillos, white tailed and brocket deer and two-toed sloth to name just a few. Also an incredible

*continued on page 24* ➤



■ Left, Masked trogon *Trogon personatus*, male with tick infestation; right, Andean cock-of-the-rock *Rupicola peruvianus*, male displaying on lek.





Violet-tailed Sylph ■  
*Aglaiocercus coelestis*.





Far left,  
Green-crowned  
Woodnymph  
hummingbird  
*Thalurania  
colombica  
fannyi*, male.  
Left, Empress  
brilliant  
hummingbird  
*Heliodoxa  
imperatrix*,  
male.

number of reptile and amphibian species had been spotted, plus an overwhelming number of plant species. The altitude within the reserve drastically changes from 950 meters to 1650 meters above sea level. In addition, the isolation of the region has created one of the most delicate, but rich and complex ecosystems known in the Mindo region. Most of the hummingbird photos featured in this article have in fact been taken on the Septimo Paraiso grounds, a few meters from the lodge's entrance, and this is possibly the best place in Mindo to also find and photograph the near-legendary Pinocchio anole, plus a variety of other reptiles. Another outstanding - and quite different - spot for bird photography is the Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve, which is sited at a higher elevation and which can be reached with a short car drive up Mindo's winding hill roads.


**BELLAVISTA CLOUD FOREST RESERVE**

First founded in 1991, the Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve is a 2,000-acre (8.1 square kms) certified conservation area. The lodge itself comprises guest rooms, 10 km of walking trails and the four storey geodesic dome, which contains a restaurant, viewing platforms and further accommodation. The area won the Audubon Christmas Bird Count for the Americas in 2006, 2007, and 2008. The Bellavista Reserve is also a

*continued on page 31* ➤



*Neotropical Red Squirrel* ■  
*Sciurus granatensis.*

Plate-billed   
Mountain-toucan  
*Andigena laminirostris*.





Top left, Great Thrush *Turdus fuscater*; ■  
top right, Montane Woodcreeper  
*Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger*;  
bottom left, Slate-throated Whitestart  
*Myioborus miniatus*, with moth prey;  
bottom right, White-winged brush finch  
*Atlapetes leucopterus*.



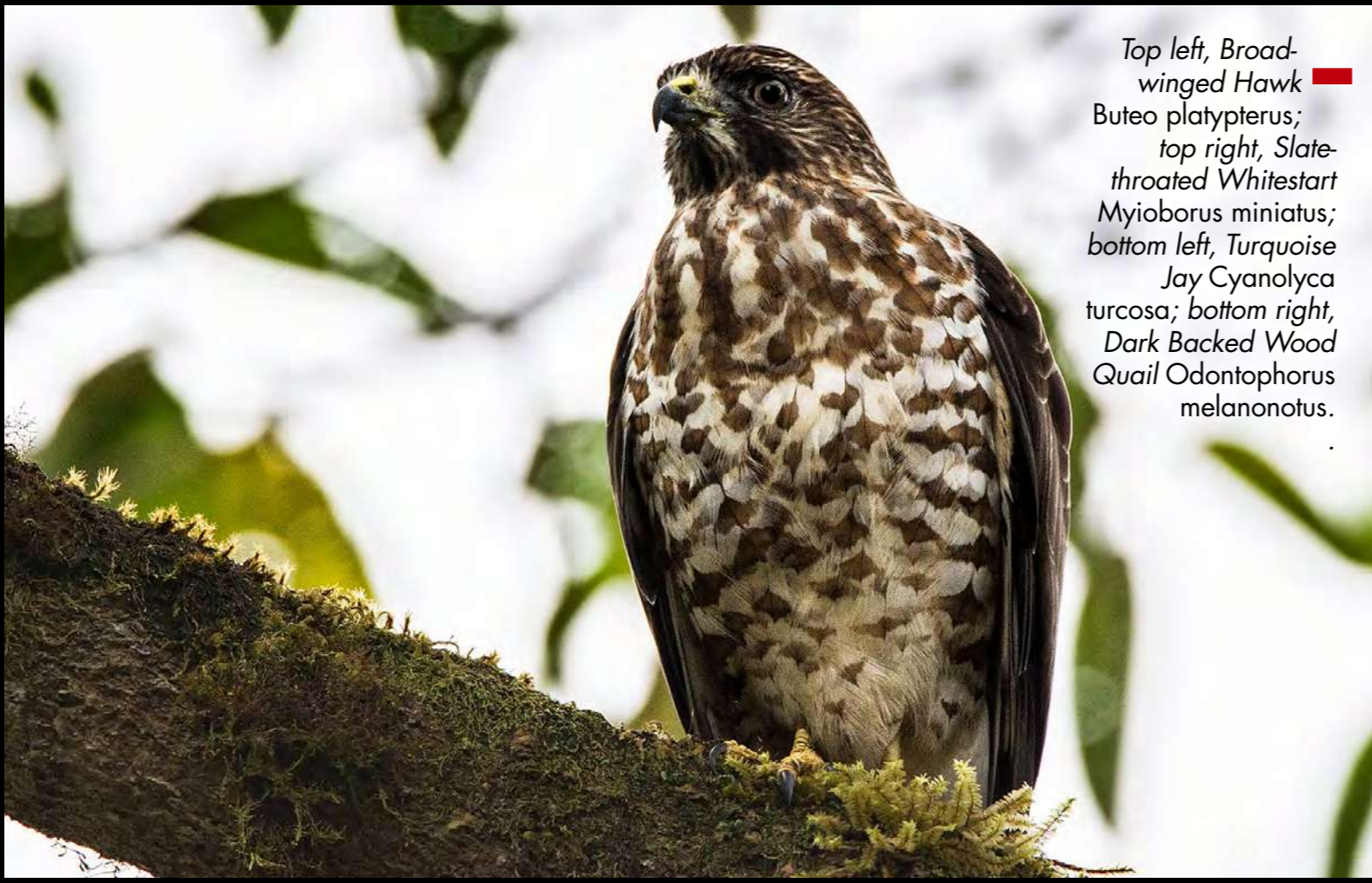


Blue-winged █  
mountain tanager  
*Anisognathus somptuosus*.

*Tiny fluttering iridescent  
jewels of the air*



■ Green-crowned  
Woodnymph hummingbird  
*Thalurania colombica*  
fannyi, male.



Top left, Broad-winged Hawk ■  
*Buteo platypterus*;  
 top right, Slate-throated Whitestart  
*Myioborus miniatus*;  
 bottom left, Turquoise Jay  
*Cyanolyca turcosa*; bottom right,  
 Dark Backed Wood Quail  
*Odontophorus melanonotus*.





■ *Pinocchio anole* Anolis proboscis, male.



founding member of the Network of Private Protected Forests of Ecuador Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve is in the northern section of the Andes which runs through Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador and consists of two parallel ranges, the Cordillera Occidental and the Cordillera Oriental. The cloud forests of Ecuador - pre-montane/subtropical rainforests - cover the slopes of the Andean mountains from about 900 meters to about 2500 meters. They are forests of high biodiversity, with a variety of little-studied wildlife and plants. The cloud forest is a cool and humid environment with frequent canopy level cloud cover. The Bellavista Reserve is situated at the southern edge of the Chocó/Andean biodiversity hotspot areas which stretch from south western Colombia to northwestern Ecuador. The existence of the hotspots lead to the Bellavista Reserve being declared part of the Mindo Area of International Importance for Birds, the first area so designated in South America, by Birdlife International in 1997. Furthermore, the diversity of epiphytes ("air plants" that grow on other plants) is higher in the cloud forests of Ecuador, Colombia and Peru than anywhere else on the planet, and many orchid species are also found in the Bellavista Reserve. These plants grow in both east and

*continued on page 35* >



*Sparkling violetear hummingbird* *Colibri coruscans.*



Left,  
*Violet-tailed Sylph*  
*Agelaiocercus*  
*coelestis*;  
right, *Toucan*  
*barbet Semnornis*  
*ramphastinus*.



The cloud forest   
of the Mindo Valley.

Left, Buff-  
tailed Coronet  
hummingbird  
*Boissonneaua  
flavescens*; right,  
Masked trogon  
*Trogon personatus*,  
male with moth prey.





■ Neotropical Red Squirrel  
*Sciurus granatensis*.

west tropical and subtropical zones of Ecuador, and only a very few are able to grow in mild or cold zones. The majority of orchids live on trees, as epiphytes, where they can receive heat, light and moist tropical air; others prefer rocks semi-covered with moss, and other orchids grow only at ground level. Within Ecuador 4200 species of orchid have been found, more than 10% of all orchid species worldwide. Bellavista is home to a huge variety of bird species. Hummingbirds are seen particularly often in and around the reserve, with sighted species including the lesser violetear, buff-tailed coronet, sparkling violetear, gorgeted sunangel, Andean emerald, purple-bibbed whitetip, speckled hummingbird, white-booted racket-tail, violet-tailed sylph and purple-throated woodstar. Species such as the tanager-finch, giant antpitta, swallow-tailed nightjar, plush-capped finch, beautiful jay, and white-faced nunbird are also seen, as well as the plate-billed mountain-toucan and toucan barbet. The Andean cock-of-the-rock is also frequently spotted at the nearby lek,

*continued on page 40* ➤



■ Top left, Spring robber frog *Pristimantis crenunguis*; top right, a mosquito feeds off the head of a rare Osborne's Lancehead Pit-viper *Bothrops osbornei*. Bottom left, Golden Tanager *Tangara arthus goodsoni*; bottom right, Central American agouti *Dasyprocta punctata*.





*Fast-flitting gems of the  
neotropical cloud forest*

■ Western emerald  
hummingbird  
*Chlorostilbon  
melanorhynchus.*

Purple-throated  
Woodstar hummingbird  
*Calliphlox mitchellii*;  
right, Mist Whorltail  
lizard *Stenocercus*  
*varius*.








Velvet-purple ■  
coronet hummingbird  
*Boissonneaua jardini*,  
male flicking  
its long tongue.



Left,  Buff-tailed Coronet hummingbird *Boissonneaua flavescens*; right, another Buff-tailed Coronet hummingbird *Boissonneaua flavescens*.

where the males and females gather to breed. Mammals seen in the reserve area include the endangered spectacled bear, as well as puma, Andean coati and tayra. The Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve has its own research station available for students and scientists to study all aspects of the cloud forest ecosystem. The Bellavista Reserve is currently used as an active research base for the Payamino Project, which was initiated in 2002, through a partnership between San Jose de Payamino (an Indigenous community in the Ecuadorian Amazon), Zoos Go Wild and Aalborg Zoo, in order to protect the wildlife and culture of the area. The project is supported by a number of universities, including Glasgow and Manchester in the UK and Aarhus and Aalborg in Denmark. These universities run expeditions and field courses and also have post-graduate students carrying out research. The number of studies taking place in the area has grown recently to now cover the birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects and mammals of the Payamino area. Ornithological surveys have been conducted in the area since 2000 and have so far registered more than 260 species of bird. To date, amphibian surveys have revealed that the area has at least 60 native species of frog. ●





*Booted Racket-tail* ■  
*Ocreatus underwoodii* -  
a very tiny but  
truly spectacular  
hummingbird species.



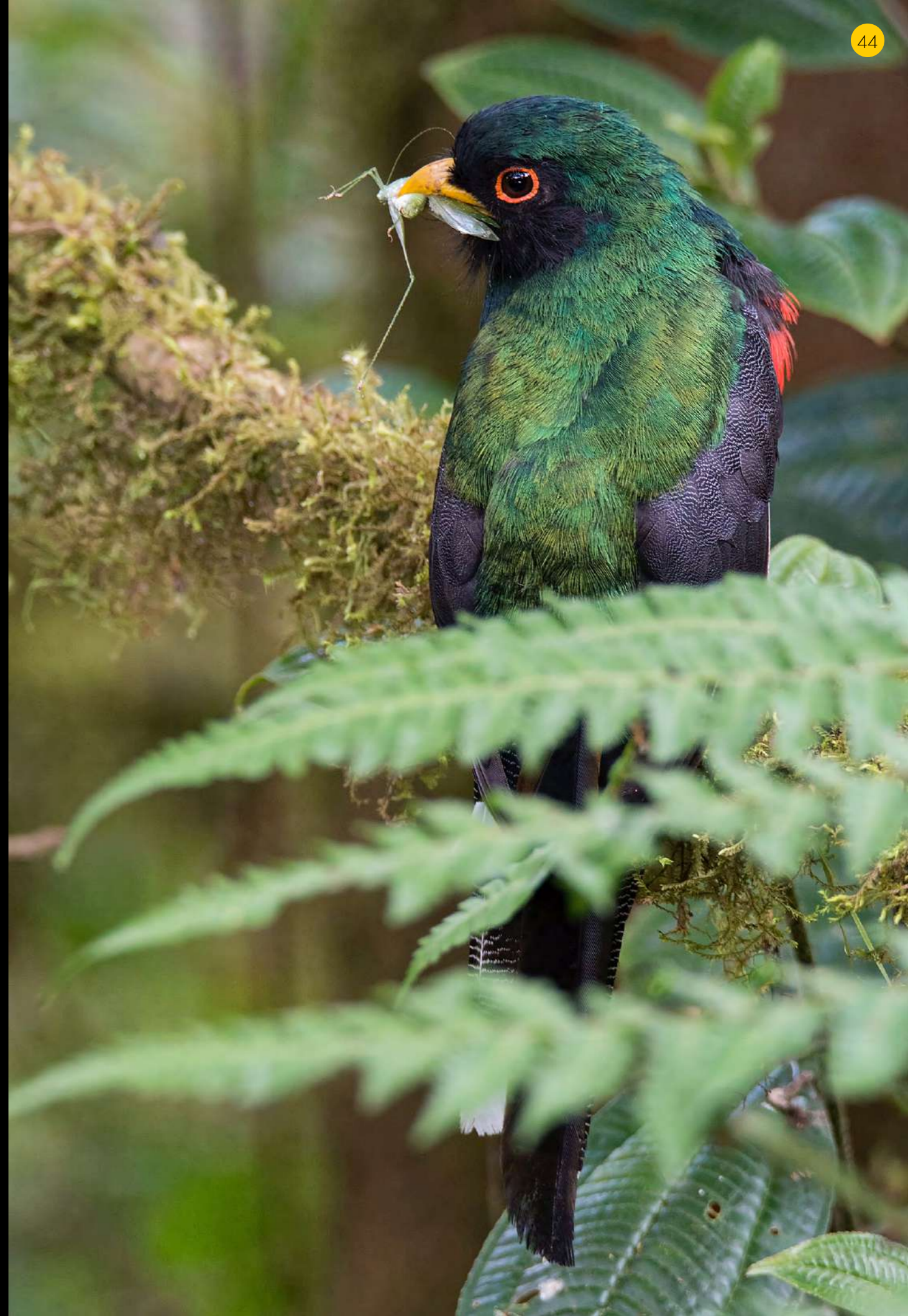
Western emerald hummingbird  
*Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus*.



■ *Green-crowned  
Woodnymph  
hummingbird*  
*Thalurania  
colombica fannyi.*



■ Left, Pinocchio anole *Anolis proboscis*, male, at Septimo Paraiso; right, Masked trogon *Trogon personatus*, male with grasshopper prey, at Bellavista.





Left, Violet-tailed Sylph *Agelaiocercus coelestis*; right, Montane Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger*.



*One of the most sought-after  
birdwatching subjects*

■ Andean cock-of-  
the-rock *Rupicola  
peruvianus*, male  
displaying on lek.





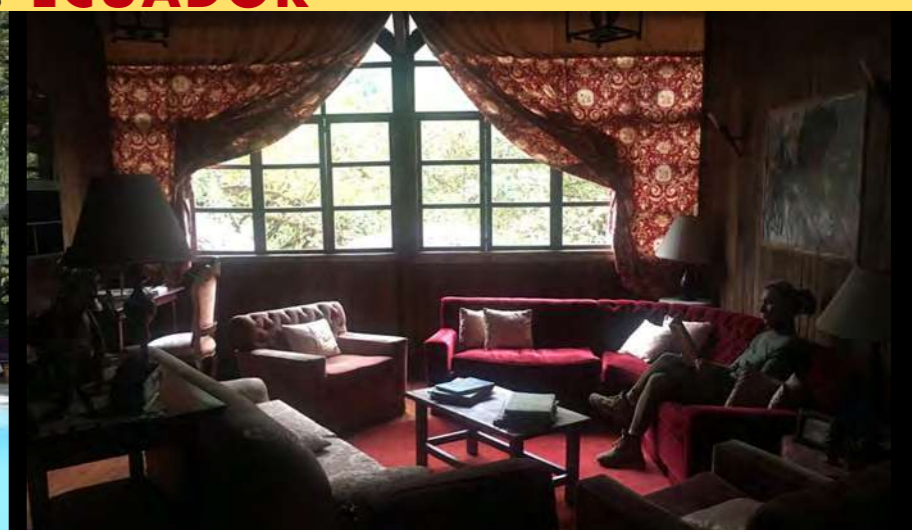
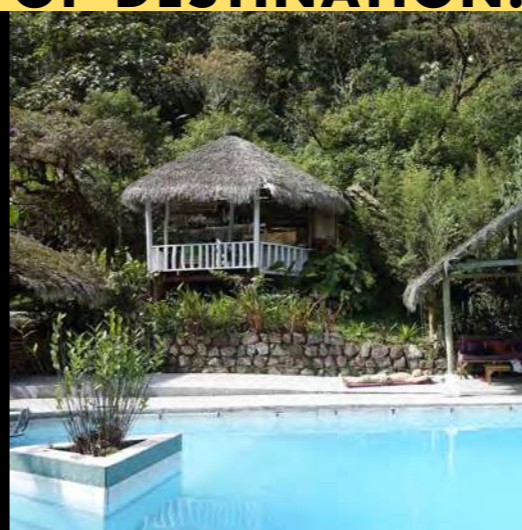


Plate-billed ■  
Mountain-toucan  
*Andigena laminirostris*.

# 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, close to Ecuador's high-altitude capital Quito. From there it's a comfortable three-hour car drive due north-west on good, well-maintained roads to your destination, Mindo town and its Forest Reserve. The transition between the arid, desert-like dry eastern plateau and the lush western mountainsides is quite surprising.

**MEANS OF TRANSPORT:** You might rent a car in Quito and drive yourself to Mindo but we do not advise you to - save yourself the trouble and have the trip organized by a local naturalist guide who is familiar with the routes and the best wildlife viewing

spots. Once in the Forest Reserve you will have to walk on very easy cloud forest trails criss-crossing several private properties and fincas. For a well-organized and successful trip we can - as it always happens with trips to Ecuador - heartily recommend the services of our friends of **Tropical Herping**.

**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:** Mindo is a birdwatchers and nature lovers classic destination, and the local infrastructures have developed accordingly with

several private properties and farms offering their own land and trails. We can and will recommend staying at the lovely and very comfortable **Septimo Paraiso Country Hotel and Cloud Forest Reserve**, where you will find wonderfully appointed accommodation and excellent food. Septimo Paraiso is faultlessly managed and has its own forest reserve.

**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. Always make sure the fruit squashes - which you don't want to miss! - are done

# Quite literally, a Seventh Heaven located in Ecuador's lush cloud forest



with bottled water to avoid health problems. Simple but clean and inexpensive food – such as soup of the day and grilled trout - can be had at a number of small family-owned restaurants in downtown Mindo.

**LANGUAGE:** Ecuadorian Spanish and English, especially in tourist areas where many foreigners congregate, such as Mindo.

**WORRIES:** Ecuador used to have a rather (and well-deserved) bad 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. Mindo and other rural areas are quite safe, but - like anywhere else - a measure of discretion is advised when going around at night or with expensive cameras and/or videocameras.

**HEALTH:** Located in a wide, open valley at 1.300 meters, Mindo has a cool, middle-altitude climate which makes it relatively safe from mosquito or sandfly-borne diseases, which are rampant in the Amazon provinces. Landing in Quito (2.800 meters, 9000 feet) upon one's arrival might however cause altitude sickness to the unaccustomed, so it's advisable to plan spending a couple of days there to better acclimatize. Food is generally quite safe, but avoid street-stalls snacks and always make sure your drinks have been concocted with bottled water.

**CLIMATE:** Pleasantly cool and occasionally warm during the day, all year-round. 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. The cloud forests of Mindo are breezy and very pleasant - this is an equatorial climate, so expect frequent rainfall.

**BESIDES:** Don't miss the historical center of the capital Quito, extensively and lovingly restored and featuring spectacular examples of colonial architecture from the Spanish domination. Quito is a vibrant metropolis - restaurants, theaters, art galleries and universities have much to offer to all, not to speak of the stunning vistas and landscapes surrounding it. Mindo - which is relatively close to Quito - has little to offer culture-wise, and can instead be only recommended for its lush nature and abundant wildlife. 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 cloud forests – descending to the dry Pacific coast (and the Galapagos Islands) if going West and to the lowland rainforest of the Amazon – locally known as El Oriente - if going East. ●

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*Pinnocchio Lizard*



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## ABYSSAL AMBUSHERS

Field researcher and passionate conservationist Danté Fenolio reports on the DEEPEND project taking place in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico





This Bearded Seadevil *Linophryne* sp. has a relatively short *illicium*. On the opening spread, a profile of Murray's Black Seadevil *Melanocetus murrayi*, trawled from between 1,000 and 600 meters depth. This individual has a particularly steep forehead. All images courtesy of the DEEPEND project, by Danté Fenolio.



Top, author Dante Fenolio shows his excitement at finding a Bearded Seadevil, *Linophryne* sp., in a trawl.

DANTÉ B. FENOLIO (1) APRIL COOK (2) AND TRACEY T. SUTTON (2)

1 DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH, SAN ANTONIO ZOO, 1309 N. ST. MARY'S ST., SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78212, USA. E-MAIL: DANTEFENOLIO@SAZOO.ORG

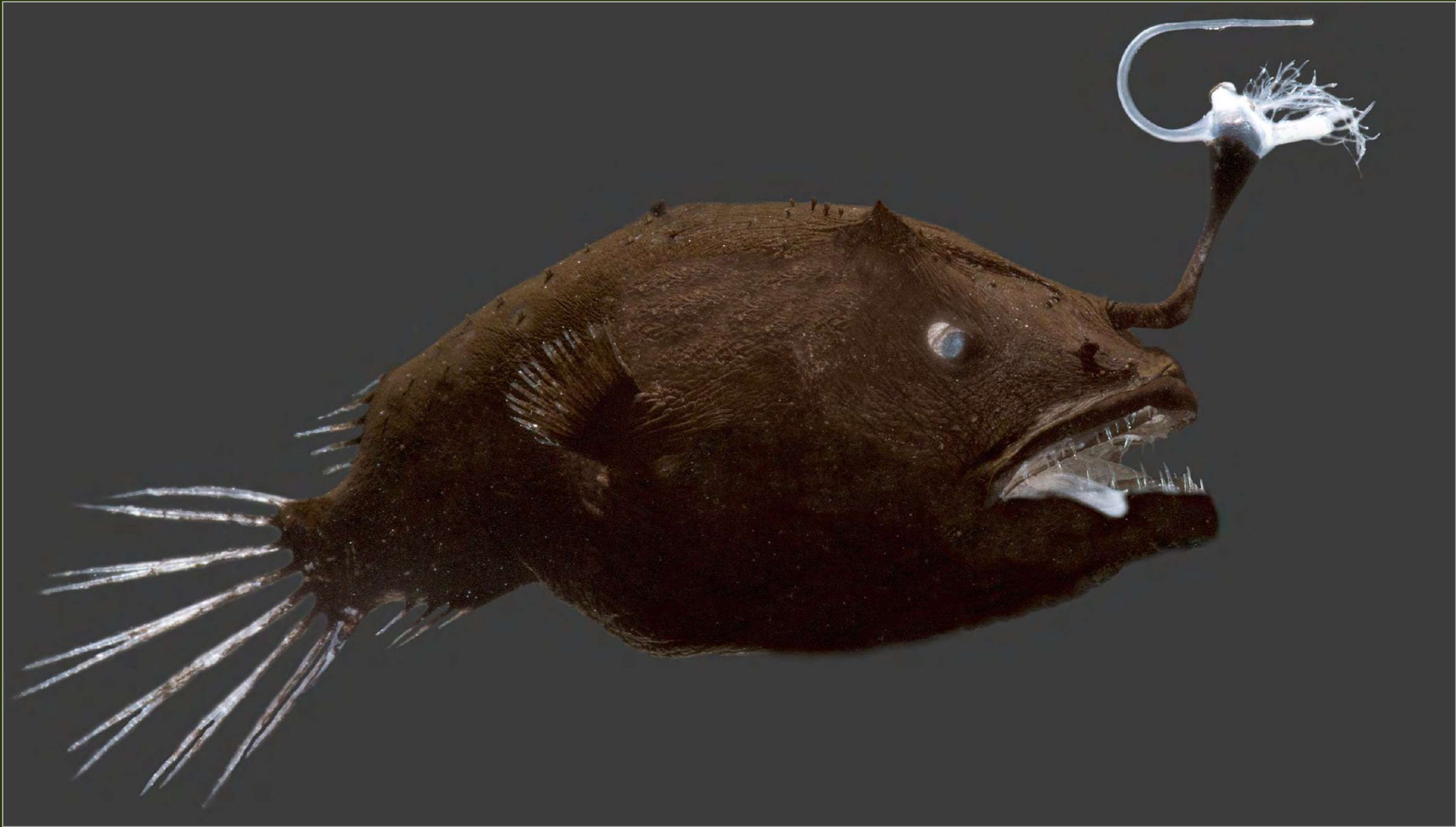
2 NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY OCEANOGRAPHIC CENTER, 8000 N. OCEAN DR., DANIA BEACH, FLORIDA 33004, USA. E-MAIL: TSUTTON1@NOVA.EDU

PHOTOS  
BY DANTÉ FENOLIO

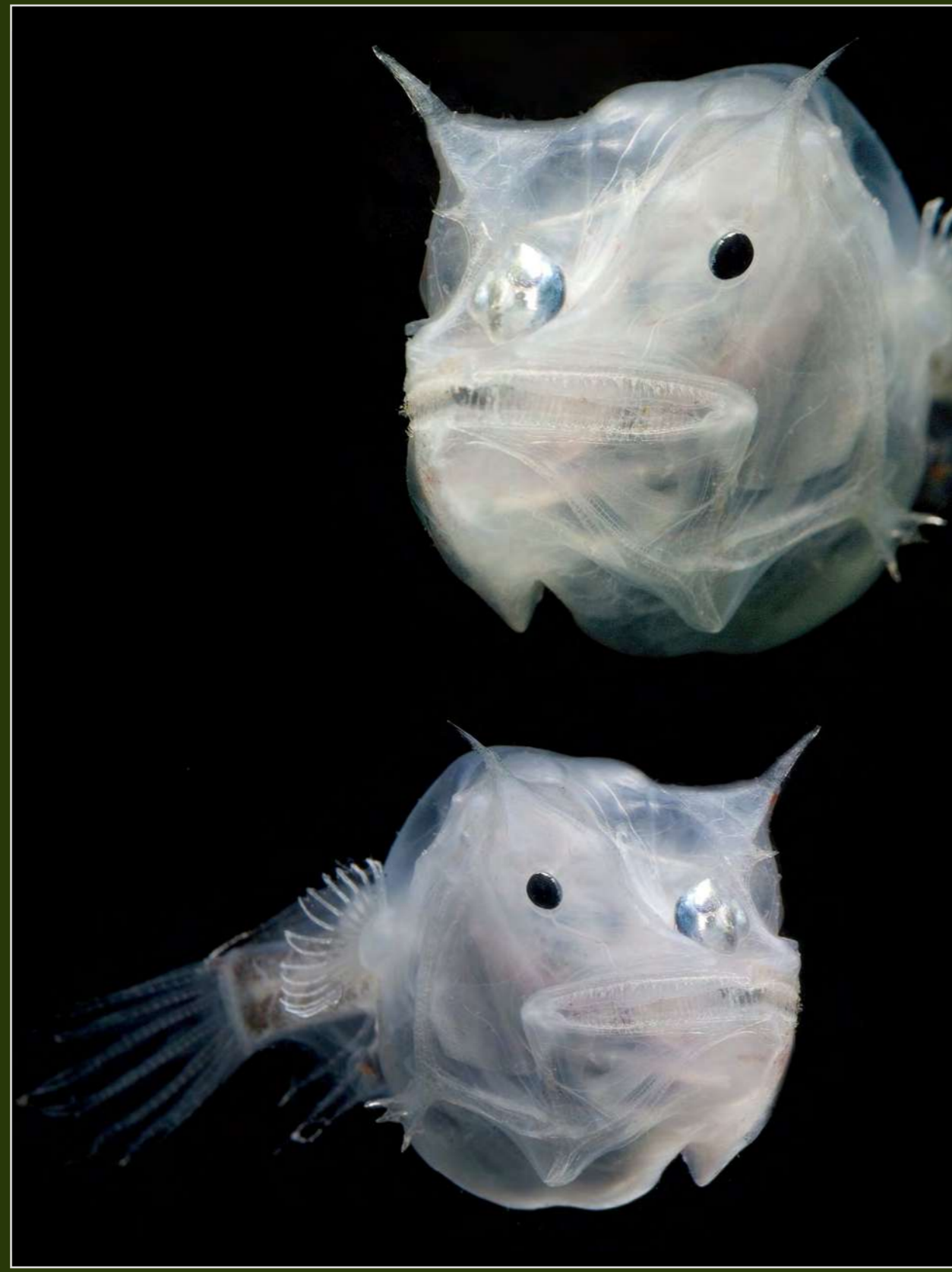
The evening was typically warm and humid. Thunderheads sat low on the horizon but as the moon began to rise, it made its way up through a break in the clouds. It was a blood red moon that evening – one of the few we have seen out on the Gulf of Mexico (GOM). The ship's diesel engines rumbled in the background. The sea was dead calm and we listened as the massive winch spooled the cable in and brought our net closer and closer to the ship. As the net neared the surface, it startled a small school of flying fish. They spooked and took to gliding. Several wound up on the sun weathered deck of the ship. We tossed them back into the water and waited for the giant winch to lift our net out of the sea. Deep sea trawling is a game of chance and playing the numbers. Imagine yourself with a butterfly net in miles and miles of open field. In the entire field, there may be one or two specimens of a rare species. Even if you vigorously sweep the net through the field, the chances that you will capture the rare species is small. But the probability is proportional to the amount of the field that is swept. As

sweeping continues, the probability of capturing a rare species slowly increases. The same applies to capturing an individual of any rarely encountered species in the ocean. While there may be more individuals of a rare species in the ocean, the "field" is many orders of magnitude larger than the field used in the example above. The take home message is that the more time you can trawl with your net open, the better you will do. In fact, trawling can and is demonstrated as a function of the amount of water that passed through the net during the trawl...an important metric when trying to calculate how frequently any given species is encountered while using this sampling method. For these reasons, a typical research cruise involving deep sea trawling lasts weeks, this one was no different. We had been hard at work, trawling virtually 24 hours a day, for well over a week before this tow had been made. We began to pick through the net's haul - always hoping to see deep-sea anglerfishes. They aren't commonly encountered in any of the oceans around

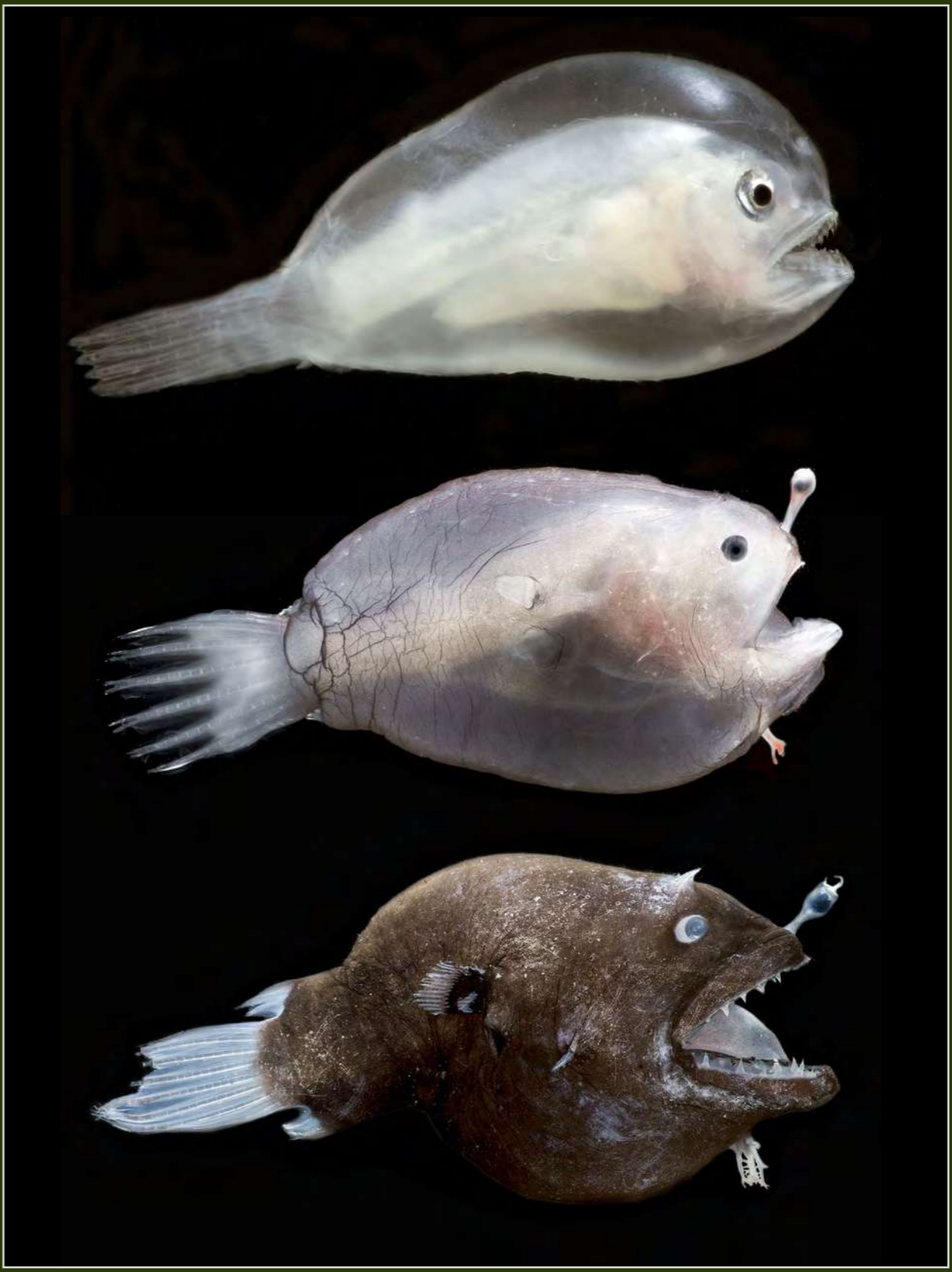
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The Bulbous Dreamer *Oneirodes eschrichtii* has a complicated esca with multiple components. In addition, there are tube-like structures that protrude from the rear corners of the mouth and into the water column – these may glow in the dark as well. This specimen was collected from between 1,500 meters depth and the surface.



Left, Ghostly Seadevil *Haplophryne mollis* trawled from 1,200 meters depth, taken on research cruise organized by Dr. J. Torres; right, two adult female Doublewart Seadevils *Ceratiias* sp. The top one was trawled from between 1,000 and 600 meters depth. The bottom one was trawled from between 600 and 200 meters depth.



Left, developmental sequence from related shallow water anglerfishes of the family *Antennariidae*, the "frogfishes." Similarly to their deep water cousins, frogfishes have an esca and an *illicium*; however, the esca does not glow in the dark. Right, a developmental series of anglerfishes in the family *Oneirodidae*.



Larval anglerfish typically are surrounded by a semi-transparent sac of tissue. This is a larval fish of the family *Oneirodidae* collected between 600 and 1000 meters depth.



Top, the net is hoisted onto the research ship. Bottom, Dr. Tracey Sutton working on the identification of an anglerfish based on the morphology of the fish's esca.

the world. But this night was going to reveal something really special. We poured the contents from one of the nets into a shallow tray and were amazed at what we saw. An adult Bearded Seadevil (*Linophryne* sp.) sat before us...and she had a male attached to her. There are a few cool things that you need to know about this fish in order to truly appreciate the event: (1) That we are aware, this is the only group of fishes that have evolved two entirely different bioluminescence systems. The "beard" that hangs off of the chin of the fish glows in the dark by way of "intrinsic bioluminescence," or light produced by the fish itself. The "lure" at the end of the "fishing rod" protruding from the forehead (a modified first dorsal ray) are known as an *esca* and *illicium* respectively. The *esca* glows in the dark through "symbiotic bioluminescence," or light produced by a bacterial symbiote. Again, it is exceptionally rare to have both bioluminescence systems evolve in the same organism. (2) Males of this family of anglerfishes are parasitic on the females. The male finds a female, bites her, and holds on. Ultimately, her skin grafts with his and her circulatory system connects with his. From that point on, she sustains him, even some of his organs degenerate. He becomes a built in sperm factory. (3)

These fishes have expandable stomachs, allowing them to eat prey items that are nearly their own size. (4) Only the females grow into the monstrous fishes that we would recognize as an anglerfish (big teeth, glowing lure, and a larger size relative to the male). The male is smaller than the female. Surprising to some, not all species of anglerfishes have parasitic males, some species have free living males.

We have had an exceptional opportunity to examine a number of anglerfishes while working on the DEEPEND project in the GOM. The project is a three year effort that involves dozens of institutions and researchers. All are examining the impact of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill (DWHOS) on the mesopelagic fauna (animals living in the midwater) of the GOM. The group's mission statement is this, "*The DEEPEND consortium will characterize the oceanic ecosystem of the northern GOM to infer baseline conditions in the water column. This information will establish a time-series with which natural and anthropogenic changes can be detected.*" The group also has a scope of work statement which reads, "*In response to the DWHOS and the highlighted absence of*

*continued on page 62* >



A profile shot of Johnson's Black Seadevil *Melanocetus johnsoni*, trawled from between 1,500 meters depth and the surface.





Left, development of the Black Seadevils, *Melanocetus* sp., from the Gulf of Mexico. Early stages of the *illicium* and *esca* in the top three fishes and mature female fish at the bottom. Right, the Triplewart Seadevil, *Cryptopsaras couseii*, from 1,000 meters depth, has a blueberry shaped *esca* sitting atop a moderate length *illicium*.



The *illicium* is long and slender in the Black Seadevils. *Melanocetus johnsoni* has an *esca* shaped like a grape. Its most notable feature is the massive teeth. The one to the right was trawled from 1,200 meters depth on research cruise organized by Dr. J. Torres, by Danté Fenolio. The one to the left was collected from between 1,500 meters depth and the surface.



A profile shot of a Bearded Seadevil, *Linophryne* sp. B, trawled from between 1,500 meters depth and the surface, with a close-up of the esca in the upper right hand corner and a close-up of the "beard" in the lower right hand corner.



Left, Anglerfishes of the family *Gigantactinidae*. Top, *Rhynchactis leptonema* collected from between 1,500 meters depth and the surface. Middle, *Gigantactis gracilicauda* collected from between 1,500 meters depth and the surface. Bottom, *Gigantactis vanhoeffeni* collected at 900 meters depth on a research cruise organized by Dr. J. Torres, by Danté Fenolio. The top two images courtesy of the DEEPEND project, by Danté Fenolio.

baseline data for the deep GOM (200-1500 m) water column, the DEEPEND consortium will conduct a three year sampling, sensing, modeling, and laboratory analysis program to assess ecosystem dynamics, identify drivers of variability, and investigate possible consequences of the spill on ecosystem attributes. Data obtained during the 2010-2011 and 2015-2017 periods will establish a time-series with which ecosystem shifts or responses can be detected.” Much more regarding the project and its research cruises can be found on the website – [www.deependconsortium.org](http://www.deependconsortium.org)

Our intent is to share with the reader a variety of anglerfishes that have been encountered through deep water trawling in the GOM. Most of the images here come from DEEPEND work but a few are derived from independent research cruises with marine biologist Dr. Jose Torres. Those images are indicated as such in the captions. This group of deep water fishes are far more diverse than most people are aware. As a whole, the group is comprised of 11 families, 35 genera, and well over 150 species. An exact number of species is difficult to pin down as there are new anglerfishes being

described right now, including a new species stemming from DEEPEND research. Anglerfishes are just one component of the deep water fauna of the world’s oceans but it’s a group we wanted to start sharing through public outreach. Our hope is that by delivering photo essays that depict slices of the ocean’s biodiversity, we might inspire others to help conserve the biodiversity we currently enjoy.

An important side note – the animals depicted here were collected in the course of a scientific effort to discern the impact of the oil spill on the mesopelagic community of wildlife living in the GOM. The specimens hold incredible value for these studies as well as research involving taxonomy and ecology. But these images do not depict animals in the deep sea that were not touched in the course of photographing them. This is a full disclosure statement for the readers in acknowledgement of the fact that nearly all other articles in this magazine depict wildlife that has not been touched. Please do remember that the goals of our initiative are to conserve these amazing species and the GOM mesopelagic habitat - and we chose to take the time to try and share them with you, here. ●



Top left, a male anglerfish in the family *Linophrynidae* and the genus *Linophryne*. The male is attached to a female. Males with this type of ecology spend the early portions of their lives searching for a female. Clearly, chemoreception (chemical detection/reception) is involved owing to the well-developed nares and nasal rosette. These are structures used to detect chemicals in the water. Once the male locates a female, he bites her and holds on. Over some length of time, her tissue and his fuse. Her circulatory system begins to link with his system and she takes over providing the male with whatever his nutritional needs are and her blood and filtration systems take care of removing the cellular waste he produces. In some families, there is associated organ degeneration within the male. He is now reduced to a sperm factory and will provide sperm when the female is ready to produce eggs. This male and female were trawled from between 1,000 and 1,200 meters depth. Top right and bottom, the Spinyhead Seadevil, *Photocorynus spiniceps*, is another Linophrynid anglerfish with a relatively short *illicium*. This specimen was trawled from between 1,500 and 1,200 meters depth.



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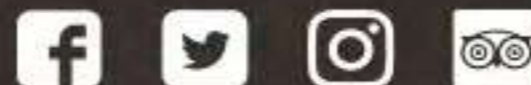
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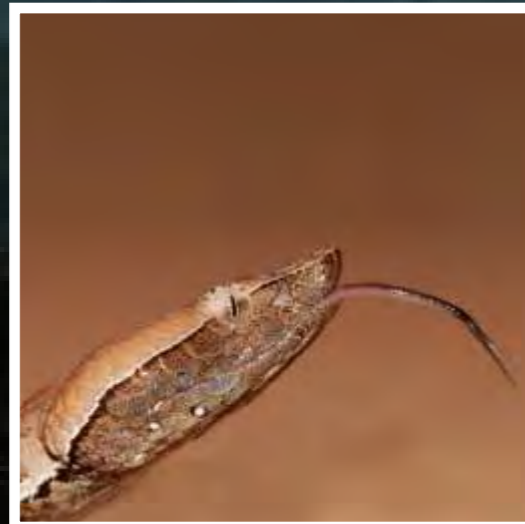


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# India's Rebel Queen

A selection of splendid images by a strong-willed and powerfully passionate artist with a self-admitted feminine weakness for felines

## *Archana Singh - A Wildlife Photographer in Her Own Words*

A designer by qualification and a photographer by passion, Archana Singh is an adept Wildlife & Nature photographer for the last few years. Having graduated from the prestigious National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi, Archana has been associated with design and its intricacies for over two decades. Her foray into the world of photography began in 2006 by assisting Delhi based acclaimed photographer Akhil Bakhshi. Working behind the lens was a thoroughly enjoyable experience and it encouraged her to actually start playing with the camera. Self-learning and experimentation have brought her to where she stands today. Her journey has been one of inner discovery and has unerringly led her combine her passion for photography with her deep love of wildlife. Backed by a strong design background, she has been actively involved in designing and publishing books, calendars, walks, events &

exhibitions on wildlife for the last few years under her trademark "Orah Wildlife". She loves to capture the intrinsic beauty and emotions of these animals through her lens and to constantly push all boundaries that limit her. Her work is not mere pictures recorded on film but an expression of her personal philosophy. Every photograph that you see of hers represent Archana's refusal to be held back and to be shackled by any perceived constraints or norms. Her driving passions reverberate in the colors, light and shadows of her photography. Her camera more than just 'draws with light', it creates art! Art that is vibrant and enthused by her openness to travel and her need to absorb new ideas. She hopes that through her art she can create awareness about our wildlife, reach out to more people, educate them about the need of the hour and in turn create respect towards all God's creatures.



### Muscle Power

This playful fight amongst two young sub adult Tigers was indeed a brilliant lifetime opportunity that lasted exactly 4-5 seconds. The cubs were sitting in the grass as dusk approached when suddenly one of them sneaked up behind the other and what happened next is captured in this image. This playful fight amongst the siblings is what prepares them for their survival in the wild. Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh, India

ISO 1250

F/4.5

1/500s

Canon 1DC

Canon 200-400mm with built in extender @ 200 mm

## Charging Bull

As I spent an afternoon near the river photographing birds with my 800mm, I suddenly heard loud splashing sounds. Without removing my eye from the viewfinder, I saw this angry bull coming right at me. The bull came charging as if directly towards me.

Only when I removed my eye from the viewfinder did I realize that the bull was still quite far and not about to kill me.

Yala National Park, Sri Lanka

ISO 500

F/5.6

1/2500s

Canon 1DX

Canon 800mm





**Ethereal beauty**

This sub adult and extremely shy tigress was sitting at a place with bright light falling on her face, giving this beauty an out of this world feel. For a moment it did not appear like it was a predator's face. Ranthambhore National Park, Rajasthan, India.  
ISO 2000  
F/6.3  
1/320s  
Canon 1D Mark IV  
Canon 800mm

**Dance of death**

At the end of my day's safari these two Monitor Lizards came tumbling on to the road right in front of our jeep. I thought they were a mating pair, but was told that it was a territorial fight to the death between two males. Yala National Park, Sri Lanka  
ISO 640  
F/4  
1/5000s  
Canon 1DC  
Canon 200-400mm  
with built in extender @ 200 mm



## Full Throttle

This image was captured in the scorching African sun one afternoon. The lionesses were resting with six cubs.

Suddenly they tensed and within seconds the cubs disappeared. Upon turning I saw a male lion of another pride approaching them.

Within seconds, these peaceful moms had turned into these vicious beasts and the poor lion did not stand a chance and made a hasty retreat.

Selous Game Reserve, Southern Tanzania, Africa  
ISO 200  
F/6.3  
1/400s  
Canon 1D Mark IV  
Canon 200-400mm with built in extender  
@ 200 mm



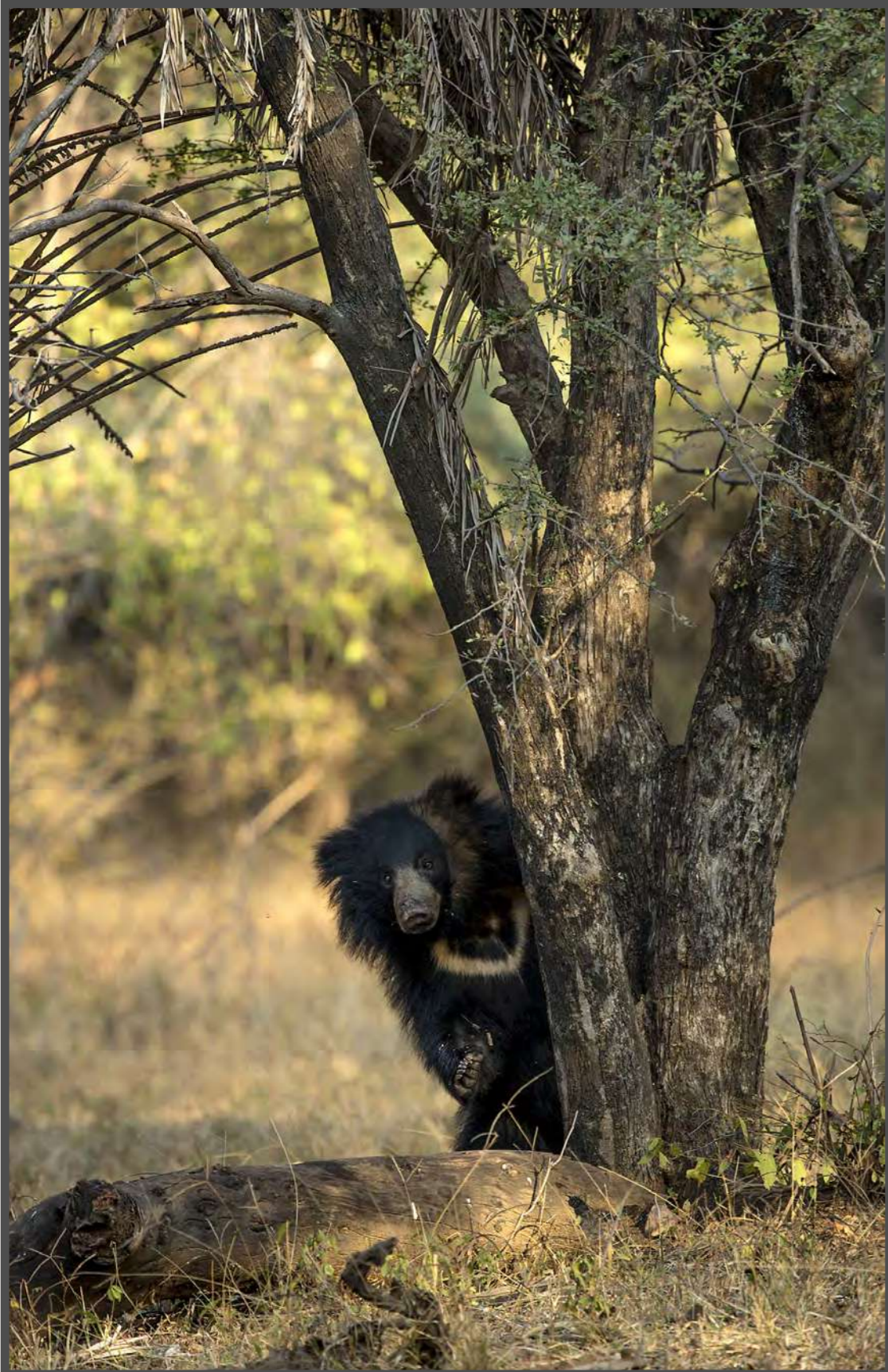


### The kill

This tigress shot out of the jungle straight in front of our jeep and sat in the middle of the track observing a herd of wild boars. She sat and carefully watched them, stalking them and eventually making a kill. Wild boars are tough opponents and it took her half an hour to keep the deadly grip before he passed.

Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh, India  
ISO 320  
F/5.6  
1/600s  
Canon 1DC  
Canon 200-400mm with built in extender  
@ 560 mm





### Hide and seek

The quest for the tiger, quite often than not, leads to some unique photo opportunities as was the case with this Sloth Bear.

ISO 400  
F/5.6  
1/250s  
Canon 1DC | Canon 200-400mm with built in extender @ 400 mm

### Watching you

The Leopard in picture was very far away and sitting on its favorite tree, enjoying a warthog kill.

Yala National Park, Sri Lanka  
ISO 1250  
F/5.6  
1/320s  
Canon 1DC  
Canon 200-400mm with built in extender @ 560 mm





---

**Oh deer!**

I made this image when everyone on safari that morning was busy photographing a tigress. Having taken several pictures of the tiger, I turned around to observe a herd of Spotted Deer and it was really fascinating to watch their reaction as they smelled or sensed the tiger approaching from very far.

Ranthambhore  
National Park,  
Rajasthan, India  
ISO 200  
F/5.6  
1/600s  
Canon 1DX  
Canon 200-  
400mm with built  
in extender  
@ 280 mm



### Incredible haul

This image was captured after spending close to almost thirteen hours with this mother leopard. She managed to make this kill of a Thompson's gazelle after three failed attempts. What was absolutely incredible to witness was the way she hauled this kill up an almost vertical tree.

Serengeti  
National Park,  
Tanzania, Africa  
ISO 1250  
F/8  
1/500s  
Canon 1D  
Mark IV  
Canon 200-  
400mm with built  
in extender  
@ 461 mm

## Armored Knights

A mother Indian rhino and her calf take a stroll through the beautiful forest as the filtered morning light on them makes them appear like figures out of a historic movie.

Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India  
ISO 400 / F/4 / 1/250s

Canon 1DX Mark II / Canon 200-400mm with built in extender @ 400 mm



## And time stood still

On a bright sunny afternoon, tigress T-19, popularly known as Krishna, sits for a while to rest, in a burnt out dead foliage, due to the extreme harsh summer conditions. I saw the burnt out background and the bright yellow orange coat of the tiger and thought to myself - if the Tiger decides to strike a pose in this backdrop, it will really pop out.

Ranthambhore National Park, Rajasthan, India.  
ISO 400 / F/10 / 1/200s  
Canon 1DC / Canon 800mm



## King of my jungle

This image is special to me. During the tsunami of 2012, this tree washed ashore and has hence laid in the vast field ever since. Over time it transformed into this beautiful piece of driftwood. A few years later as I was following a leopard, I spotted this piece of driftwood, so intricate in nature that I was instantly drawn towards it. And the leopard actually went and sat on the tree - just as I had wished.

Yala National Park,  
Sri Lanka  
ISO 1250  
F/5.6  
1/500s  
Canon 1DX  
Canon 800mm

After a long wait, the tigress came out of the thick grass. Anticipating her and with no clear space to see the tiger let alone photograph it, I quickly moved my jeep to beat everyone and grab a good spot. There was only one open space in the entire area and since that was the only space where one could get a clear picture from, I stopped and laid myself on the floor of my jeep. She came to the exact spot as I had anticipated. She was soon joined by her sub adult cub, who literally went and gave mommy a hug and this was indeed a touching moment for me.

Ranthambhore National Park, Rajasthan, India  
ISO 800 / F/5.6 / 1/250s  
Canon 1DX / Canon 200-400mm  
with built in extender @ 560 mm



### Where's Mommy?

These two tiny cubs of a popular tigress called Noor (T-39) come out of their cave when they hear their mom call out from a distance. Their tiny eyes have that look of anticipation so beautifully expressed.

Ranthambhore National Park, Rajasthan, India  
ISO 2000 / F/5 / 1/400s  
Canon 1DC / Canon 200-400mm with built in extender @ 400 mm

**Catch me  
if you can**

I found this tigress, popularly known as T-39, aka Noor, waiting near a waterhole one morning. This

Sambar deer, approached the waterhole without sensing the tiger's presence. I waited, for what could be one hell of a photo opportunity. The deer did not sense

the tigress approaching him until she was very close. The deer ran for his life and both disappeared behind a small hill.

Ranthambhore  
National Park,  
Rajasthan, India

ISO 2000

F/5.6

1/400s

Canon 1DC

Canon 200-  
400mm with built

in extender

@ 236 mm



### Mischief Mongers

These two cubs of a Tigress called Krishna (T-19) are seen here in a difficult terrain, following their mom on a long trek to a kill she had made. Even though the mom was walking on the path along with her third cub, these two naughty ones decided to climb on this rocky hill side, giving an excellent backdrop. The trek was difficult but they seemed to enjoy it. A typical cub behaviour displayed in this image - how they are always up to something mischievous, and find their own games.

Ranthambhore National Park, Rajasthan, India  
ISO 1250 / F/5.6 / 1/160s  
Canon 1DX / Canon 70-200mm with built in extender @ 115 mm



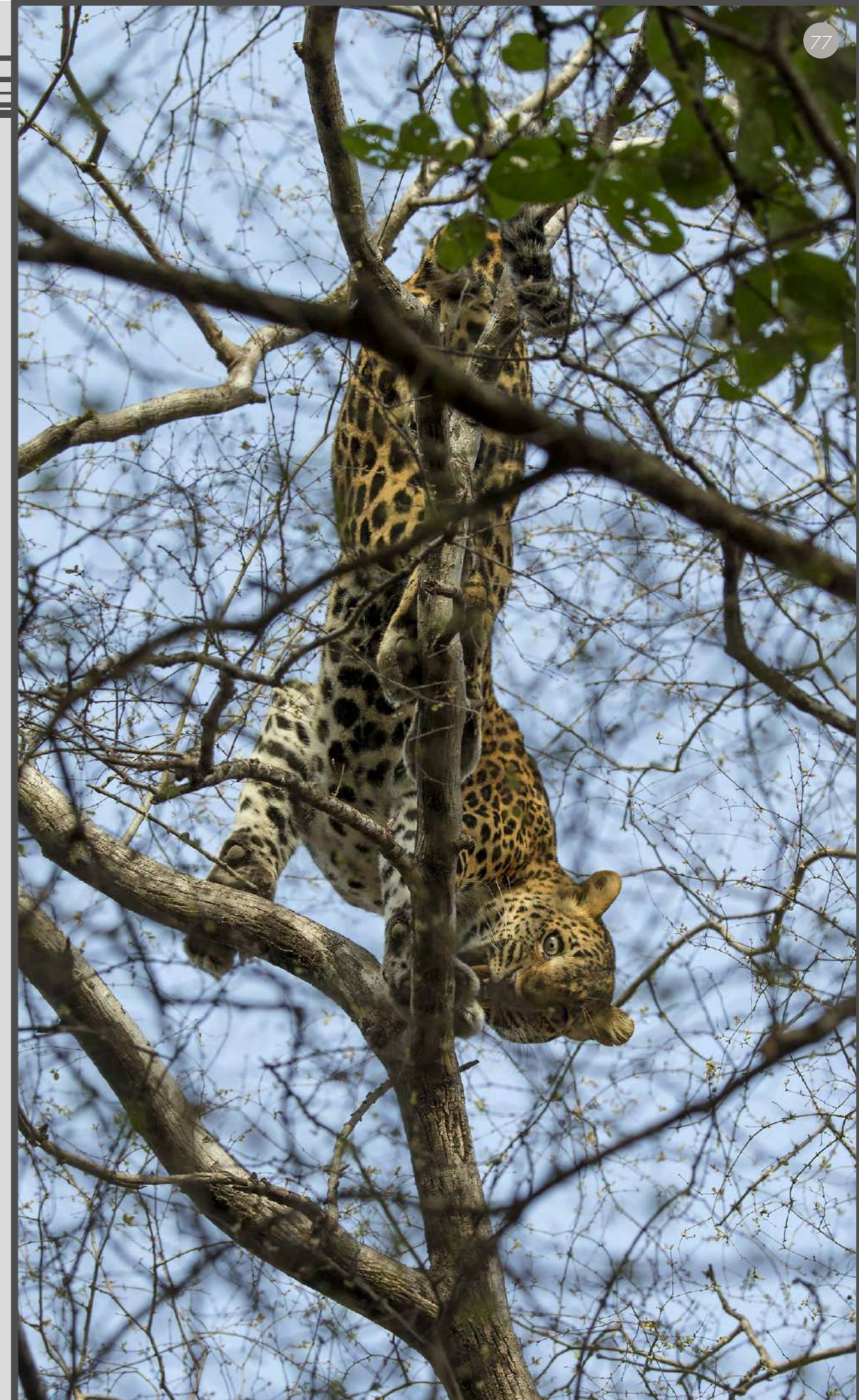
### The Angry Leopard

A tigress was staring upwards. I glanced and hanging right on top of us, on this frail looking tree, was a scared female leopard.

Ranthambhore National Park, Rajasthan, India  
ISO 500

F/9 / 1/500s Canon 1DX

Canon 200-400mm with built in extender @ 280 mm







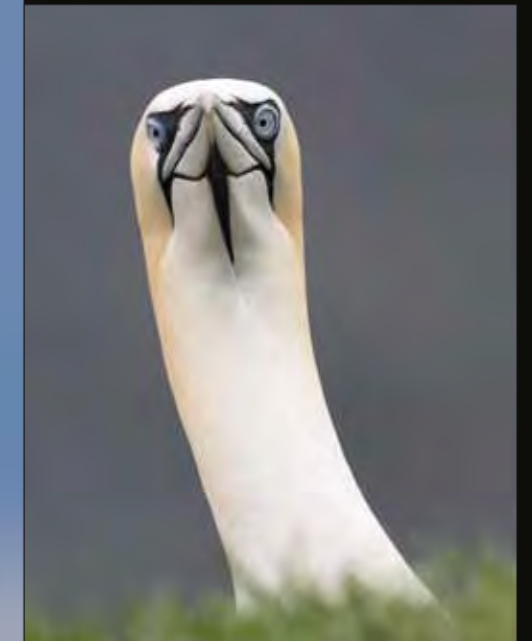
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*David Hemmings - President, Nature's Photo Adventures*



"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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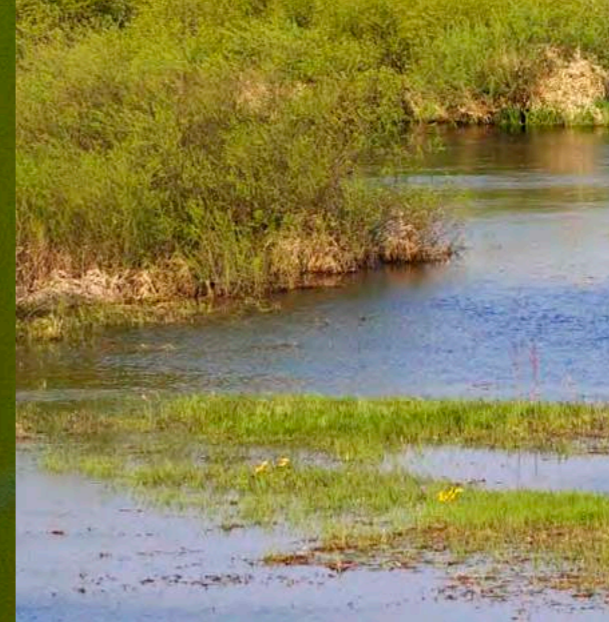


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# Trip Report

TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK

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# PUMAS OF PATAGONIA

Wildlife photographer and conservationist Bjorn Olesen travels to Southern Chile in search of one of the world's most beautiful and elusive cats



### **Torres del Paine National Park**

Torres del Paine National Park, in Chile's Patagonia region, is known for its diversity of habitats - mountains, glaciers, deciduous Magellanic forests and grassy plains that shelter rare wildlife. The park, A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, has been praised by visitors as one of the most scenic and majestic wild places on the planet.



**Puma** *Puma concolor*

The Puma has many names such as mountain lion and cougar. This species has the largest geographic range of any terrestrial mammal in the Western hemisphere, from Canada through the USA, Central and South America down to Chile.

TEXT AND PHOTOS  
BY BJORN OLESEN

The Puma *Puma concolor* has many names, such as mountain lion and cougar. This magnificent feline species has the largest geographic range of any terrestrial mammal in the Western hemisphere, from Canada through the USA, Central and South America down to Chile. Yet, the puma is barely ever seen throughout its entire range – with one exception: Torres del Paine National Park, not far from the southern tip of the continent. Torres del Paine National Park, in Chile's Patagonia region, is known for its great diversity of habitats from distinctive mountains, glaciers, deciduous Magellanic forests and grassy plains that shelter rare wildlife. The park, A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, has often been praised by visitors as one of the most scenic and majestic wild places on the planet. So why is it possible to watch the notoriously elusive pumas here, and not anywhere else in North or South America? The short answer is conservation. The sparsely populated 1,800 sqkm National Park, and the adjacent private Laguna Amarga Ranch, give them a unique safe haven. A population of around 3,000

Guanacos in the area provides a high prey density, which has supported some of the highest concentration of pumas found anywhere in the wild. Many ranchers around Torres del Paine have a negative perception of pumas killing their livestock. Despite being protected by law, pumas are still hated and hunted by ranchers. However, attitudes have started to change now, when locals realise that pumas have a tourist value. The owners of the extensive Laguna Amarga Ranch have converted their business from livestock husbandry to puma watching covering a remote area of 70 sqkm on the eastern edge of the Park. To these ranchers, a live puma is more valuable than a dead one. Several tour companies are now arranging puma tracking expeditions for photographers and nature lovers in the summer months from January to April. Over time, it is expected that more ranchers with properties adjacent to Torres del Paine will realise that ecotourism can be more profitable than sheep farming. Important that the current sustainable practices are followed, in other words only authorized guides are used,

*continued on page 83* ➤



**Puma** *Puma concolor*

Despite its wide distribution, the puma is barely ever seen throughout its entire range – with one exception: Torres del Paine National Park, not far from the southern tip of the continent. Why is it possible to watch the notoriously elusive pumas here, and not anywhere else in North or South America? The short answer is conservation.





**Puma** *Puma concolor*

A young puma with an old guanaco kill in the background. Many ranchers around Torres del Paine have a negative perception of pumas killing their livestock. Despite being protected by law, pumas are still hated and hunted by ranchers. However, attitudes have started to change now, when locals realise that pumas have a tourist value.



**Puma** *Puma concolor*

The sparsely populated 1,800 km<sup>2</sup> Torres del Paine National Park, and the adjacent private Laguna Amarga Ranch, give pumas a unique safe haven. A population of around 3,000 Guanacos in the area provides a high prey density.

puma tracking off road is only permitted outside the Park, and no baiting, chasing or interfering with the pumas is allowed. Pumas are independent and cautious by nature, and finding one in the wild without the help of a professional guide is almost impossible. It is a good sign that the number of pumas in the Park is increasing. The guides know how to read the pumas and to stay at a secure distance for the safety of their clients; fortunately puma attacks on humans are very rare. In and around Torres del Paine pumas appear to ignore the infrequent human visitors, probably because humans are neither prey nor a threat, and therefore irrelevant. We had nine days of puma tracking with a full-time guide and two trackers. As pumas are nocturnal, the best times to observe them are at dawn before they settle down to rest, and also late afternoon when they wake up, and start to walk out for their hunting trips. During our nine days of tracking, we only saw other visitors once. In the summer month of January, sunrise is just after 06:00, and sunset at around 21:20 hours, so our day started at 05:00 in the morning until around 09:00, and in the afternoon around from 16:00 hours. In other words we spent eight to nine hours a day searching for and tracking pumas. Our two trackers would drive out in advance and report back on radio in case of any sightings. Their job is not easy, pumas do

not roar like some of the other big cats, so our trackers rely on nature's own telltale signs like the guanacos' alarm call, which they sound repeatedly at the sight of a puma. Often, we waited for extended periods at a prudent distance while the pumas were resting, realizing that cats sleep a lot! To be able to capture the Patagonian wildlife at a respectful distance, we decided to carry our heavy 600 mm outfit and often used a 1.4 tele-converter, as well as a 2nd camera body with a 300 mm lens. On the first day we drew a blank - no pumas, but our guide and two-member tracking team reassured us that this would change. The next morning we were up at 04:00 and off in the dark, passing through the largely treeless landscape. It was not cold, but for us, the wind was storm strength, which is normal in these parts of Patagonia. Early in the morning, the lack of light and air pollution and unique clear skies deliver some of the most breathtaking starscapes you could ever hope to witness. We sat by a rock and waited for the darkness to lighten. Finally at around 06:00 hours our guide spotted three pumas high up on the hillside. We quickly decided to climb the hill from the opposite side to get within "shooting" range – not an easy task carrying some 15 kilos of photo equipment, but suddenly this did not matter, this was about getting images of the

*continued on page 85* ➤



**Guanaco** *Lama guanicoe*

Charles Darwin described the Guanaco as "*an elegant animal, with a long, slender neck and fine legs*". It is believed to be the ancestor of the domestic llama. While still common in many areas, its distribution has been impacted by hunting, habitat degradation and competition with livestock. Inside Torres del Paine, the population of more than 3,000 is stable.



**Long-tailed Meadowlark** *Sturnella loyca*

The striking Long-tailed Meadowlark forages mostly on the ground, often in small groups. It perches on shrubs as seen here, and it turns over pieces of dung and debris to find hidden invertebrates.

mystic puma. While our guide and trackers kept in touch on the radio, we finally saw the pumas coming our way, one hour later, and passing us before they went their separate ways to find a place for resting. Only the 2nd day, and we had already seen three pumas, and excellent images to prove it. It appeared to be siblings, one big male and two females. An amazing week followed; we saw pumas every day, apart from one. According to our guide, we observed 13-15 different pumas over a period of nine days. On day five, we had the privilege to see 4 puma siblings in the evening and just managed to take a few images before sunset.

There are lots of other wildlife in Torres del Paine apart from guanacos and pumas. Charles Darwin described the Guanaco *Lama guanicoe* as "an elegant animal, with a long, slender neck and fine legs". It is believed to be the ancestor of the domestic llama. While still common in many areas, its distribution has been severely impacted by constant hunting, habitat degradation and competition with livestock. The long-necked Guanaco migrates in large groups throughout the Torres del Paine National Park, with the exception of single males which have been ousted from the group by a dominant male during the breeding season. It is a compact animal at just over one meter high at the shoulder, but here it is easily spotted with soaring snow covered peaks as background. Guanacos form small sedentary harem groups that live

within a small territory. Females give birth to a single young, which remain with their mother for one year, at which point the dominant male drives it from his territory. Young females may quickly join another herd, whereas immature males live in bachelor groups until they are around 5 years old. Inside Torres del Paine, the current population of more than 3,000 Guanacos is stable. Several times we came across the small Grey foxes foraging for food. The Park is also home to more than 100 bird species.

**General Information**

After arrival in Santiago, transfer to the domestic airport for a 3.5-hour flight to Punta Arenas for an overnight stay. The following day drive to Torres del Paine, around five hours via Puerto Natales. There are several companies arranging puma tracking trips. Whenever possible use local companies and local guides to support the economy of the area. The five-star Tierra Patagonia Hotel just outside Torres del Paine National Park has a view that is hard to beat. It is an ideal, but expensive, base for puma tracking, however, there are a more economical alternatives in the area.

Torres del Paine is infamous for its strong winds especially during the summer, which is also the wet season. This is also the reason why the weather here can be entirely different from one hour to the next. Weather fronts are driven across the sky at

*continued on page 87* ➤



**Puma** *Puma concolor*

Pumas are independent and cautious by nature, and finding one in the wild without the help of a professional guide is almost impossible. As pumas are nocturnal, the best times to observe them are at dawn before they settle down to rest, and also late afternoon when they wake up, and start to walk out for their hunting trips.

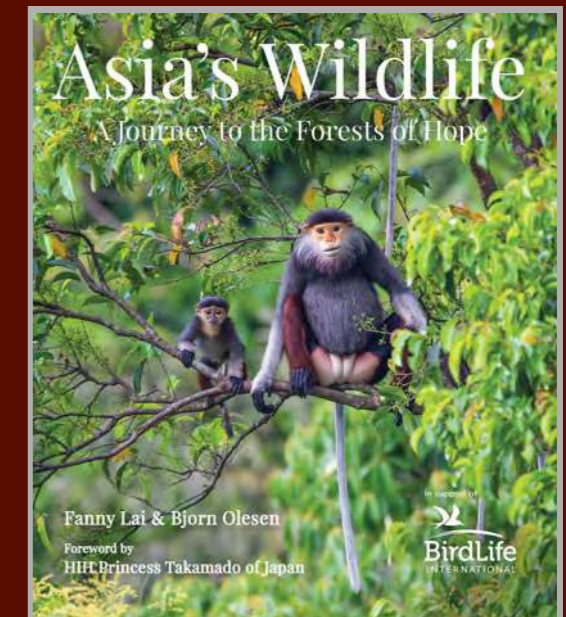


**Puma** *Puma concolor*

Two female pumas seen on the second day of the trip. During nine days of tracking, the author and his companion only saw other visitors once and 13-15 different pumas were encountered, including four puma siblings sighted in the evening before sunset.

a frantic speed, so by the time you've got your rain jacket out of your bag and put it on, it is often time to take it off again. Do not forget your waterproof jacket/pants, gloves and a warm hat, and to dress in layers being prepared for everything from sunshine to snowfall. The average temperature in the summer is around 13 degrees C with lows at around 1 degree C. ●

*Bjorn Olesen is a retired corporate executive, award-winning wildlife photographer and a passionate conservationist. With his wife Fanny he has published three books: A Visual Celebration of Giant Pandas in 2013, and A Visual Celebration of Borneo's Wildlife in 2016. Their latest publication Asia's Wildlife: A Journey to the Forests of Hope has just been released with proceeds in support of BirdLife International and a foreword by HH Princess Takamado of Japan.*





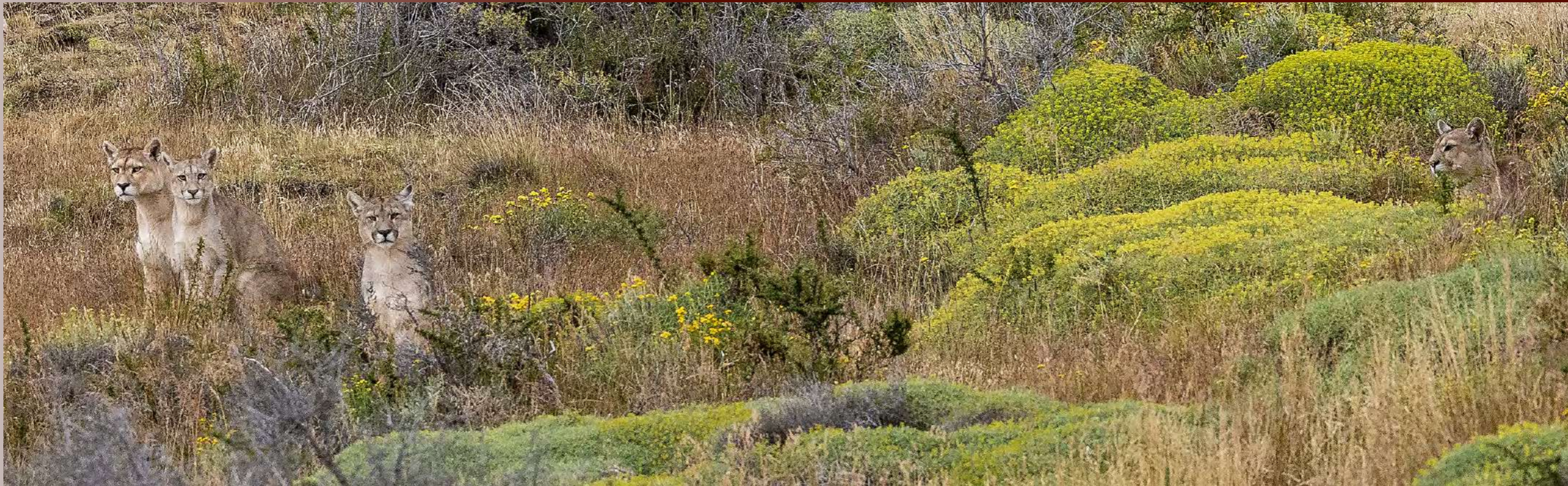
**South American Grey Fox** *Lycalopex griseus*  
The common South American Grey Fox has a body length of around 60 cm and weighs up to four kg. Its preferred diet consists of hares and other rodents, but it will happily eat any leftovers from a puma kill, such as Guanacos.



**Andean Condor** *Vultur gryphus*

The Andean Condor is one of the park's 15 breeding species of birds of prey. Here is a female in a friendly attack on a male condor while soaring alongside the peaks of Patagonia. As their name suggests, the Andean Condors are found in mountainous regions, but also live near coasts awash with ocean breezes and strong thermal air currents.





A rare sight of four puma siblings, seen on day five of the author's expedition to Torres del Paine National Park.



The Black-necked Swan *Cygnus melancoryphus* is part of the Park's avifauna.



The European Hare *Lepus europaeus* was introduced to Argentina in 1880.



**Darwin's Rhea** *Rhea pennata*

The common Darwin's Rhea is a South American relative of the African ostrich. Interestingly, the males are "single" parents, building the nests and incubating the eggs, whereas the females enjoy a life of leisure.



The Magellan Goose *Chloephaga picta* is common in the area. The female is on top.



The Southern Caracara *Caracara plancus* is a highly opportunistic raptor.



The nocturnal Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunk *Conepatus humboldtii* is about 35cm long.



The long-necked Guanaco is a compact animal at just over one meter high at the shoulder.



**Andean Condor** *Vultur gryphus*

The black and white Andean Condor is among the largest flying species in the world, weighing up to a massive 15 kg. The surging thermals of Patagonia's cliffs are the ideal setting for this majestic bird. A wingspan of more than three meter, the largest of any land bird, enables this remarkable scavenger to stay in the air with minimal efforts.



**Spectacular landscapes** Torres del Paine National Park offers some of the finest natural spectacles in Patagonia.



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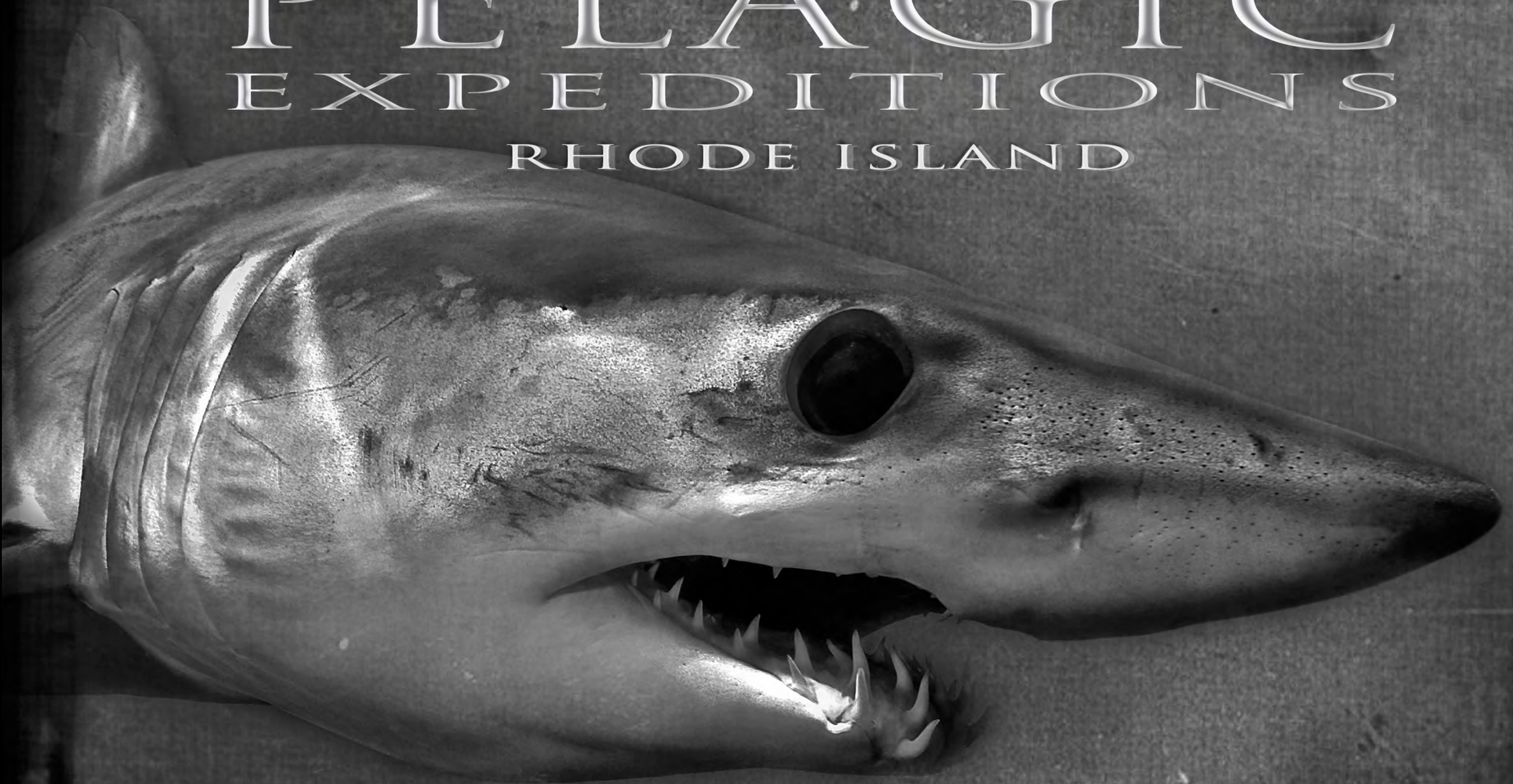
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# The Parting Shot

Italian photographer Antonio Macioce had the encounter of a lifetime and shares his experience with us: *"The European Wildcat Felis silvestris is certainly one of the most difficult animals to observe and photograph in Italy. In many years I have had the opportunity to spot it a very few times in our territories: usually sightings by car at night, or from a distance with binoculars. In the National Park of Abruzzo Lazio and Molise I had already photographed one, but at a great distance, just*

*record shots. But last winter, luck had me photograph a beautiful subject just a few meters away. I could tell you of days spent stalking in unbearable temperatures before being able to photograph it, but in reality it was not so - one morning, coming back from a photo shoot, we saw an animal crossing the road. When we were a few meters away we realized that it was a Wildcat. The habit of always keeping cameras ready and within reach paid back - after having crossed the road, we*

*expected it to vanish into the vegetation, but instead it stopped and then sat looking at us for a few seconds, just the time to take two shots, then it got up and hid in the thick bushes of blackthorn. I found similar attitudes in the Wildcat population in Slovenia which I had the opportunity to photograph several times. Shooting data: Nikon D500, Nikkor 600 mm f4, f4- 1 / 320sec. ISO 800. Other shots can be viewed on my website: [www.antoniomacioce.it](http://www.antoniomacioce.it)".*



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Namibia's legendary National Park in the wet season



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A scientific survey

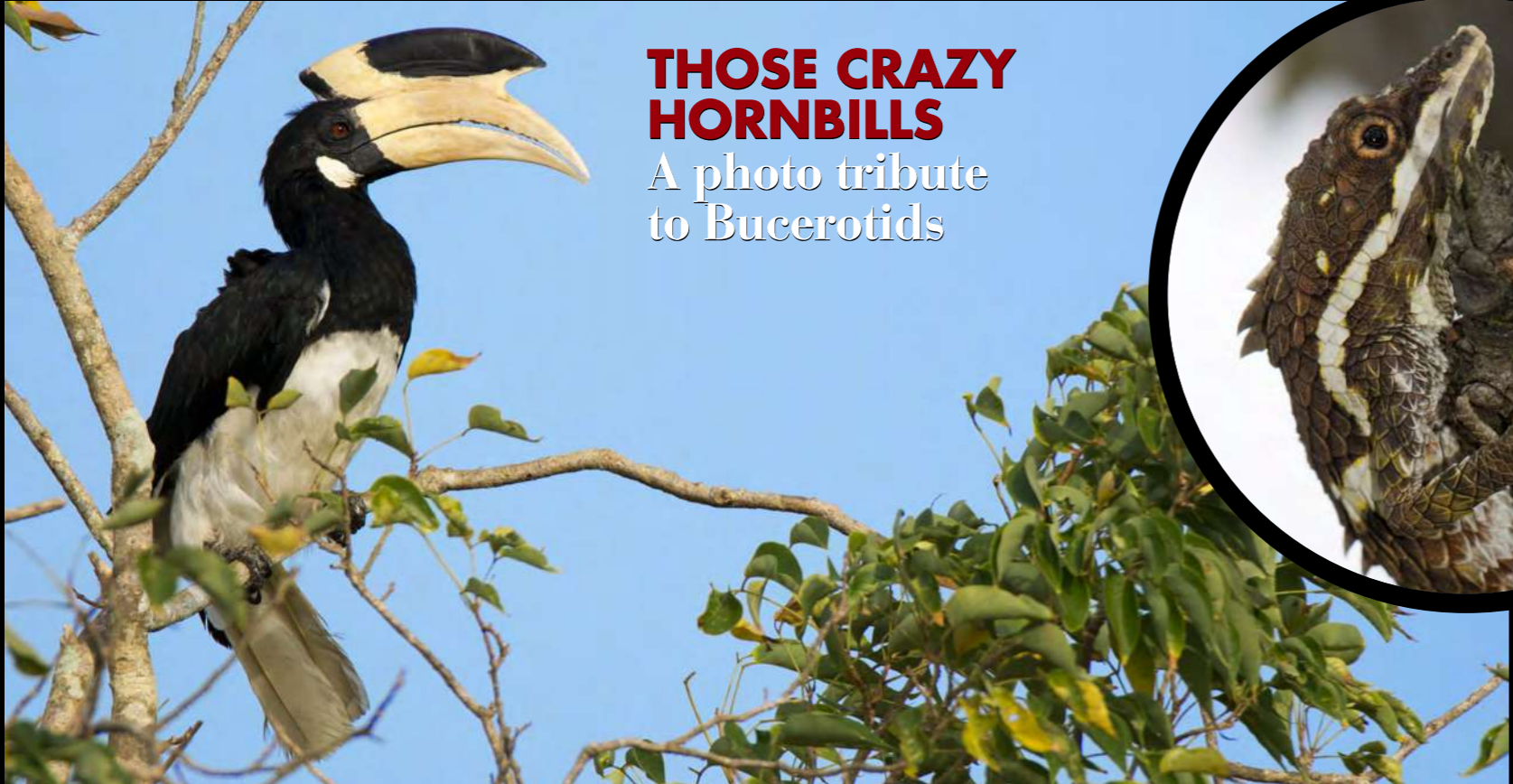
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Exploring Ecuador's flooded rainforest



**THOSE CRAZY HORNBILLS**

A photo tribute to Bucerotids



**SRI LANKA'S MINIATURE DRAGON**

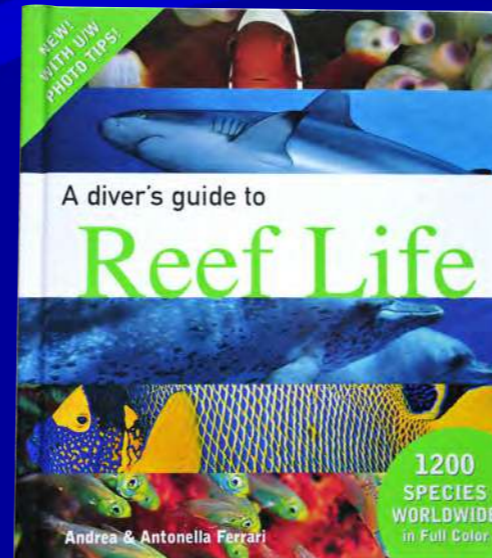
The endemic Pygmy lizard

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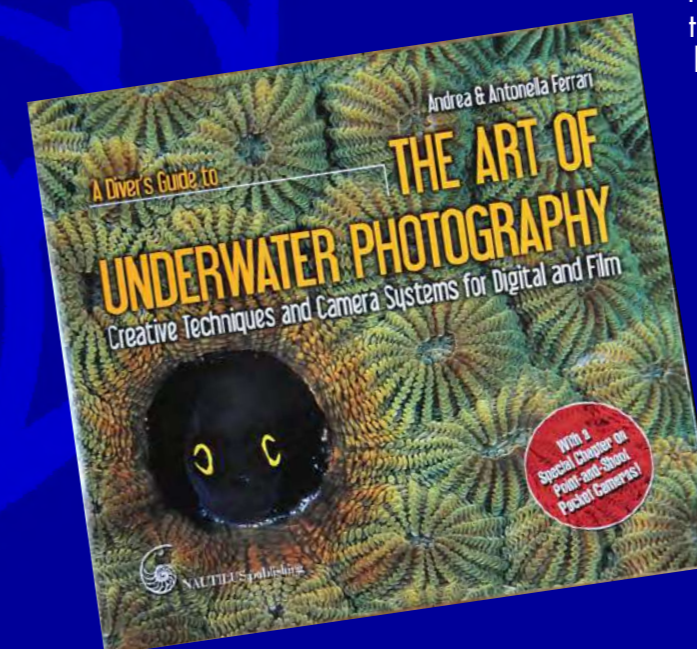
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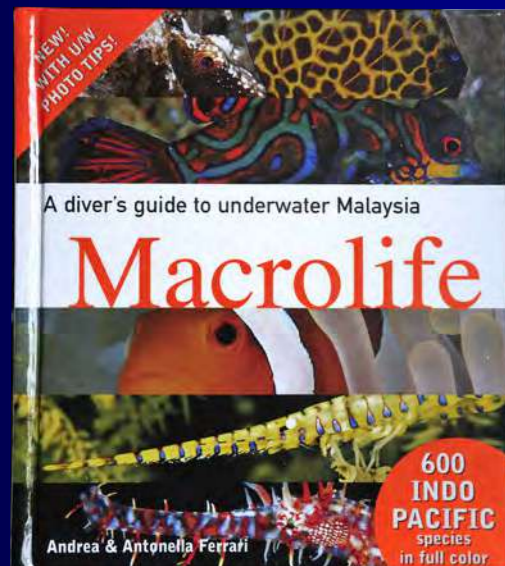
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