

ANIMA MUNDI

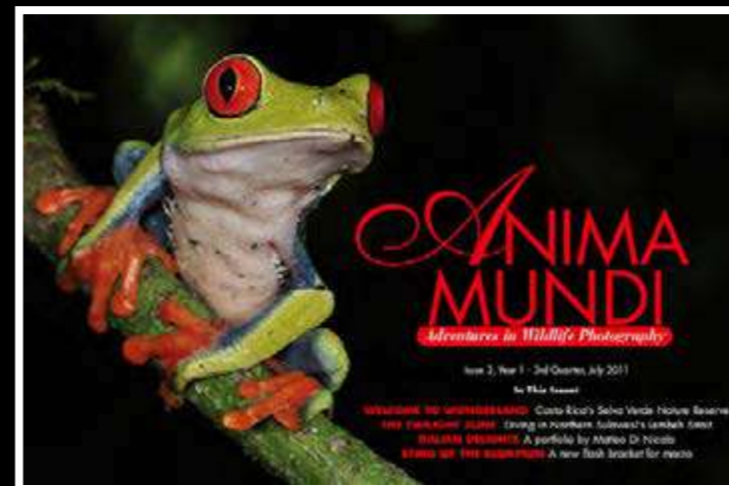
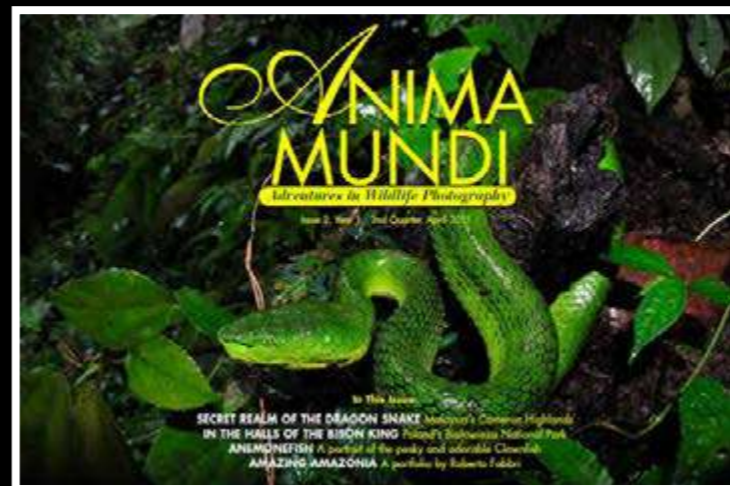
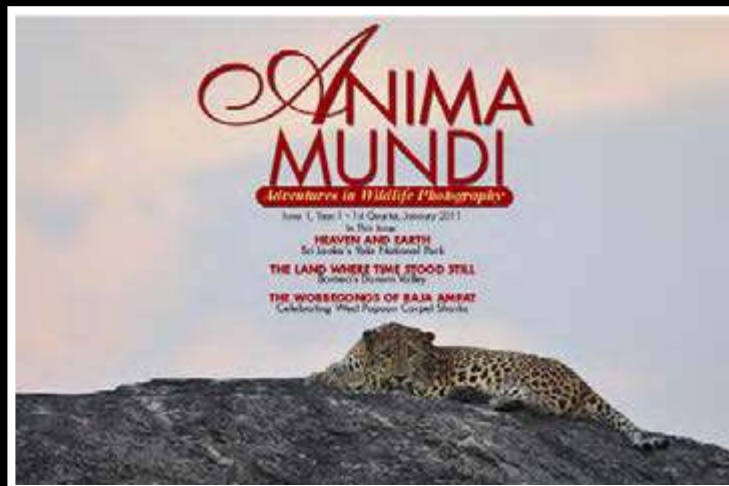
Adventures in Wildlife Photography

Issue 39, Year 10 - July 2020

In This Issue:

MAGICAL DESERT Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
MOREMI MEMORIES Gate of the Okavango
CAMOUFLAGE CONNOISSEURS Indo-Pacific cuttlefish





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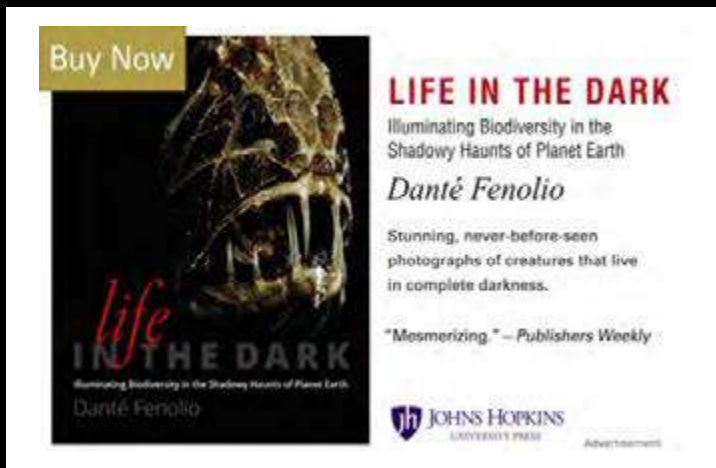
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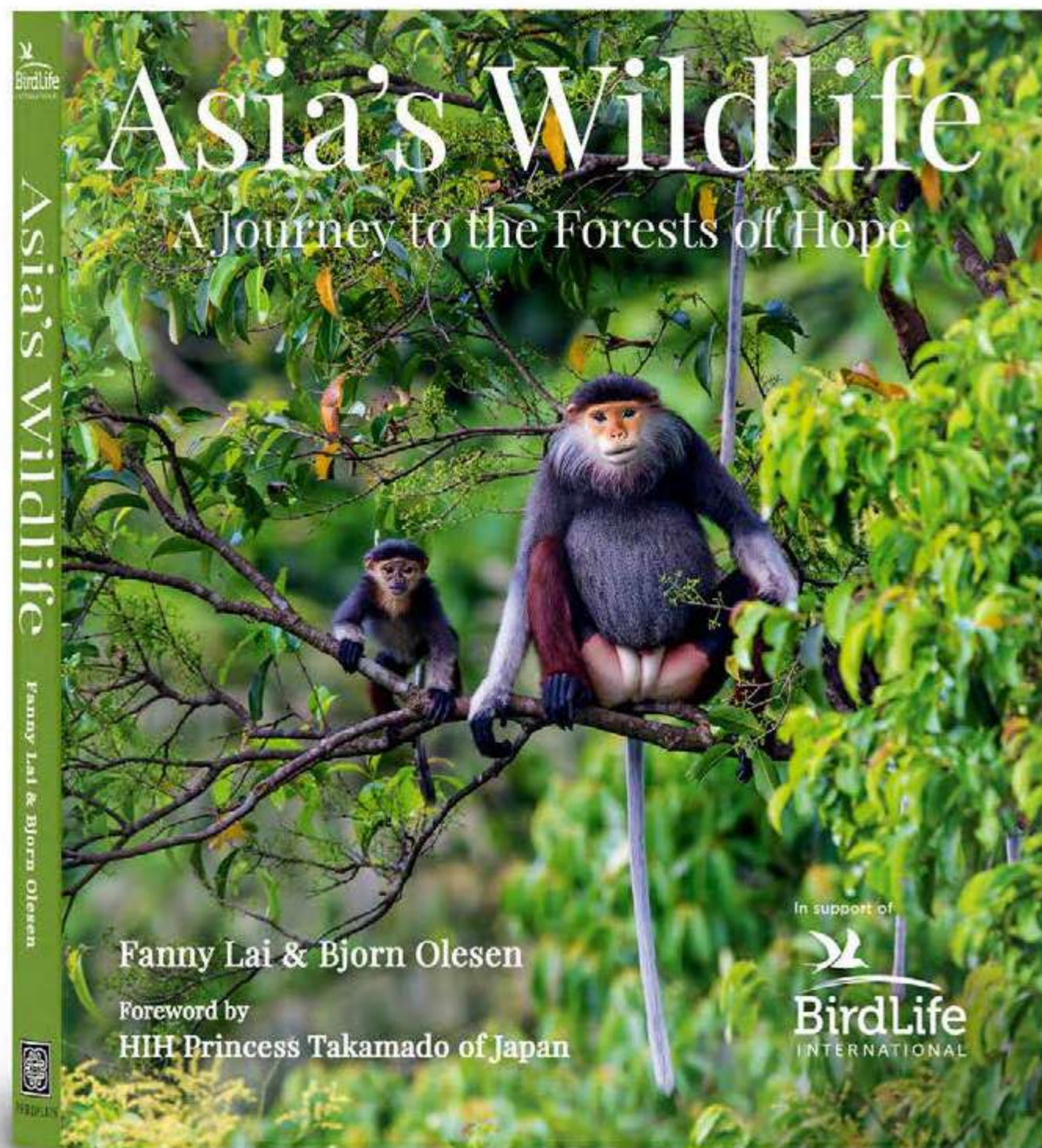
Dear Andrea & Antonella,

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

'In these pages, we can read about eight forests in eight countries of Asia that we call forests of hope because of the love and commitment we have for them. The powerful photographs evoke feelings in me, and I suddenly realise that that is because Asia is my homeland. That we are blessed with such beautiful forests is a joy and a responsibility. But they are, of course, just examples of the miraculous riches that forests possess, and on this tiny planet we want all forests to be forests of hope.'

'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.

'The surprising range and breathtaking beauty of the animals so miraculously photographed in this excellent book are a powerful reminder of the need to protect these treasures before they are lost forever.'

Dr. John van Wyhe, historian of science and one of the world's leading experts on Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace.

'Close-up views of Endangered fauna in their natural habitats are difficult enough to obtain, but the breathtaking quality of the photography in this valuable documentation of Asia's forests makes this book highly recommended for both scientists and nature lovers alike.'

Robert Stuebing, The Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.

'These arresting portraits of living creatures from eight Asian forests remind us all that forests have value beyond our capacity to measure. Without forests we cannot dream. Without forests we cannot breathe. Without forests we cannot hope. Forests are forever, and their conservation is the human endeavour that represents the best hope of our own survival as a species. Forests of hope indeed!'

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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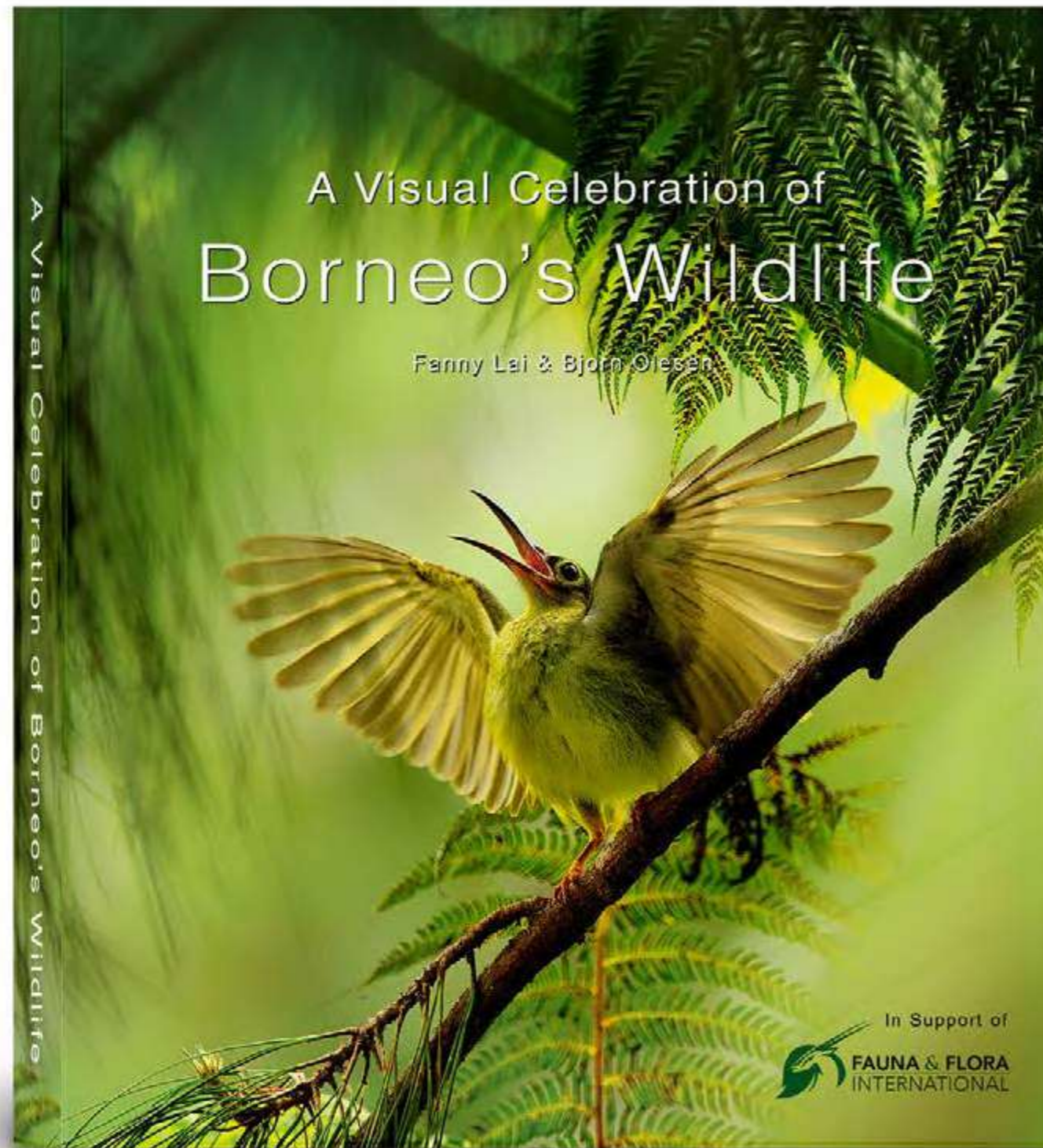
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Dr. John van Wyhe, National University of Singapore, historian of science and leading expert on Alfred Wallace, author of *Dispelling the Darkness: Voyage in the Malay Archipelago and the Discovery of Evolution by Wallace and Darwin*.

All of the authors' royalties will be donated to [Fauna & Flora International](#)

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■ Mom and baby suricate from the Kgalagadi - see our story starting on page 4.

ANIMA MUNDI

Adventures in Wildlife Photography

Living in a dreamtime

Putting together this issue of *Anima Mundi - Adventures in Wildlife Photography* has been rather hard for us - certainly not for a lack of interesting contents, as you will see, but rather for the dire context in which it was edited. The Covid-19 pandemic currently sweeping the globe with its deadly scythe has not only sown death and pain among a sizable number of countries worldwide - it has also given rise to a myriad of social and economic disasters which will profoundly change our daily life for a presumably long time, inflicting atrocious damage at the same time of the travel industry, and then consequently on conservation work. It is not difficult to imagine poachers having a field day in deserted National Parks and Wildlife Reserves where until a few months ago scores of tourist vehicles roamed, and the fragile local conservation projects which we have staunchly supported for all these years now risk being obliterated for good in no time at all. We all seem to live in a dreamtime in which

action is suspended, in which projects are frozen, in which we can only hope to be able to visit again, one day, our beloved wilderness.

In the meantime, we can offer a substitute on these pages. There's a rich feature on our trip to the little-known, little-visited and stunningly beautiful Kgalagadi Transfrontier National Park, straddling South Africa and Botswana, followed by a reminiscence of a visit to Moremi Reserve, where we briefly stopped on our way to the Chobe National Park, and finally a look at the fascinating world of Indo-Pacific cuttlefish harking back to our halcyon days of scuba diving.



And that is all for now - until October with a new issue. 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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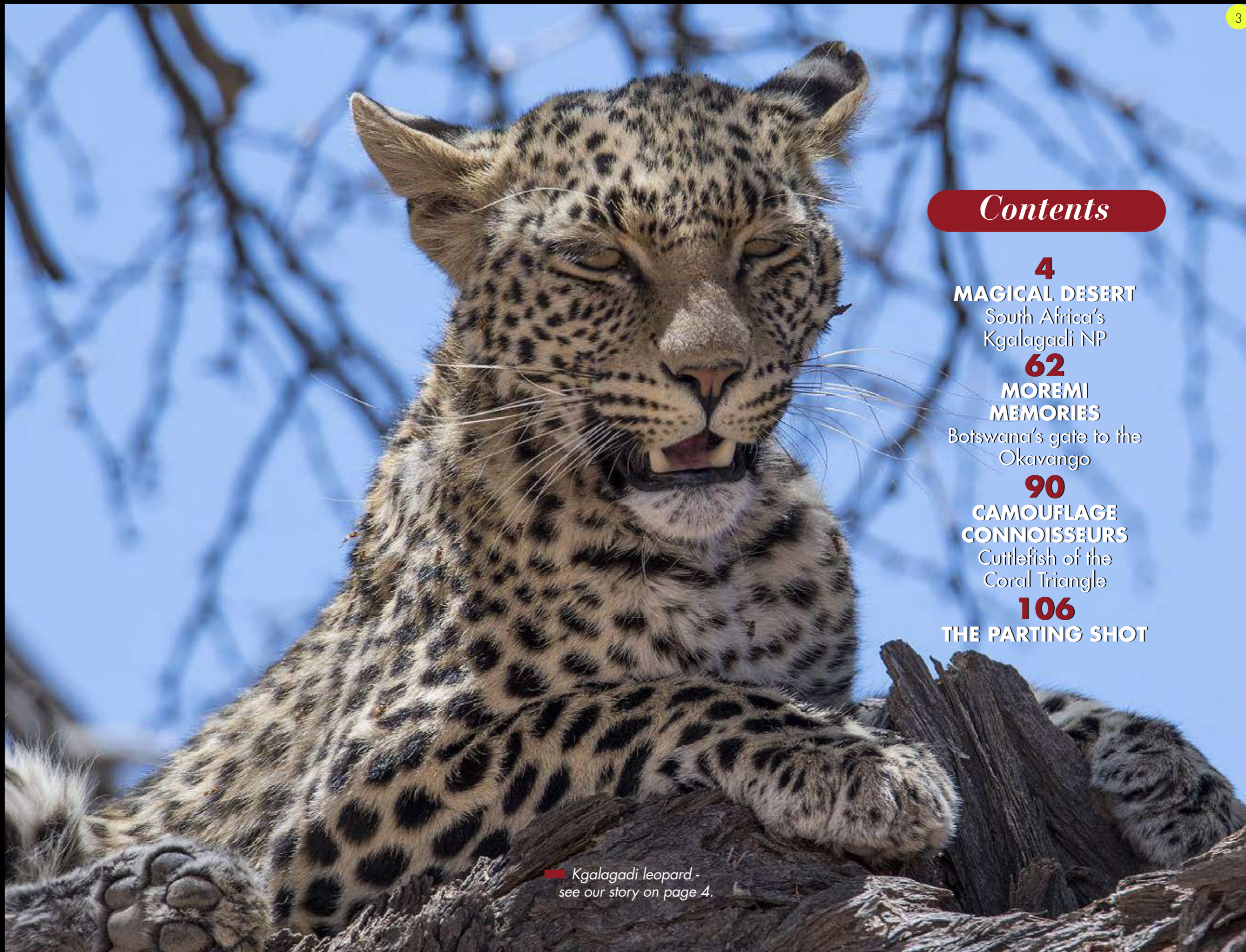
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■ Kgalagadi leopard -
see our story on page 4.



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KGALAGADI NATIONAL PARK

MAGICAL DESERT

An expedition to South Africa's
remote and untouched
Transfrontier area



A spectacular sunset
welcomes us at Nossob camp.
On the title page, a
courting/mating pair of
African lion *Panthera leo*.



TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

*S*andwiched in a bone-dry, wind-swept corner between Namibia, South Africa and Botswana, lies hidden and forgotten by most a magical corner of wilderness for serious safaris devoted to wildlife photography. Here, Botswana and South Africa have joined forces to protect the wildlife on opposite sides of their border, forming the world's first Transfrontier Park: the Kgalagadi. The protected area consists of about 38,000km² of the Kalahari and was previously split between South Africa's Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and Botswana's Gemsbok National Park. Being away from most


major routes and not really easily reached, the Park gets relatively few visitors, making it ideal for dedicated game-viewers. Springbok, blue wildebeest, gemsbok, red hartebeest and eland abound, while suricates, leopards, and black-maned lions are commonly observed. This is also one of South Africa's best areas for cheetah, which thrive by hunting in its fossil river valleys and the surrounding Kalahari dunes. The Kgalagadi is also a haven for birders, especially those interested in birds of prey. To sum it up, this is an exceptionally interesting and remote area - with an equally interesting story

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*A typical
encounter in the
Kgalagadi with a
mature African lion
Panthera leo
black-maned male.*



*Dueling Gemsbok
Oryx gazella.*

 *Brown hyena*
Parahyena
brunnea.



*African Wild cat
Felis chaus with
freshly caught
Fawn-coloured Lark.*



behind its coming into being. It all started a long time ago, when the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa was established on 31 July 1931 - mainly to protect the migrating game, especially the gemsbok, from poaching. In 1948 an informal verbal agreement was made between the then Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Union of South Africa to set up a conservation area in the contiguous areas of the two lands. In June 1992 representatives from the South African National Parks Board Board (now SANParks) and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks of Botswana set up a joint management committee to manage the area as a single ecological unit. A management plan was drafted, reviewed, and approved in 1997. The parties agreed to cooperate in tourism and share equally in park entrance fees. On 7 April 1999, Botswana and South Africa signed a historic bilateral agreement whereby both countries

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African lioness
Panthera leo
with her very
young cubs.

undertook to manage their adjacent National Parks, the Gemsbok National Park in Botswana and the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa as a single ecological unit. The boundary between the two parks had no physical barriers, although it is also the international border between the two countries. This allowed for the free movement of animals. On 12 May 2000, President Festus Mogae of Botswana and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa formally launched Southern Africa's first peace park, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Today the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is a huge, largely unpopulated, remote, relatively little-visited and truly spectacular wildlife preserve and conservation area in southern Africa. Moreover, it is also possible to enter Namibia from a border entry point in the Western Kgalagadi. The total area of the park is 38,000 square kilometres (15,000 sq mi). Approximately three-quarters of the park lies in Botswana and one-quarter in South Africa. Kgalagadi means "place of thirst" in the local language, and with good reason - the place is basically a sandy dustbowl with very little or no water.

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The flag species of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier National Park - Gemsbok or South African Oryx Oryx gazella.





Left, the huge Verreaux's eagle-owl *Bubo lacteus* is one of the Kgalagadi's most imposing birds of prey; right top, Green Wood hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*; right bottom, Crimson-breasted Shrike *Laniarius atrococcineus*.



A large Lappet-faced vulture *Torgos tracheliotos* taking off.



Tawny eagle *Aquila rapax* feeding on a mongoose carcass.



AN EXTREME ENVIRONMENT

The Park is located largely within the southern Kalahari Desert. The terrain consists of red sand dunes, sparse low shrubby vegetation, occasional trees, and the dry riverbeds of the Nossob and Auob Rivers, where most of the wildlife sightings take place. The rivers are said to flow only about once per century. However, water flows underground and provides life for grass and camelthorn trees growing in the river beds. The rivers may flow briefly after large thunderstorms. Several artificial wells dug and maintained by the Park authorities provide well-camouflaged, strategically-placed permanent waterholes to attract - and often sustain in dry times - the local wildlife.

SPECTACULAR ENCOUNTERS

Despite its barren and forbidding environment, the Park has abundant, varied wildlife. It is home to large mammalian predators such as lions, cheetahs, African leopards, and hyenas. Migratory herds of large herbivores such as blue wildebeest, springbok, eland, and red hartebeest also live and move seasonally within

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A quarter
of wrestling Giraffe
*Giraffa
camelopardalis*.





Swallow-tailed bee-eater *Merops hirundineus* with wasp (left) and bee (right) prey. These are quite a common sight along the dry riverbeds of the Kgalagadi.



■ A rare sight - a Cape porcupine *Hystrix africae australis* in daytime. Usually strictly nocturnal, this is Africa's largest rodent.





Far left, immature Martial eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*; left, immature Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus*. The Kgalagadi offers exceptional sightings of raptors.




Another unique sighting - a Bat-eared fox *Otocyon megalotis* female suckling its newborn cubs at the entrance of its den.



■ Top left, Lanner falcon *Falco biarmicus*; top right, Cape glossy starling *Lamprotornis nitens*. Bottom left, Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* on its nest with egg; bottom right, Lilac-breasted roller *Coracias caudatus*.

Cheetah Acinonyx jubatus
- the Kgalagadi is an excellent location to observe this endangered species.



A small mouse with grey and white fur is perched on a thin, light-colored branch of a plant. The mouse is facing left and appears to be feeding on the plant. The background is a dense thicket of similar branches, creating a complex, textured pattern. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the mouse's features and the intricate details of the plant's structure.

■ African striped mouse
or Four-striped Grass
Mouse *Rhabdomys
pumilio* feeding.



■ Top left, Violet-eared Waxbill *Uraeginthus granatina*; top right, Fawn-coloured Lark *Calendulauda africanoides*. Bottom left, Acacia Pied Barbet *Tricholaema leucomelas*; bottom right, Fork-tailed drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*.



■ Subadult African leopard *Panthera pardus* resting in a tree.



Immature Spotted
Eagle owl *Bubo*
africanus.



the Park, providing sustenance for the numerous predators. More than 200 species of bird can be found in the Kgalagadi, including vultures and raptors such as eagles, buzzards, and Secretary birds. Since 2005, the protected area is considered a Lion Conservation Unit and a lion stronghold in Southern Africa.

A DESERT CLIMATE

The weather in the Kalahari can reach extremes. January is midsummer in southern Africa and the daytime temperatures are often in excess of 40 °C (104 °F). Winter nights can be quite cold with temperatures below freezing. Extreme temperatures of -11 °C (12 °F) and up to 45 °C (113 °F) have been recorded. Precipitation is sparse in this desert area.

ACCOMODATION IN THE K GALAGADI

Originally, the SA National Parks Board ran only three tourist camps in the area. These were designed for self-driving visitors, with simple self-catering accommodation dotted around village-like compounds, which include a shop, a small fuel station, a pool and sometimes even a restaurant. These are where we were based during our visit, and we can safely recommend them. Of these restcamps, Twee Rivieren is the largest and most developed, and the only one with a restaurant. Other facilities include a well-stocked shop and a family-size

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■ A trio of Cape ground squirrels *Xerus inauris*.





■ *Left, African lion Panthera leo female; right, an alert Meerkat or Suricate Suricata suricatta on the watch for predators.*





■ A herd of beautiful Kgalagadi springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis* in the Nossob riverbed.

Left, Swallow-
tailed bee-eater
Merops
hirundineus;
right, African lion
Panthera leo
young male.



Namaqua sandgrouse
Pterocles namaqua.





■ Top, a flight of Namaqua sandgrouse *Pterocles namaqua*.
Bottom left, Caracal *Caracal caracal*;
bottom right, Black-backed jackal *Canis mesomelas*.



swimming pool. It's usually the first stop within Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, near the southern entrance. Further north, Nossob Rest camp is fairly basic, with several self-catering chalets – although most visitor camp here. It also has cooking facilities and a small shop, and its central location provides one of the best spot to enjoy the Park's untouched wilderness. If we had to choose one site alone where to stay in the Kgalagadi, Nossob would be it. Set in Kgalagadi's southwest, Mata Mata Rest Camp is quite simple, but a great place for adventurous small families. Its self-catering chalets are ideally situated to explore the whole of the Park. More recently, six "wilderness camps" have been built in scenic locations deep in the Park. Small, remote and unfenced, these are very different in character to the restcamps; they feel more isolated and closer to the wildlife. Most take

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■ Cape fox
Vulpes chama.





■ Dueling Gemsbok
Oryx gazella.





Left, ■
Springbok
*Antidorcas
marsupialis*
male; right, adult
Southern Pale
Chanting
Goshawk
*Melierax
canorus*,
a commonly
observed
denizen of the
Kgalagadi.





■ A lone black-maned African lion *Panthera leo* male on the prowl.

eight people when full. All require you to bring your own water, fuel and food – though cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery are provided – and all the accommodation is en-suite. For safety, each has a single armed game scout in residence. These are recommended to the most adventurous visitors who do not mind a little lack of comfort.

DARK CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

However, in an unexpected, very disappointing and potentially devastating twist in the history of the Kgalagadi, in September 2014 the government of Botswana quietly sold the rights to frack for shale gas in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. It granted prospecting licences for 29,291 square kilometres (2,929,100 ha), 34,435 square kilometres (3,443,500 ha) and 23,980 square kilometres (2,398,000 ha) – more than half of the Botswanan part of the Park – to a United Kingdom-listed company called "Nodding Donkey". The sale was not reported at the time, and in November 2015, the company changed its name to "Karoo Energy". This does not bode well for the future of the Park. ●

■ Mating African lion *Panthera leo*.



■ Left, Secretary bird *Sagittarius serpentarius*; center, the endangered Ludwig's bustard *Neotis ludwigii*; right, African Ostrich *Struthio camelus*.



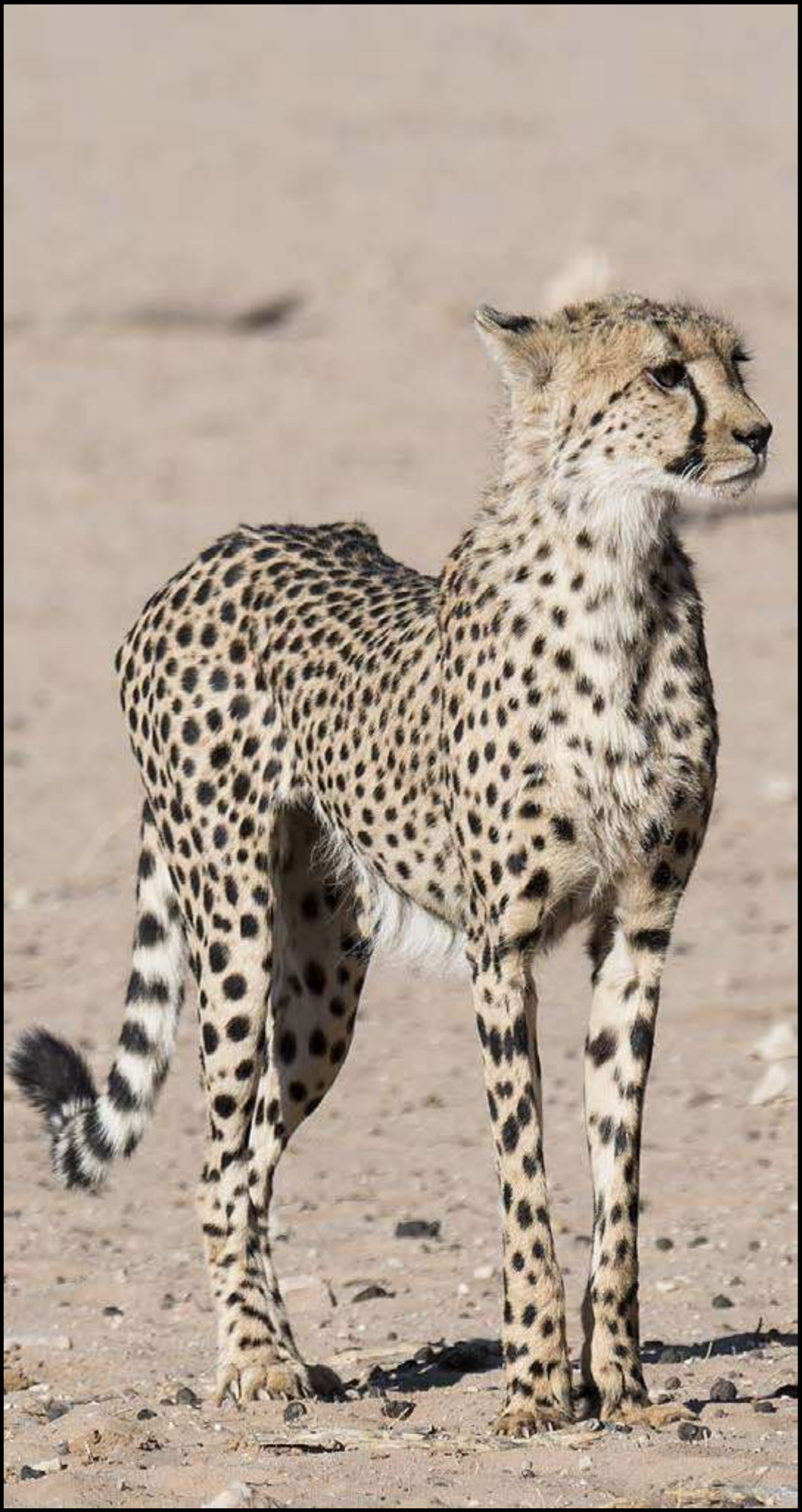


■ Top, three resting African lion *Panthera leo* males; bottom, a rarely observed and very shy Cape fox *Vulpes chama* peeking at us from its burrow.





Two African White-backed vultures *Gyps africanus* and a Lappet-faced vulture or Nubian vulture *Torgos tracheliotos* pausing at a waterhole.



■ Left, Cheetah
Acinonyx jubatus;
center and right,
Gemsbok or South
African oryx
Oryx gazella.



■ *Brown hyena*
Parahyaena
brunnea.
This is one of the
most interesting
species of the
Kgalagadi, being
quite uncommon
elsewhere.



■ Swallow-tailed
bee-eater
*Merops
hirundineus* with
a freshly-caught
moth. These are
quite common
near Nossob.



*A pride of African lion
Panthera leo on the walk.*



African lion
Panthera leo.



Left, Tawny eagle *Aquila rapax*;
right, immature Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus argentior*.





Left,
Bateleur eagle
Terathopius
ecaudatus;
right,
Martial eagle
Polemaetus
bellicosus.





Ostrich Struthio camelus family with newly hatched chicks.



■ Left, Spotted Eagle-owl *Bubo africanus*, a large and common denizen of the shrubbery along the dry riverbeds of Nossob; right, Cape ground squirrel *Xerus inauris*.



Dueling Gemsbok or South African oryx
Oryx gazella -
a great photo
opportunity and a
highlight of the
observations in the
Kgalagadi.





A sequence showing an African wildcat *Felis lybica* stalking and catching an unlucky Lark.



■ The hunt was a success - African wildcat *Felis lybica* with freshly caught Lark prey.





Left, Pearl-
spotted Owlet
*Glaucidium
perlatum*; right,
snarling African
lion *Panthera leo*.





Left, Ostrich ■
Struthio camelus male
with very young chick;
right, an unusual image
of a Gemsbok
or South African oryx
Oryx gazella with a
rival's broken horn
sticking from its flank.





■ Typical landscape of the Kgalagadi in the vicinity of Nossob camp.

■ Top, yellow
mongoose *Cynictis
penicillata* taking a
sand bath; bottom,
playful African lion
Panthera leo cubs.





Wide open dry riverbeds constitute the Kgalagadi's salient landscape feature.



Top, Bat-eared fox *Otocyon megalotis*; bottom, two black-maned African lion *Panthera leo* males.



A line-up of African Collared doves *Streptopelia roseogrisea* perching on a branch above a waterhole. This is where they get hunted by Black-backed jackals - see our article on issue 31 of Anima Mundi -Adventures in Wildlife Photography.



SCOOP!

Bird-hunting jackals of the Kgalagadi
AMBUSH IN NOSSOB
ENCOUNTER A WOLF AT THE WATERHOLE
OF A REMOTE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL PARK

Special Wild Bird
Photo: Chris Hemmings
How harmful is habitat loss?
— coming to light in the
suburbans of South Africa
by Graham Greenway



■ Mating pair
of African lion
Panthera leo.

At-a-glance travel guide



COUNTRY OF DESTINATION: SOUTH AFRICA



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: The best option would be to land in Cape Town and then drive/be driven all the way up north to the Kgalagadi. It's a long, tiring two-day drive with an intermediate stop in Upington (we can safely recommend to spend the night at the De Werf Lodge there). When in the Kgalagadi you'll have to be self-sufficient regarding food and vehicle, so have everything prepared accordingly by your guide.

MEANS OF TRANSPORT: You'll need a robust, reliable 4x4 as the deep sand and soft dust roads inside the Kgalagadi can be surprisingly tricky to navigate, needing some specific experience. One more reason to be taken there by a reliable,

experienced guide such as our long-time friend Phillip Conradie of [African Wildlife Photo Safaris](#). No walking is allowed while in the Kgalagadi, and visitors can leave the car only briefly and at very few specific, built-up picnic-with-toilet locations.

CURRENCY: South African Rand, but USD and Euros are commonly accepted in all lodges.

ACCOMODATION: Roomy, cool and very comfortable chalets in Twee Rivieren (usually the first stop in the Park, and the only camp with a restaurant), lovely, romantic tented huts on stilts in the Kalahari Tented Camp, little basic cottages in

Nossob (which is the place where one really wants to be regarding wildlife). Cutlery, water and kitchen appliances are usually available but you'll have to bring along your own food supplies. Again, some experience in self-catering safaris helps. Camps are usually fenced with wire and gates are locked before sunset, but it's a good idea to stay inside your cottage anyway during the night.

FOOD: South Africans have a national obsession with *braai* (in a broad sense, meats grilled on an open fire), and we must admit that we had the best, juiciest steaks of our entire life in a restaurant in Johannesburg. Food at the Kgalagadi will be as you

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make it - you'll be carrying frozen lamb, chicken, beef and possibly game and sausages, so that means lots of grilled meats, basically.

LANGUAGE: Afrikaans and English.

WORRIES: South Africa has an extremely high incidence of armed robberies and serious violence in most big cities, so be warned - walking around at night or in several urban neighborhoods can be an extremely risky proposition, even for the locals. Regarding the National Parks and Wildlife Reserves, it goes without saying that all wildlife is potentially dangerous and that all safety measures must be strictly adhered to when on safari - this cannot be repeated often enough, as accidents do happen and people tend to be extremely careless, mostly out of ignorance. Responsible game wardens, safari drivers and wildlife guides will explain all the details

and keep an eye on you, but remember always this is the African bush and that in the Kgalagadi you are on your own - lions and leopards can and will actually eat people, and venomous snakes will readily bite whoever struts around barefooted at night, so don't be silly. And walking in flip-flops on acacia thorns can really spoil one's holiday!

HEALTH: No serious risks of dangerous tropical diseases. The climate is hot and dry and malaria is non-existent in the Kalahari desert. Bring your own drinks and avoid drinking water at the camps.

CLIMATE: Predictably, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park has a typical Kalahari desert, arid to semi-arid climate, very hot and very dry for much of the year. There is what one might call a rainy season during the summer months, but rain is often little and unpredictable. The summer season begins in

November and ends in March, with very high temperatures - variations of up to 40 degrees centigrade within a 24hr period are not uncommon. We visited the Kgalagadi in November, at the very start of summer, and found the climate perfectly manageable, with hot days and pleasantly cool nights. This also helped a lot with wildlife sightings - animals tend to stay hidden more when it's too hot during the day, and night game drives are not allowed in the Kgalagadi.

BESIDES: South Africa is a stunningly beautiful country, with marvelous landscapes and a huge variety of National Parks. Considering the complex logistics, the amount of time needed to reach the Kgalagadi and last but not least the high cost involved, however, we recommend to devote your holiday to this specific destination alone, leaving the other options for another occasion. ●

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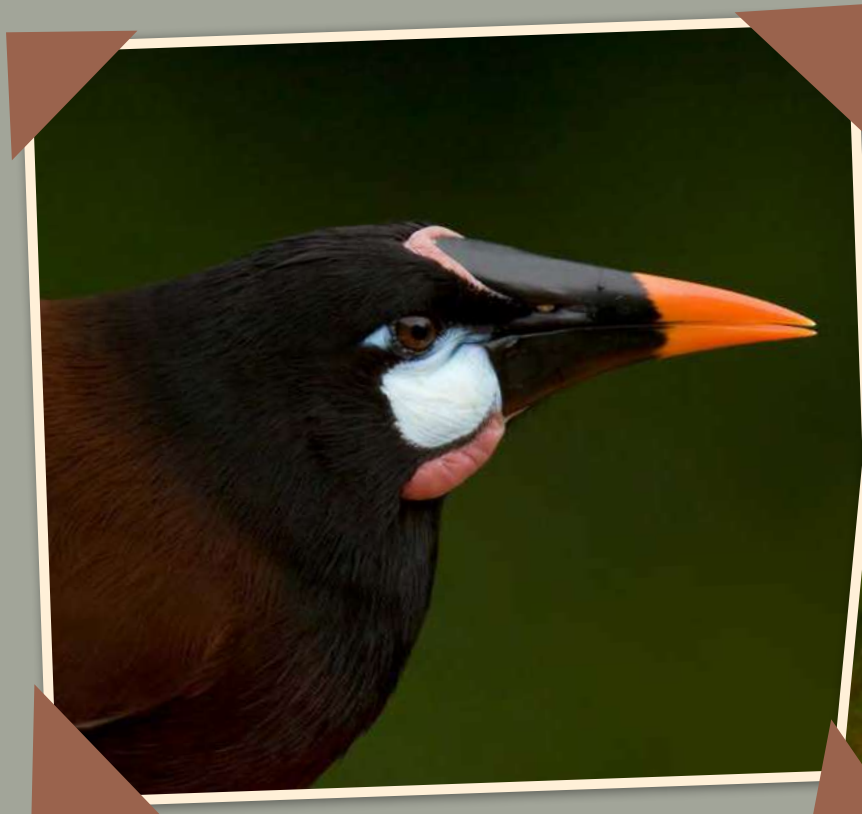
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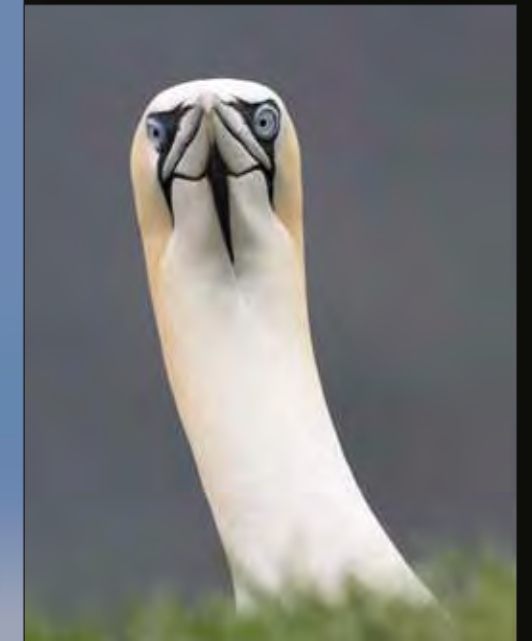
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"My experience was EXCEPTIONAL! The trip exceeded my expectations in all areas. I hoped to get in a position to see owls and couldn't possibly have been happier. It was abundantly clear that David invested significant time and effort prior to the arrival of the group in scouting the area around Quebec and Ontario. He knew exactly where to go to find every species of owl. His knowledge and efforts were very much appreciated by the entire group. My primary objective was just getting in a position to photograph owls and was not expecting much in the way of photographic instruction. I was very pleasantly surprised and was very happy with the instruction. Prior to the trip I had a love/hate relationship with auto focus as it applies to photographing birds in flight. I've struggled with this for years. While I have a lot more to

learn, and need to work at honing my skills, the trip with NPA helped me tremendously in being able to photograph birds in flight. Photographing birds in flight was my main objective. Prior to the trip I was nearly clueless in comparison to my skills after the trip. You can also see from my bird list that I found the trip productive from a birding perspective as well".
Kevin McCarthy, USA

"I recommend NPA workshops! The level of services by workshop leaders was excellent. Quality of photographic instruction was exceptional and they

were always on hand to solve issues that arose, and I had more than my share of equipment issues. Quality of wildlife provided was good and I was amazed at how easily the subjects accepted new setups provided. Locations visited were right on for the 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".
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BOTSWANA

MOREMI MEMORIES

A brief but enchanting trip to the Wildlife Reserve sprawling at the wetland doorstep of the fabled Okavango delta



African elephant *Loxodonta africana* in a typical semi-flooded Moremi environment. On the title page, adult female and baby hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius*.

TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA AND ANTONELLA FERRARI



Moremi Game Reserve is a protected area in Botswana on the eastern side of the Okavango Delta. It was designated as a Game Reserve, rather than a National Park, when it was created. This designation meant that the BaSarwa or Bushmen that lived there were allowed to stay in the reserve. We briefly visited it on our way to Chobe National Park.

Moremi Game Reserve is just under 5,000 square kilometres (1,900 sq mi) in extent, covering much of the eastern side of the Okavango Delta, combining permanent water with drier areas and creating some startling contrasts. Here one can experience excellent views of savannah game as well as bird-watching on the lagoons. There are also thickly wooded areas, which are home to the Cape wild dog *Lycaon pictus pictus* and leopard. To the northeast lies the Chobe National Park which borders the Moremi Game Reserve. Only about 30% of the reserve is mainland, with the bulk being within the Okavango Delta itself.

Although not one of the largest Parks, Moremi presents insights and views even for the most experienced of travelers. Its habitats are surprisingly diverse, combining mopane woodland and acacia forests, floodplains and lagoons. It is home to nearly 500 species of bird (from water birds to forest dwellers), and a vast array of other species of wildlife including Cape

buffalo, Angolan giraffe, black rhinoceros, lion, elephant, hippopotamus, zebra, cheetah, hyena, jackal, impala, and red lechwe. Cape wild dogs have been the subject of a project run in the area since 1989. The Reserve offers the opportunity to explore not only in 4x4's but on foot and by mokoro - a dug-out canoe. Game viewing is at its peak from July to October, when seasonal pans dry up and the wildlife concentrates on the permanent water. From October until the start of the rains in late November or early December, the weather can be extremely hot. Malaria is prevalent throughout the Reserve and it is strongly recommended that visitors should take precautions before, during and after a visit. The Reserve itself has very few lodges and only four areas set-aside for camping, but there are a number of relatively affordable lodges on the outskirts of the Reserve.

Roads in Moremi Game Reserve change dramatically depending upon the season and the water level of the Delta. When the flood waters are high some of the roads are waterlogged, while exposed sandy areas are much harder to navigate during the hot summer months.

Starting April 2019, poaching has sadly risen at an alarming rate in the Reserve. Organised poaching rings slaughtered 46 rhinos in 10 months, representing almost 10% of Botswana's 500 rhinos. ●

Southern red-billed hornbill *Tockus rufirostris*.



Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*, a large, heavy-bodied antelope which favours wetlands and wooded areas.



African lion *Panthera leo*.



A typical water-snail eater, the African openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*.



Little bee-eater *Merops pusillus*.



Spur-winged goose *Plectropterus gambensis*.



Wattled crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*, a beautiful but rarely encountered species.



Striped or Le Vaillant's cuckoo *Oxylophus levaillantii*.



Adult bull hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius*, arguably Africa's most dangerous large animal.



Green-backed heron *Butorides striatus*.



Adult hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius* showing dominance.



African lioness *Panthera leo*.



African elephant *Loxodonta africana* caked in mud.



African grey hornbill *Tockus nasutus*.



African darter *Anhinga rufa*.



African elephants and hippos sharing the same pools and small, meandering watercourses - a typical Moremi habitat scene.



African fish eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*.



Tawny eagle *Aquila rapax*.



Mother and baby hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius* grazing in the open at twilight.



Dwarf mongoose *Helogale parvula* in anthill den.



Goliath heron *Ardea goliath*.



Adult hippos *Hippopotamus amphibius* are extremely powerful and easily angered animals, with bulls always vying for dominance.



Arrow-marked babbler *Turdoides jardineii*.



Rufous-bellied heron *Ardeola rufiventris*.



Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*.



Red-billed teal *Anas erythrorhynchos*.



Spotted hyena *Crocuta crocuta*.



Red lechwe *Kobus leche sub. leche*.



Burchell's Starling *Lamprotornis australis*.



Bull African elephant *Loxodonta africana*.



African openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*.



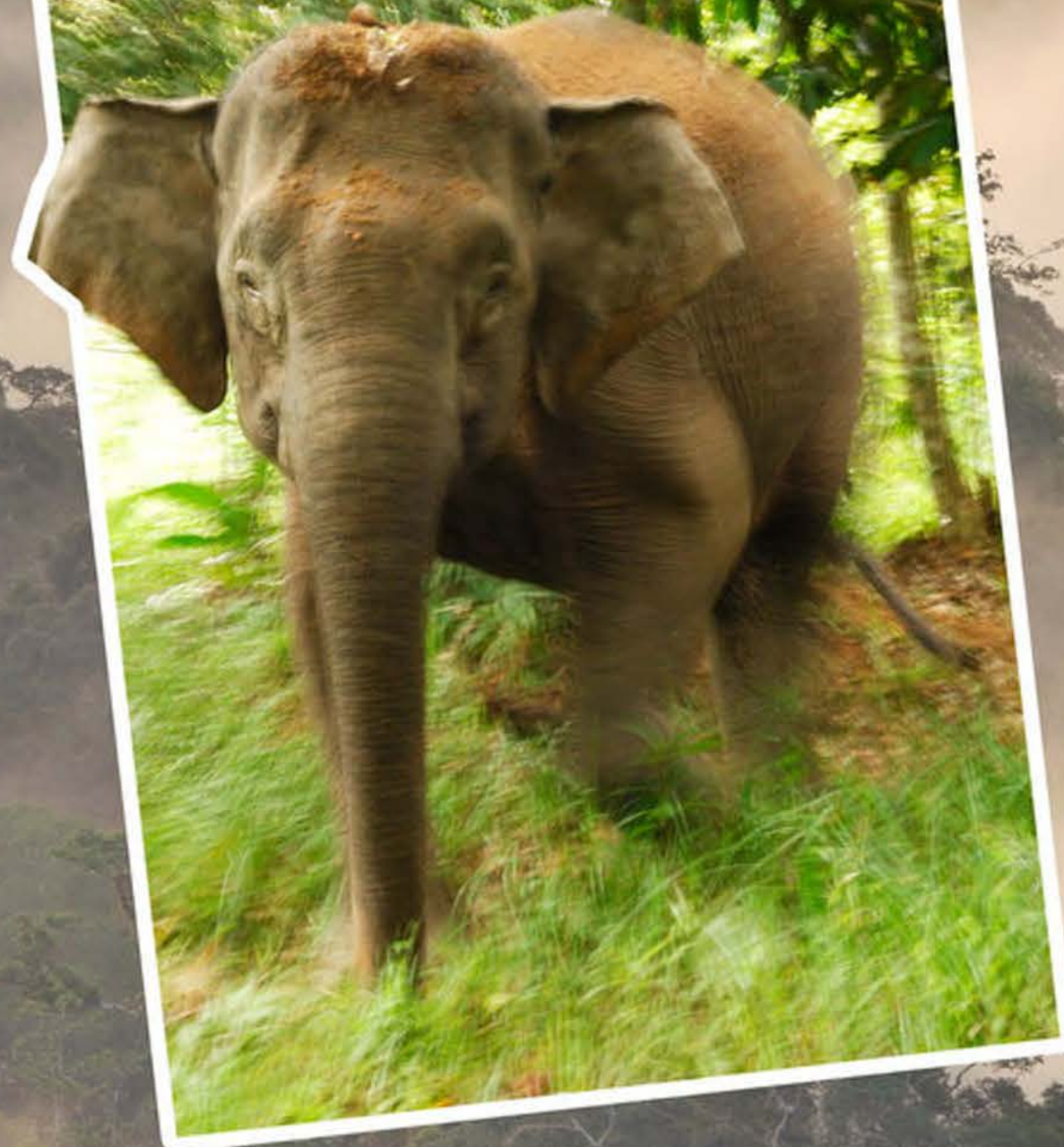
Burchell's Starling *Lamprotornis australis*.



Red lechwe *Kobus leche* sub. *leche*, a robust-bodied antelope species beautifully adapted to wetland and semi-flooded habitats.

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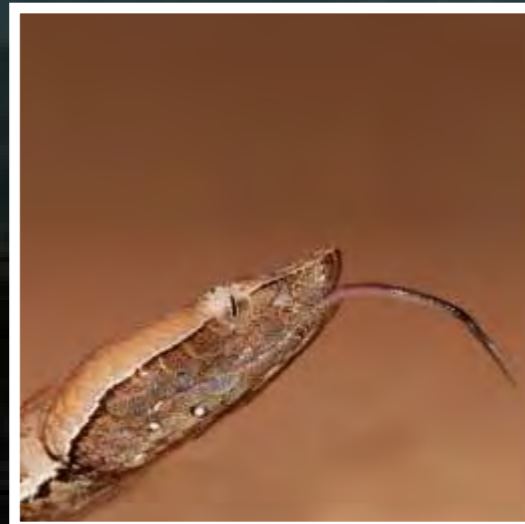
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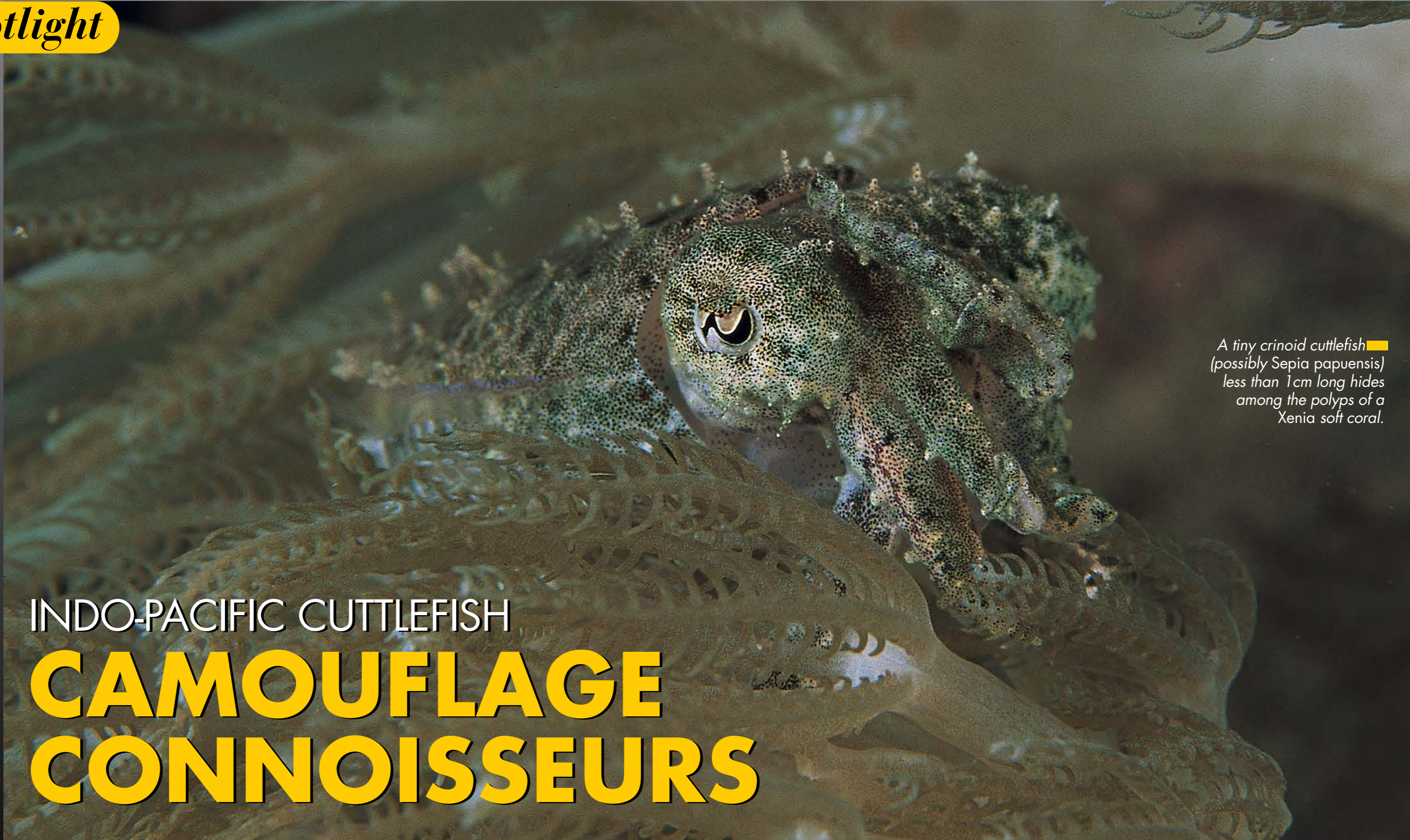
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A tiny crinoid cuttlefish (possibly *Sepia papuensis*) less than 1cm long hides among the polyps of a *Xenia* soft coral.

INDO-PACIFIC CUTTLEFISH
**CAMOUFLAGE
CONNOISSEURS**

From tiny to large, often very colorful but not easy to identify correctly, always stupendously adept at disappearing at will in their marine environment

Identifying small cuttlefish in the field is a difficult task - this might be a baby Broadclub cuttlefish *Sepia latimanus* or an adult *Sepia cf mestus*.



TEXT BY ANDREA FERRARI
PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

Say "Sotong" and most people in SE Asia will immediately think "Yum yum". But translate that to "cuttlefish" and most experienced divers and underwater photographers will go "Wow". It's a fact: these camouflaged cephalopods are among the most fascinating critters of the reef. Curiously shaped – the Class name means "footed head" in Latin – incredibly adept at changing body shape and color with lightning speed and exceptionally intelligent, these common mollusks never cease to amaze those patient enough to stop for a while and try interacting with them while on a dive on tropical reefs. Powerful, stealthy and cunning predators, they are in turn hunted and eaten by large morays, reef whitetip sharks and large groupers.

COMMON BUT CAMOUFLAGED

Cuttlefish are quite common and are often encountered in shallow water, especially the two largest Indo-Pacific species, the Broadclub *Sepia latimanus* and the Pharaoh *Sepia pharaonis* – which look rather similar and are often confused underwater by novice divers: both can reach an impressive size with a length of about 40 centimeters in the largest specimens. The latter usually

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A tiny *Sepia latimanus* baby mimics to near-perfection the dead mangrove leaf next to which it is resting.



A rapid-fire five-second sequence showing how fast and how impressively the usually showy Flamboyant Cuttlefish *Metasepia pfefferi* can change its appearance.

sports thinly white-barred tentacles, but both are capable of switching patterns, colors and even skin texture in a matter of seconds, going from a smooth unicolored or faintly mottled general shape to a perfectly camouflaged one sporting all sorts of spots, bars and skin flaps. In season they can often be observed among branching coral colonies, courting each other, mating and subsequently laying clusters of

blackish, grape-like eggs among the coral ramifications, where they will be better protected by roving predators. If you meet some during one of these occasions, stop and take your time without disturbing them – you’ll be able to enjoy some very interesting behaviour and a lot of very colorful displays. Belligerent males will often flourish their tentacles, waving them to and fro in a intimidatory display which

really makes them look like creatures from another world (which in fact, after all, they are): it’s a behavior which is better described by photographs than by words. These two large species usually display a large degree of curiosity towards divers if left undisturbed, and will come close to investigate their human observers, occasionally allowing gentle touching and in general giving the unmistakable feeling they’re somehow trying to communicate – always be careful however, as they can always mistake you for food, shooting their strong sucker-rimmed tentacles forward and

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■ Several undescribed or unidentified very small species are best named under the umbrella term "crinoid cuttlefish".



■ An adult Broadclub Sepia latimanus shows how well it can blend with its surroundings.

■ Baby or adult? It's difficult to say - this individual is about 1cm/1/2 inch long. This has been tentatively identified as *Sepia cf. mestus*.



Adult Broadclub cuttlefish *Sepia latimanus* are easily recognized by their large size.



administering a very painful bite with their parrot-like horny beak, which they normally use to kill and break apart their daily fare such as lobsters, crabs and occasionally fish (we once saw one catch and eat alive a large frogfish – not a pretty sight!). Very elegant swimmers, these cuttlefish will usually slowly float close to the reef, undulating the transparent, iridescent fin which rims their body (or “sac”), often hovering motionless while scanning the surroundings with their penetrating, goat-like slit eyes. But don’t underestimate their speed – if frightened they’ll be gone in a flash, using their jet-propulsion (water is pushed out with great strength by their syphon) to bolt away in the distance, often releasing a phantom-image of themselves from their

ink-sac to confuse their pursuers. Much smaller, quite more static but incredibly more colorful, the legendary and much sought-after Flamboyant Cuttlefish *Metasepia pfefferi* is normally about 10 centimeters along and is usually observed by lucky divers ambling on the seafloor, often among scattered coral heads on sand bottoms, literally “walking” using two modified skin flaps and its front tentacles. Seeing one for the first time is not easily forgotten, as the spectacular critter seems to spend most of its time actively hunting, methodically rolling on the substrate like a miniature battle tank and continuously flashing rhythmic waves of neon-bright white, fuchsia and yellow on its chocolate brown body. Amazing! Flamboyants will usually rapidly switch

continued on page 100 >



This is the same individual shown on page 96 - notice how different its appearance is now that it is trying to camouflage itself.



Tiny Indo-Pacific cuttlefish species are usually found among soft coral colonies, often on silty or coral rubble bottoms.

to a camouflage mode before striking their small prey – shrimp and the like – becoming a perfectly believable little chunk of rock covered with algae and debris, but after having caught it they'll immediately start moving again, intermittently flashing their outrageous neon-sign waves of color again. Beware! Nobody know for sure, but in fact this bright colors and pattern might

advertise a very poisonous bite in what is called an "aposematic warning" – just think of the bright colors of the Blue-ring Octopus to see what we mean. Rare everywhere but seasonally fairly common and temporarily resident (ie they stay in the same area for quite a few weeks), Flamboyants certainly are among the most desirable of subjects for underwater photographers.

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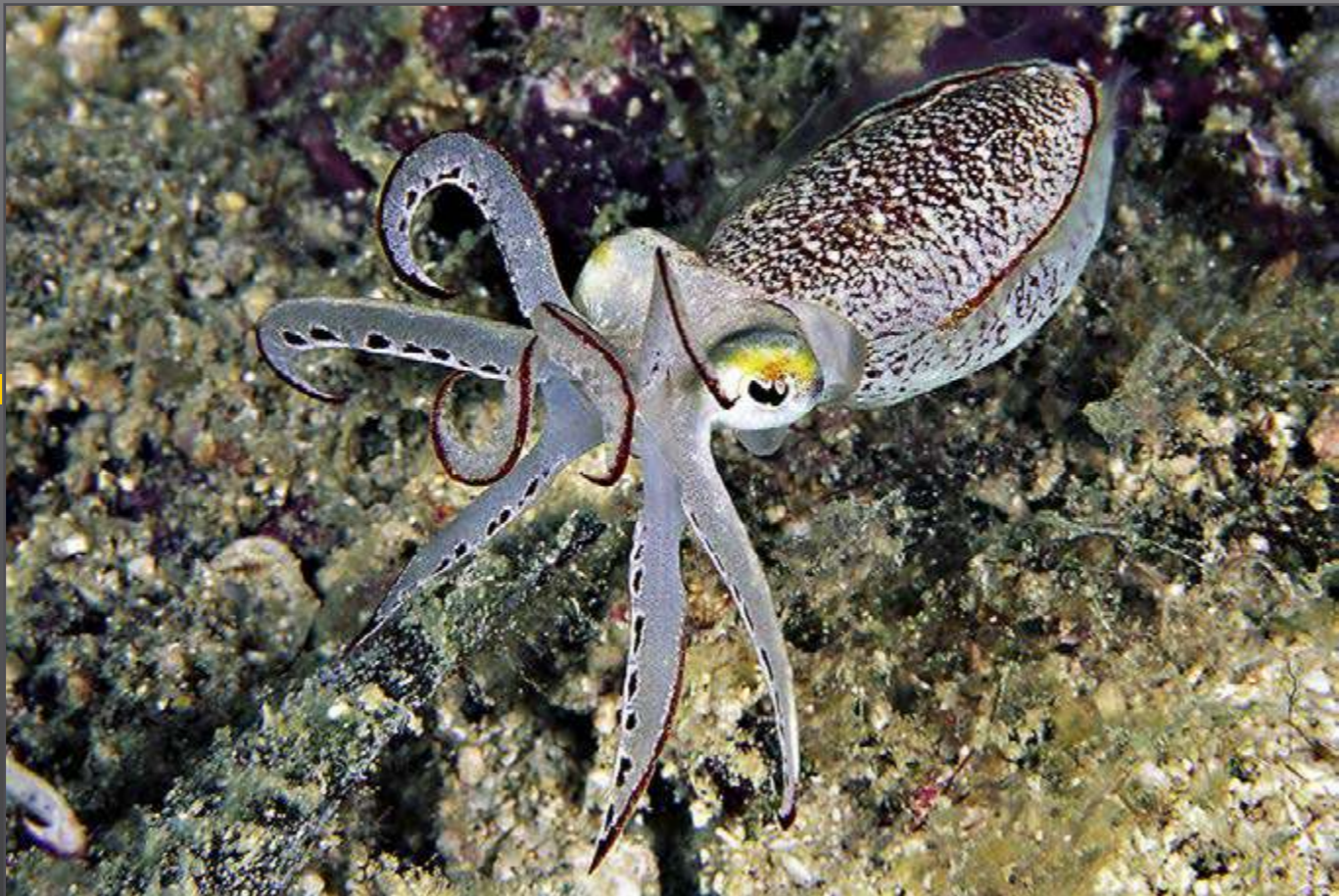


Another [redacted] exceptionally small (about 1cm or 1/2 inch long) individual, tentatively identified as *Sepia bandensis*.



Tiny but pugnacious, a pair of 2cm-long individuals tentatively identified as *Sepia cf. mestus* engage in a showy display - possibly a territorial dispute, or maybe courting behavior.

The fascinating display put up by a pair of 1cm-long cuttlefish belonging to an unidentified species, which we observed only once in more than 20 years of diving in the central Indo-Pacific.



MASTERFUL MIMICS

Several other smaller and less-known cuttlefish are equally fascinating for the experienced and discerning shutterbug – such as the exquisitely camouflaged Stumpy-spined *Sepia bandensis*, the Reaper *Sepia cf mestus*, the Crinoid Cuttlefish *Sepia sp.* and the incredibly tiny Papuan cuttlefish *Sepia papuensis*. These are highly specialized, little studied and rather uncommon species, often requiring long hours of searching to be observed – look for them among coral rubble at night (*bandensis*), close to branching sponge colonies on sand bottoms during the day (*Sepia cf mestus* and the Crinoid *Sepia sp.*) and among branching soft corals (*papuensis*). They're all very good at mimicking

other stuff (the Crinoid cuttlefish will often assume a black/white/yellow striped livery while swimming in open water from one sponge to the next, looking exactly like a Striped Fangblenny *Petroscirtes breviceps*) and very difficult to spot. Strictly not a cuttlefish, the Nautilus *Nautilus pompilio* is a very primitive "living fossil" which will be occasionally trapped at depth by fishermen at night – if you have the chance to see one do not miss it, as these are very interesting subjects too. Sadly, releasing them after their capture won't do them any good – being deep water dwellers (they spend daylight hours at 300-400 meters depth), they usually get fatally damaged during their capture, and usually die soon afterwards. ●



■ The exceptional camouflage shown by a tiny *Sepia papuensis* hiding on a silty bottom.



Left, a pair of Reaper cuttlefish *Sepia cf. mestus*; far left, the uniquely colorful Flamboyant cuttlefish *Metasepia pfefferi*.



■ Unidentified pair of tiny, less than 1 cm long crinoid cuttlefish, possibly *Sepia* sp.

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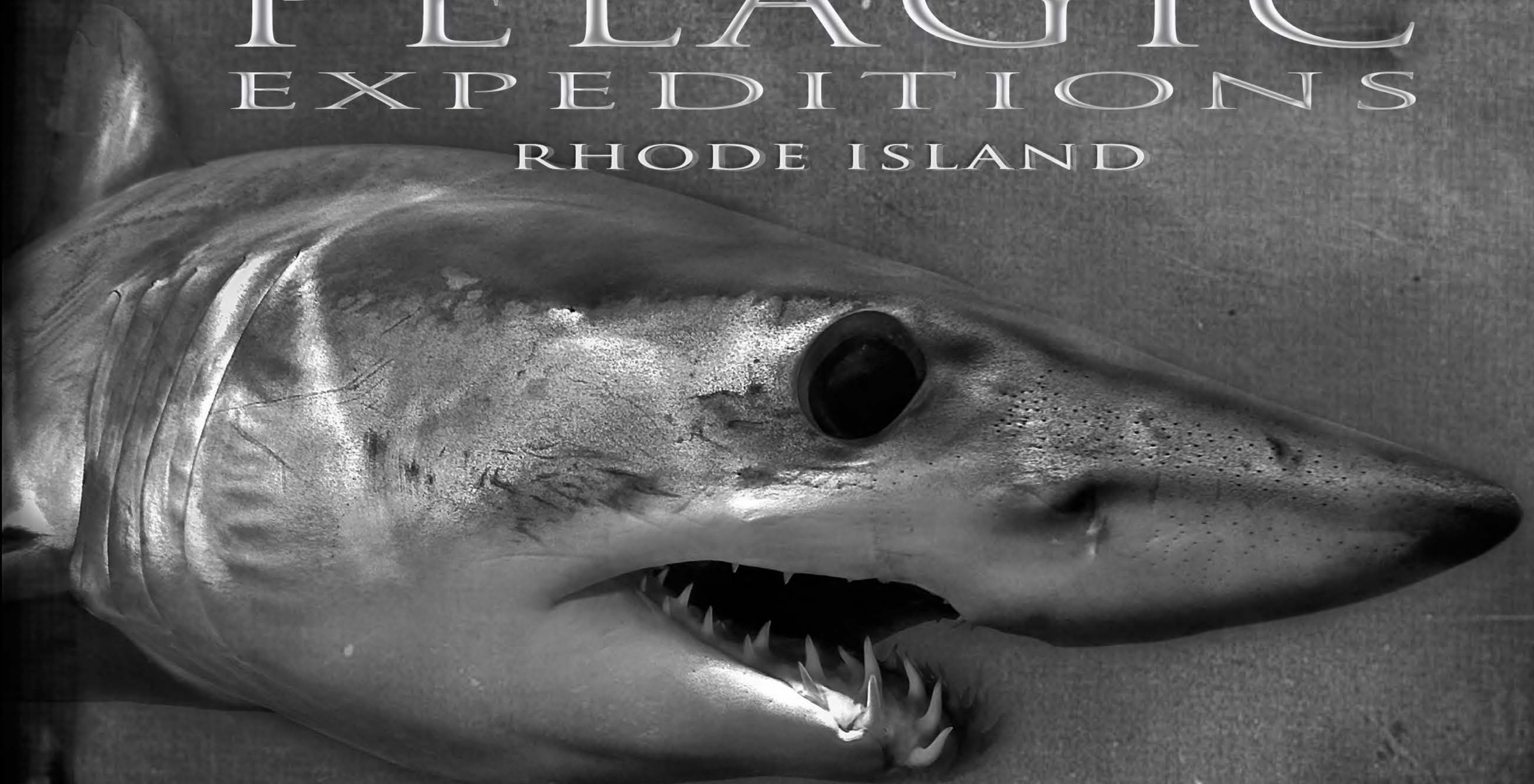
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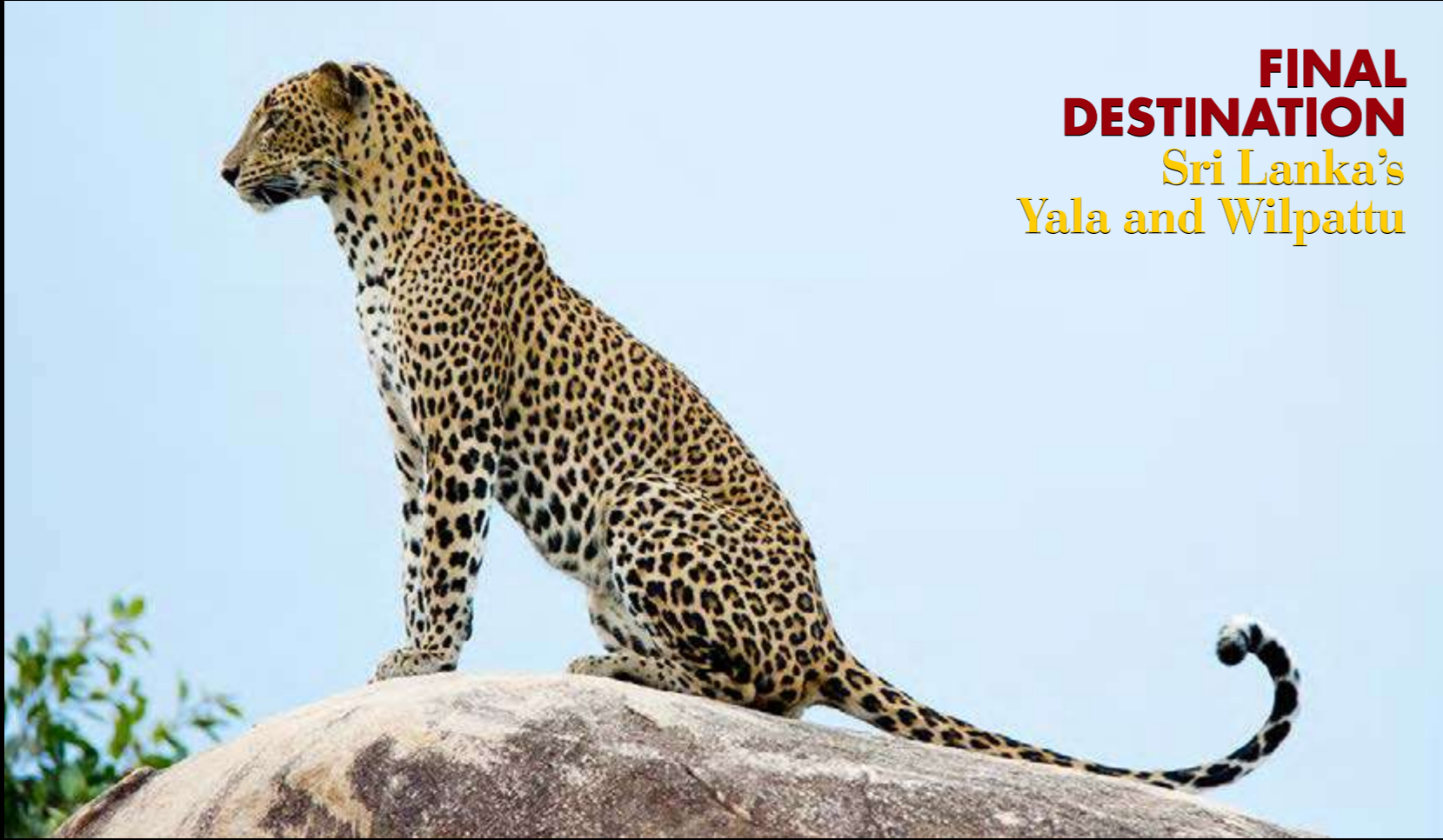


The Parting Shot

When we found and photographed this beautiful Eyelash Pit Viper *Bothriechis schlegelii* in Selva Verde, Costa Rica, about nine or ten years ago, it was still classified as *Bothrops*. Such are the vagaries of scientific nomenclature, an aspect of research and knowledge which I have always stubbornly and strenuously defended all my life (faithful rea-

ders will have noticed that *Anima Mundi - Adventures in Wildlife Photography* prides itself in always adding the Latin name of the animal in captions) but which I have now, late in my life, begun to regard with suspicion. Different name, but still the same snake - so what's in a name, after all? I am starting to find this obsession with categorizing and catalo-

guing everything absolutely useless and rather childish - an attempt to force an order in a planetary life system which knows none. But back to our little venomous subject - in Costa Rica this beautiful and showy bright yellow phase is referred to as "Oropel", ie "Golden skin". Isn't that a pretty name, and doesn't it make more sense after all? ●



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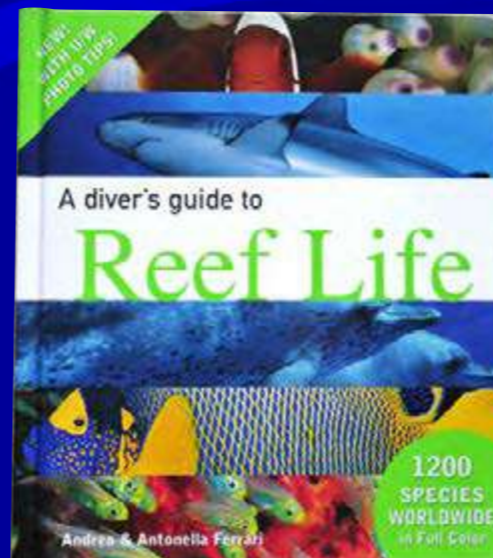


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A Diver's Guide to the Art of Underwater Photography

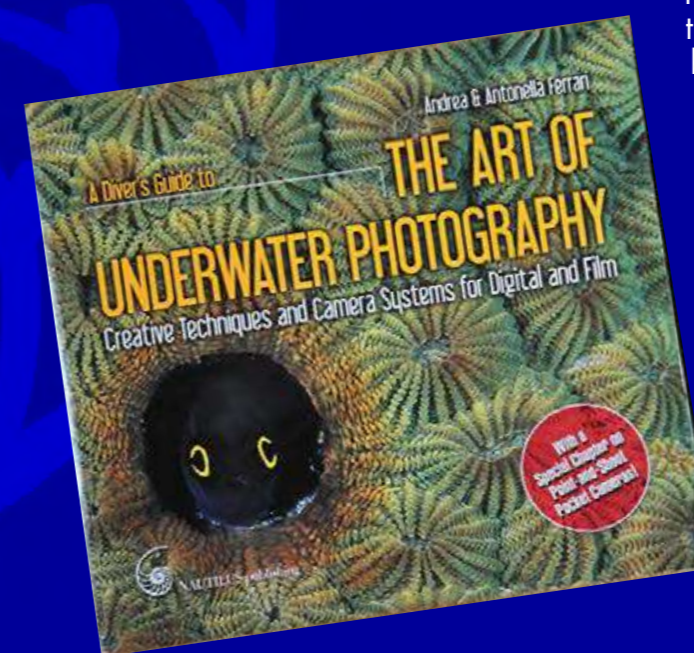
Creative Techniques and Camera Systems for Digital and Film

A highly-readable, technically-accessible, step-by-step guide in eight chapters to the secrets and wonders of underwater photography - featuring dozens of stunning, inspiring images by several of the world's most brilliant authors

THIS IS WHAT THE DIVING COMMUNITY SAYS

ALEX MUSTARD, WETPIXEL.COM: This book gives us a rare insight into the mindset, dedication and imagination involved in creating magnificent underwater images. I sat down and read this enjoyable book from cover to cover. The lack of techno-talk makes it a very accessible method to improve your photography. The images are some of the finest you will see in a guide to underwater photography. All the images are very well reproduced, which will not come as a surprise to anyone who owns any of the other books by the authors. A large format 360 page feast of fabulous images and thought provoking and enjoyable writing on taking pictures in the ocean. • UNDERCURRENT: This book is filled with spectacular images, designed not only to offer great technical guidance, but also help the underwater photographer discover and develop the artist within. Clearly the best and most beautiful "how-to" book ever produced. • JOHN BANTIN, DIVER MAGAZINE: With an enviable reputation for authoring fine books on underwater photography, the Ferraris have laced the pages of their new book with juicy pictures.

There is none of the pseudo-art talk that often ruins otherwise beautiful books of photographs. I read it from cover to cover, and it's a great read. The pictures do the talking, and need no talking-up. This 360-page volume doesn't have a weak page in it. • MIKE SEVERNS DIVING: This book is less about the technical aspects of the craft and more about the art and the "eye." This is a big, fat, beautiful, coffee-table-type book that includes 400 photographs illustrating techniques to achieve such effects as artistic lighting and framing. Inspirational as well as educational.



Visit www.reefwonders.net for more details. Available worldwide from NHBS.com, Amazon.co.uk, Amazon.com and selected outlets

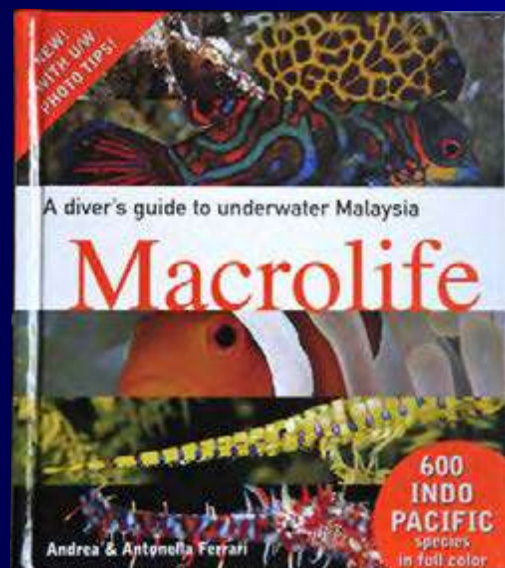
DIVE INTO DISCOVERY WITH NAUTILUS PUBLISHING

A Diver's Guide to Underwater Malaysia Macrolife

600 INDO-PACIFIC MACRO marine species featuring 800 SPECTACULAR COLOR PHOTOS with full details on distribution, habitat, size, life habits and underwater photography tips

THIS IS WHAT THE DIVING COMMUNITY SAYS

DIVERNET: Not only does it help identify the critters, but it also gives useful tips on how to photograph them. • BACKSCATTER: Best work I've yet seen. For Mabul or Kunkungan, this book should be as necessary as a passport. • FAMA MAGAZINE: Well written, quite informative, beautifully illustrated... a priced right, quality publication. Get a copy, you'll be happy you did! • TAUCHEN MAGAZINE: 600 marine species illustrated with spectacular photos and a compact text for a very useful and much needed underwater guide. • ASIAN DIVER: Illustrated with more than 800



extraordinary colour photos, this is the field guide of choice for all serious macro divers. • NORTHERN CALIFORNIA UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY: The photography is impressive - if you need to identify any species from this area, this guide is a gem. • UNDERCURRENT: We just discovered the ultimate guide to Indo-Pacific macro life - this book is a must for traveling divers. BBC WILDLIFE MAGAZINE: Identifies and describes 600 small marine species from the Indo-Pacific. Clear, concise, informative... packed with more than 800 colour photos. • FOUR LAKES SCUBA CLUB: Both a macro and a fish field guide for all serious divers from the Maldives to Australia. A must! • DIVER MAGAZINE: Colour photographs of the highest quality make it easy to identify what you have seen...An essential tool for anyone.