

photo Michael Wilms



My Love Affair with Vipers

Single-mindedly pursuing his beautiful reptilian subjects around the globe, a Norwegian artist creates photographic portraits of exquisite elegance

*Thor Hakonsen -
A Wildlife Photographer
in His Own Words*

I was born and raised on the west coast of Norway, a place with only one snake in the local fauna. But that snake was the European Adder - Scandinavia's only viper species. Perhaps it is no wonder my travel and photography almost solely is based on looking for viper species around the world. I started out early with photography, but as many young boys coming to adulthood other things came in the way for many, many years. But when digital photography took over analog around 2006-2007 I got back to photography and got more and more specialized on photographing reptiles and

vipers. My motto soon became "A place without vipers is not a place to visit", and since then I've not travelled to any spot with my camera if not for finding vipers – both to study and photograph these fascinating creatures. But even though I'm mainly interested in vipers, I will stop to shoot other reptiles and amphibians I spot on my walks in deserts, forests, moors or jungles. My daily work is in Scandinavia's largest photo retailer, CEWE Norway, where I work with amongst other things Photo Culture. I've also been leader of Norsk Herpetologisk Forening (Norwegian Herpetological

Society) since 2014. My photos have been used in several books and magazines. With my pictures of vipers and other reptiles I always try to show the details in the animals. Details that get easily overlooked in a short glimpse in nature or on television. And in this way I am trying to transfer my fascination for these animals to others, something that works surprisingly well when you get people to take the time to study the details. When out in the field I use a lot of time to find the correct angles, using a low camera angle and both background and foreground when

possible, and using only natural light when possible. In my bag you will always find one or two Nikon cameras. For the last couple of years my most used cameras have been the Nikon D5 and D500, always paired up with an assortment of macro-lenses - my favourite being the Sigma 180 f/2.8 OS Macro, but in the bag I will usually also travel with the Nikkor 105 f/2.8 VR Macro and the Nikkor 60mm f/2.8 Macro. These macro lenses will always give me the best possible sharpness and a great flexibility as I both can do full body shots and close-ups with the same lens.



**Gumprecht's
Pit Viper
*Trimeresurus
gumprechtii***

Phu Hin Rong Kla
National Park,
Thailand

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm
f/2.8 OS Macro
f/5
1/160
ISO 800

Sahara
Horned Viper
Cerastes cerastes

Negev, Israel

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm f/2.8
OS Macro + 1.4 TC
f/10
1/160
ISO 200
Godox V860II
w/80cm Octa
Softbox





White-lipped Pit Viper
Trimeresurus albolabris

Kaeng Krachan
National Park, Thailand

Nikon D5
Nikkor 105mm f/2.8 VR
Macro
f/5
1/400
ISO 800

Malaysian Pit Viper
Calloselasma rhodostoma

Trang, Thailand

Nikon D5
Nikkor 300mm f/4 VR + 1.4TC
f/5.6
1/200
ISO 800



European Adder
Vipera berus

Akershus, Norway

Nikon D5
Nikkor 60mm f/2.8
Macro
f/4
1/200
ISO 100





**Siamese
Peninsular
Pit Viper**
*Trimeresurus
fucatus*

Khao Luang,
Thailand

Nikon D5
Nikkor 60mm
f/2.8 Macro
f/5
1/160
ISO 800
Godox AD860II
w/15x20cm
softbox



European Adder
Vipera berus

Østfold, Norway

Nikon D5
Laowa 15mm f/4
Macro
f/4
1/160
ISO 1600

Sahara
Sand Viper
Cerastes vipera

Negev, Israel

Nikon Z 6
Nikkor 105mm
f/2.8 VR Macro
f/7.1
1/2000
ISO 800

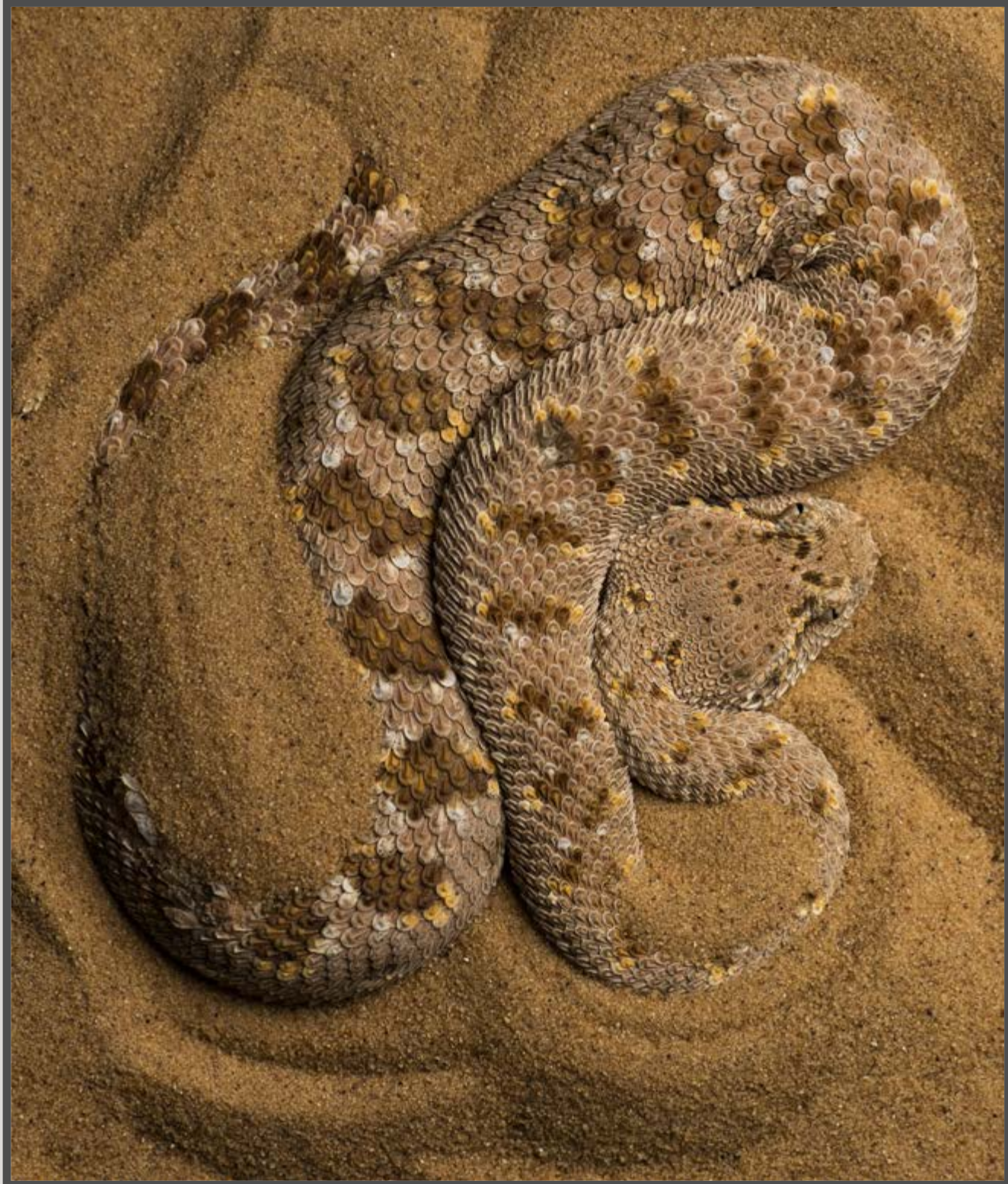




**Mangrove
Pit Viper**
*Trimeresurus
purpureomaculatus*

Ranong, Thailand

Nikon D5
Nikkor 105mm f/2.8
VR Macro
f/11
1/160
ISO 800
Godox V860II
w/80cm Octa softbox



Wagler's Pit Viper

*Tropidolaemus
wagleri*

Phuket, Thailand

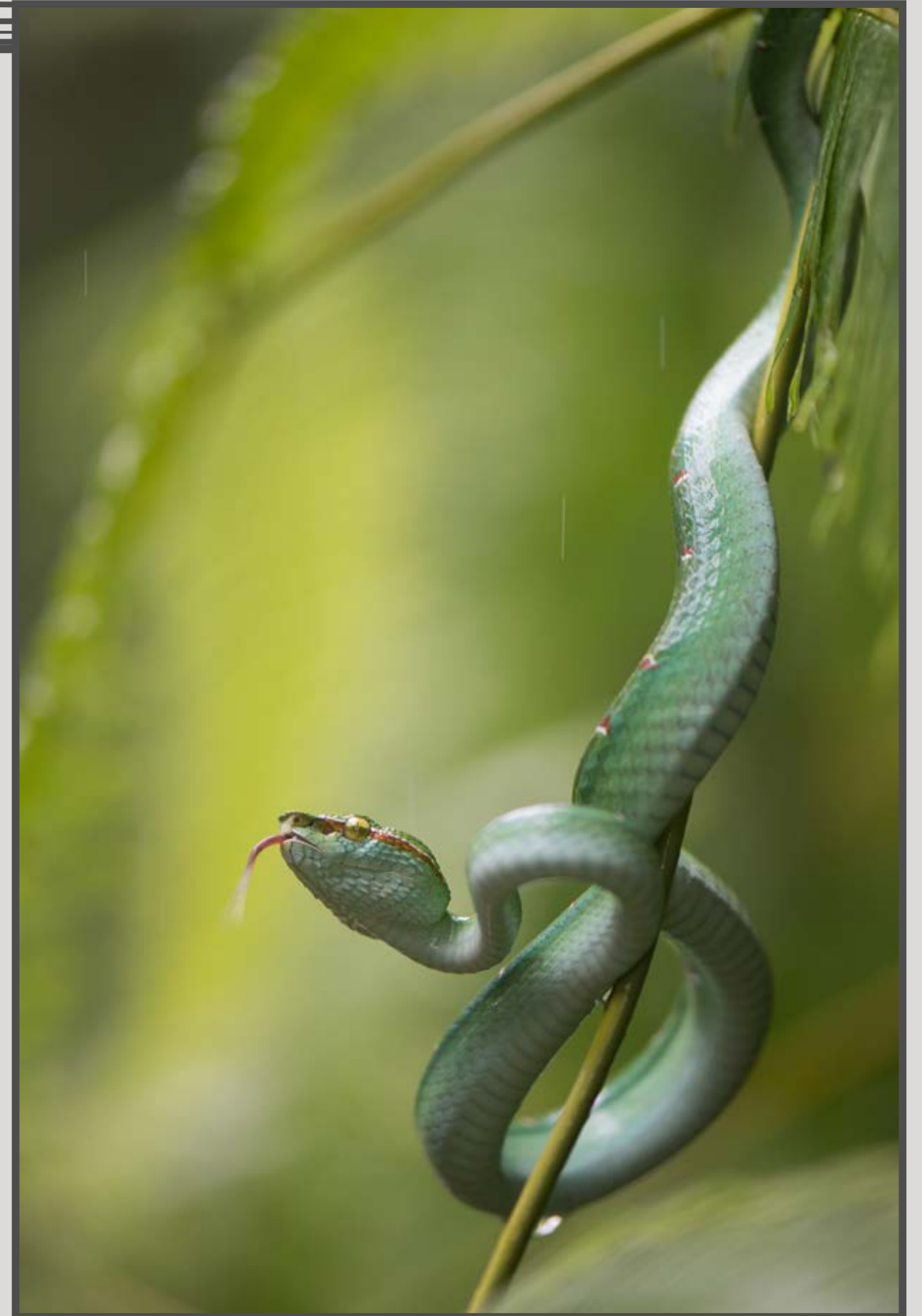
Nikon D5
Nikkor 105mm
f/2.8 VR Macro
f/3
1/250
ISO 400

Arabian Horned Viper

*Cerastes
gasperetti
mendelssohni*

Arava Valley,
Israel

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm
f/2.8 OS Macro
f/10
1/200
ISO 200
Godox V860II
w/80cm Octa
Softbox





**Sahara
Sand Viper**
Cerastes vipera

Negev, Israel

Nikon Z 6
Nikkor 105mm
f/2.8 VR Macro
f/7.1
1/2000
ISO 800

Trimeresurus cf. popeiorum

Kaeng Krachan National Park, Thailand

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm f/2.8 OS Macro
f/5
1/250
ISO 640



**Prairie Rattlesnake
*Crotalus viridis***

Arizona, USA

Nikon D500
Sigma 180mm f/2.8 OS Macro
f/6.3
1/160
ISO 800



Desert Monitor *Varanus griseus*

Negev, Israel

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm f/2.8 OS Macro
f/4
1/3200
ISO 800



Mojave Rattlesnake
Crotalus scutulatus

Arizona, USA

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm f/2.8
OS Macro
f/5
1/320
ISO 800

European Adder
Vipera berus

Østfold, Norway

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm
f/2.8 Macro
f/3.3
1/320
ISO 200



European Adder
Vipera berus

Østfold, Norway

Fujifilm X-H1
Fujinon 16mm f/1.4
f/4
1/300
ISO 400



Indo-Chinese Forest Lizard
Calotes mystaceus

Kanchanburi, Thailand

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm f/2.8 OS Macro
f/7.1
1/500
ISO 800

Sahara
Horned Viper
Cerastes cerastes

Negev, Israel

Nikon D5
Sigma 180mm f/2.8
OS Macro + 1.4 TC
f/18
1/160
ISO 400
Godox V860II
w/80cm Octa
Softbox



European Adder
Vipera berus

Hordaland, Norway

Nikon D4s
Nikkor 60mm f/2.8 Macro
f/5
1/250
ISO 400



Ottomans Viper
Montivipera xanthina

Thrace, Greece

Nikon D5
Nikkor 300mm f/4 VR
f/5
1/250
ISO 400