EXPLORERS

FEB / MAR 2026

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GALÁPAGOS:
CONSERVATION AT WORK
BY RANJAN RAMCHANDANI

INTO THE WILD
WITH VIPUL RAMANUJ

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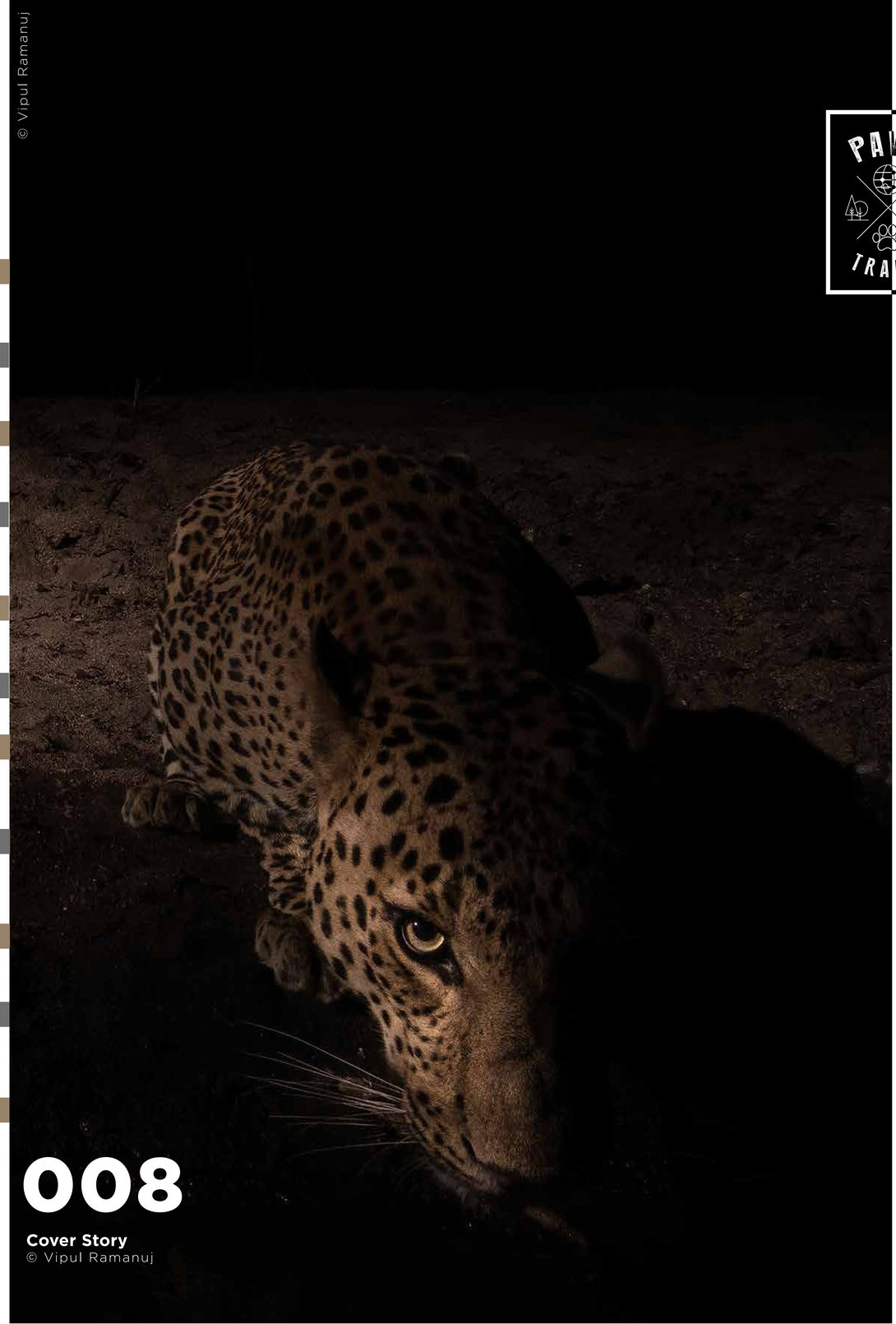
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Cover Story
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Publisher: Paws Trails Explorers **Editors**: Cynthia Bandurek, Ragul Patteri, & Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo
Content Director: Nisha Purushothaman, **Director Photography:** Hermis Haridas, **Design Desk** : Nithya Purushothaman

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PT Explorers Editors
Ragul Patteri, Cynthia Bandurek, & Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo

EDITORS DEN

50th Edition - A Celebration of Wild Stories!

Welcome to the 50th edition of PT Explorers - a milestone made possible by every contributor, reader, and nature lover who believes in the power of storytelling from the wild.

In this special issue:
Into the Wild with Vipul Ramanuj: Our cover story dives into Vipul's evocative artistry, shaped by years of fieldwork and deep connection with his subjects.

Galápagos: Conservation at Work: Ranjan Ramchandani takes us through the fragile wilderness of the Galápagos, where science and responsible tourism join hands.

Eyes of Evolution: Arindam Saha reveals the hidden universe of insect vision and the beauty of the compound eye.

Her Views & Visuals: Jinneth Acosta shares her journey from discovering birds to telling their stories through heartfelt imagery.

Cub's Corner: Young explorer **Hardika Subhash** reminds us how curiosity and wonder shape the conservationists of tomorrow.

Nature's Way: Eric Seemann brings a dramatic winter encounter to life in the snow-covered wilds of British Columbia.

A Macro Perspective: Anirban Dutta leads us into the extraordinary world beneath our feet - where insects, webs, spores, and micro-dramas thrive.

Wild Arts Showcase: Avleen Kaur Palna illustrates how wildlife inspires creativity, courage, and expression.

Your Gallery: A stunning global collection of wildlife moments captured by our community.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable journey. Here's to fifty editions, and to many more stories that keep the wild alive.

© Hermis Haridas

FOUNDERS' NOTE

Fifty editions. What a journey it has been.

When we first launched PT Explorers, we had a single intention, to create space for wild voices, both human and non-human. Today, as we reach our 50th issue, we're reminded that passion, when shared, becomes purpose.

Over the years, this free magazine has become a meeting point: for photographers who wait hours for a perfect frame, for conservationists working quietly behind the scenes, for scientists who decode nature's patterns, and for those who simply love the wild. We are grateful for every contributor, every reader, every story.

This milestone issue features 10 powerful articles, an intimate interview with a wildlife photographer, a conservation story that demands attention, a species spotlight, and a profile of a woman behind the lens. We celebrate a young talent in Cub's Corner, recount a rare moment in the field, explore a travelogue rooted in wilderness, highlight an artist inspired by nature, and close with a gallery that speaks through silence and shadow.

For the latest & past issues,
visit: www.pawstrailsmagazine.com

Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman
Founders - PT Explorers and The Team PT Explorers

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COVER STORY

Into The WILD with Vipul Ramanuj

Vipul is a herpetologist and award-winning wildlife photographer whose work bridges science and storytelling. With hands-on experience in conservation projects - including radio telemetry studies on King Cobras - he brings a deep understanding of reptiles and their ecosystems. Vipul believes in using photography as a tool to inspire curiosity and connection with the wild.

He is the co-founder of Wild Ark, a travel and photography company he runs with Catherene Christian, offering immersive nature experiences rooted in education and conservation.

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Artistic Vision & Style

Your work blends creativity with strong storytelling. How would you describe your visual style, and what emotions do you aim to evoke through your images?

I try and photograph compositions that strongly appeal to me or what I resonate with. It is a mix of portraiture with art, capturing elements of nature, light, subtle mood, or behavioural records. A sense of mysticism is what I try to achieve. I want people to feel the stillness of a dawn to the tension before a hunt through my work. If my image can make someone feel a deep admiration and a sense of responsibility, then it has done its job well.

Many of your photographs feel more like paintings than wildlife portraits. What inspires your unique artistic approach to wildlife?

There's a lot, but I really get inspired from my solitude, where I let my imaginations run wild and let those thoughts marinate till I actualise the perceived composition. I really get inspired by Claude Monet, how he painted light, atmosphere, and his deep understanding and fascination with painting something that is static, yet makes you feel like a moving imagery.

How do you balance creativity with authenticity when working in the wild? Do you plan your compositions or allow the moment to guide you?

© Vipul Ramaraju

Following an old-school approach, most of my images are composed in the field. This allows me more creative freedom. I go without expectations and try to make use of the moment and light that is offered to me by nature. I have planned compositions as well as spontaneous ones. Nature rarely follows a script. I enjoy spontaneous compositions more because I have already lived the planned compositions in my head.

Journey & Evolution

When did your journey into wildlife photography begin, and what sparked your deep connection with nature?

I come across as a photographer; in reality, I am an animal person. Since childhood, I have lived and worked with and for animals in one way or the other. Photography is one of the avenues that I truly enjoy exploiting, as it allows me to foray into their world. I started in 1998 with a Nikon FM10, a fully manual film camera. There isn't a single moment that I can isolate and say what really sparked my interest. It has been a slow and gradual evolution.

Looking back, what has changed the most in your creative process from your early days to now?

Coming from the film camera days, we had a lot of limitations. The compositions that were almost impossible to achieve with those tools are now very easy to come by with new, highly sophisticated technology. With the evolution of technology, vision expanded to venture into newer frontiers.

What are some defining moments in your career that shaped who you are as a photographer today?

During my tenure of research on the world's first radio telemetry project on King Cobras in Agumbe, I had opportunities to document some of the rarest and never-recorded events. Images from the project gave newer insights on King Cobra behaviour and ecology. During this period, I had a chance to work with some of the best filmmakers and photographers from around the world.

Technical Mastery

Your images often showcase challenging lighting, rare behaviours, and dynamic compositions. What are the essential technical skills a photographer must master to attempt these kinds of shots?

Even today, I read the camera user's manual diligently. That lets me know what each button and setting of the camera will help me achieve. Knowing your subject and your gear is the key.

Can you walk us through your thought process when creating a complex image from visualizing the frame to the final click?

It is a work of patience. By patience, I do not only mean to patiently wait for the species. I mean one should go on a long haul and not "chase" compositions, as when I chase, I restrict my imagination to follow a path. On the other hand, I study a lot about the terrain and species and have a mental library of the compositions that I could make. Adding more layers

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of complexity step by step lets me push myself further.

Which gear or specific techniques have played a significant role in elevating your work?

Camera trapping and photographing wide-angle-macro images has really helped me catapult my work to a different level.

Creative Risk-Taking

Many of your images feel experimental, bold, or unconventional. How do you push yourself creatively while ensuring your work remains ethical and respectful to wildlife?

I try a lot. My experience of working with animals closely, helps me here to be self-disciplined enough to be ethical. It helps me decide when I am stressing the species or the habitat and when to stop my approach. Within this framework, I have to make the most of the situation, gear, and skills that I possess.

Have there been moments where your creative vision required patience or risk? What did those experiences teach you?

There are plenty of occasions, especially when more of my work revolves around working with venomous snakes and going around in the forests on foot in the night. It is really humbling to feel that I am at the mercy of nature.

Connection With Wildlife

Your photographs reflect deep observation and understanding of

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animal behaviour. How important is natural history knowledge in creating powerful wildlife images?

There are two things here: one, you just get lucky to capture animal behaviour; secondly, natural history knowledge is as important as knowing your camera. It helps you anticipate and predict behaviour and compose the shot accordingly. Without understanding animal behaviour, wildlife photography remains superficial.

Has any particular species challenged you the most from a creative or storytelling perspective?

Yes, the Great Indian Bustard! They are very shy species and I am too shy to chase them considering the fact how critically endangered they are!

Challenges & Insights

What are the biggest creative challenges in wildlife photography today, especially in the age of social media?

Algorithm-friendly images following viral trends push one towards creating mundane work. This completely overshadows the originality of work.

What misconceptions do people have about the realities of wildlife photography behind the scenes?

One of the biggest misconceptions is that booking safaris and buying good gear is all that one needs. Also, people feel it is very glamorous to be a wildlife photographer. Another misconception is that one can salvage a bad image by

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over–post-processing.

Impact & Purpose

How do you hope your work influences viewers especially in terms of conservation, empathy, and appreciation for the wild?

It is a very quiet call to protect the habitats, consume less, and check human population. All the species shall bounce back with zero human intervention. Showing the unseen creates interest and empathy. I hope to touch more and more lives to change them into responsible and nature-loving citizens.

What role do you believe creative photography plays in reshaping how people perceive wildlife and nature?

Creative imagery can transform conservation from a scientific issue into a human one. When people emotionally connect with an image, they're more likely to care about the species or ecosystem behind it. Art becomes a soft, compelling advocate for protection.

Looking Ahead

What new ideas, projects, or creative directions are you excited to explore in the coming years?

I do not plan; I take it as it comes, one step at a time. Always excited to see what tomorrow brings, without expectations. Having said that, I really look forward to exploring more habitats and bringing newer compositions and not following the "trends."

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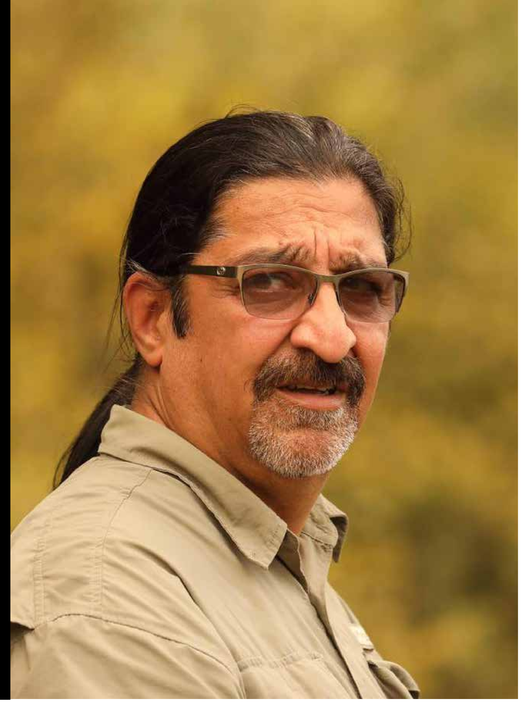
CONSERVATION

Galápagos: Conservation at Work

By **Ranjan Ramchandani**

© Ranjan Ramchandani

Galápagos Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*)



Ranjan is a Singapore-based professional photographer and author specialising in wildlife photography and digital art. A self-described lifelong student of photography, his work resists confinement to a single genre, reflected in a diverse global portfolio. After studying photography in school and later graduating from the New York Institute of Photography, he returned full-time to his craft over the past 15 years, photographing across regions from the Masai Mara to the Galápagos Islands. He is the author of Swades; Ladakh: The Land of Splendour, published to support earthquake recovery efforts, and co-creator of the world's first photographic 3D book, Masai Mara: A Wild Escape. His work, rooted in themes of preservation and conservation, has been featured in Sanctuary Asia, Outdoor Photographer, and The Wild Lens, where he also serves as editor, alongside collaborations with WWF, Olympus, and Canon.

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Galápagos Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

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Nazca Booby (*Sula granti*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

Nazca Booby (*Sula granti*)

Landing on the shores of the Galápagos Islands, I felt the kind of wonder that accompanies the glance into a world unlike your own. Over several visits, my camera and I have followed the marine iguanas, the playful dives of Galápagos sea lions, the rare march of Galápagos penguins along equatorial rocks, and the bright-plumed land birds that thrive nowhere else. What I came to appreciate most, however, was the fragile ecosystem and the efforts under way to protect it, in partnership with tourism.

The Galápagos archipelago may appear immutable, but it has faced immense pressures: invasive species, resource over-use, plastic pollution, and rapid tourist growth. External engagement and long-term partnerships have aided conservation efforts:

· The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has been working here since the 1960s, documenting that these islands are under threat from over-grazing, non-native animals and tourism if unmanaged.

· The Charles Darwin Foundation, since its founding in 1959, has driven scientific monitoring and the eradication of invasive species that are crucial for restoring native wildlife.

· Visitor-based conservation: The Galápagos Conservancy highlights that responsible tourism is essential; when tourists travel with accredited, committed operators, they help fund park infrastructure, local education and research.

These efforts have real results: ecosystems that seemed irrevocably

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Galápagos Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

Galápagos Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*)

Galápagos Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

San Cristobal Mockingbird (*Mimus melanotis*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

damaged are showing signs of recovery. My photographs document this; bird colonies around islands where goats and pigs once roamed freely are now healthier. The vegetation is thicker, and the birds, more numerous.

Tourism in the Galápagos is a double-edged sword. On one hand, the archipelago receives about 270,000+ visitors annually, and that influx brings needed revenue to support conservation programs. On the other hand, unregulated visitor numbers, expansion of infrastructure and poor waste management can degrade the lands that made the islands unique.

But the stories I have witnessed through my lens are heartening. When tourism is consciously managed, it becomes part of the solution. There are, for instance:

· Specialists guiding small groups, helping visitors understand the biology and fragility of the ecosystem, and ensuring they don't harm it.

· Tour operators contributing part of their revenue to local conservation programs and ensuring leisurely vacations are also conservation investments.

· Tourists leaving as advocates: I have met several visitors who returned home inspired, and who are now organically raising awareness in their networks.

In these ways, the islands become a classroom. My lens and I strive to follow a simple set of rules: maintain distances, disturb nothing and no one. I found that

Galápagos Fur Seal Pup (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

Blue-footed Booby (*Sula nebouxii*)

Galápagos Marine Iguana (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) and Lava Heron (*Butorides sundevalli*)

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Galápagos land iguana (*Conolophus subcristatus*)

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Albatrosses (*Diomedeidae*)

the “leave no trace” ethos actually ensures the wildlife was less skittish – that they feel at home in their home – which leads to more authentic images, and meaningful observations.

There is a clear need for continued vigilance. Introduced species remain one of the greatest threats; the invasive goat eradication of Project Isabela is a notable success, but many challenges remain. Marine conservation – the fight against illegal fishing and protecting the rich but delicate marine reserves – is still evolving. Tourist management has to adapt as demand grows.

And there is potential for this to work. The partnership of scientists, park authorities, local communities and conscious travelers is paying dividends; years ago, the shoreline was eroding rapidly, but today I see more nests, healthier colonies, and cleaner shorelines.

The Galápagos Islands are a living testament that conservation isn’t a passive ideal – it is active, it involves people, and when done well, it can leave us with wonders not just to photograph, but also to treasure. If you visit someday, bring more than your camera – bring curiosity, respect and a willingness to become part of the solution. The best moment may not be captured in the image you take, but the impact you leave behind: a healthier island for the next traveler, or yourself a decade down the line, and most certainly for the next generation of Galápagos wildlife.

White-cheeked Pintail (*Anas bahamensis*)

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Galápagos fur seal (A*rctocephalus galapagoensis*)

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Galapagos Giant Tortoise (*Chelonoidis niger*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

Large Ground-Finch *(Geospiza magnirostris)*

© Ranjan Ramchandani

Frigatebird (*Fregatidae*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

© Ranjan Ramchandani

Sally Lightfoot Crab (*Grapsus grapsus*)

SPECIES

Eyes of Evolution

By Arindam Saha

© Arindam Saha

Arindam Saha is an Indian wildlife photographer whose work captures intimate, often unseen moments of the natural world, with a special focus on birds and insects. A Senior IT Consultant by profession, he balances over two decades in the technology industry with a deep-rooted passion for wildlife photography.

Inspired by a childhood love for nature and supported by numerous national and international accolades - including recognition from National Geographic - his images reflect both technical precision and a profound respect for the delicate balance of life in the wild.

instagram.com/arindam_saha_79/

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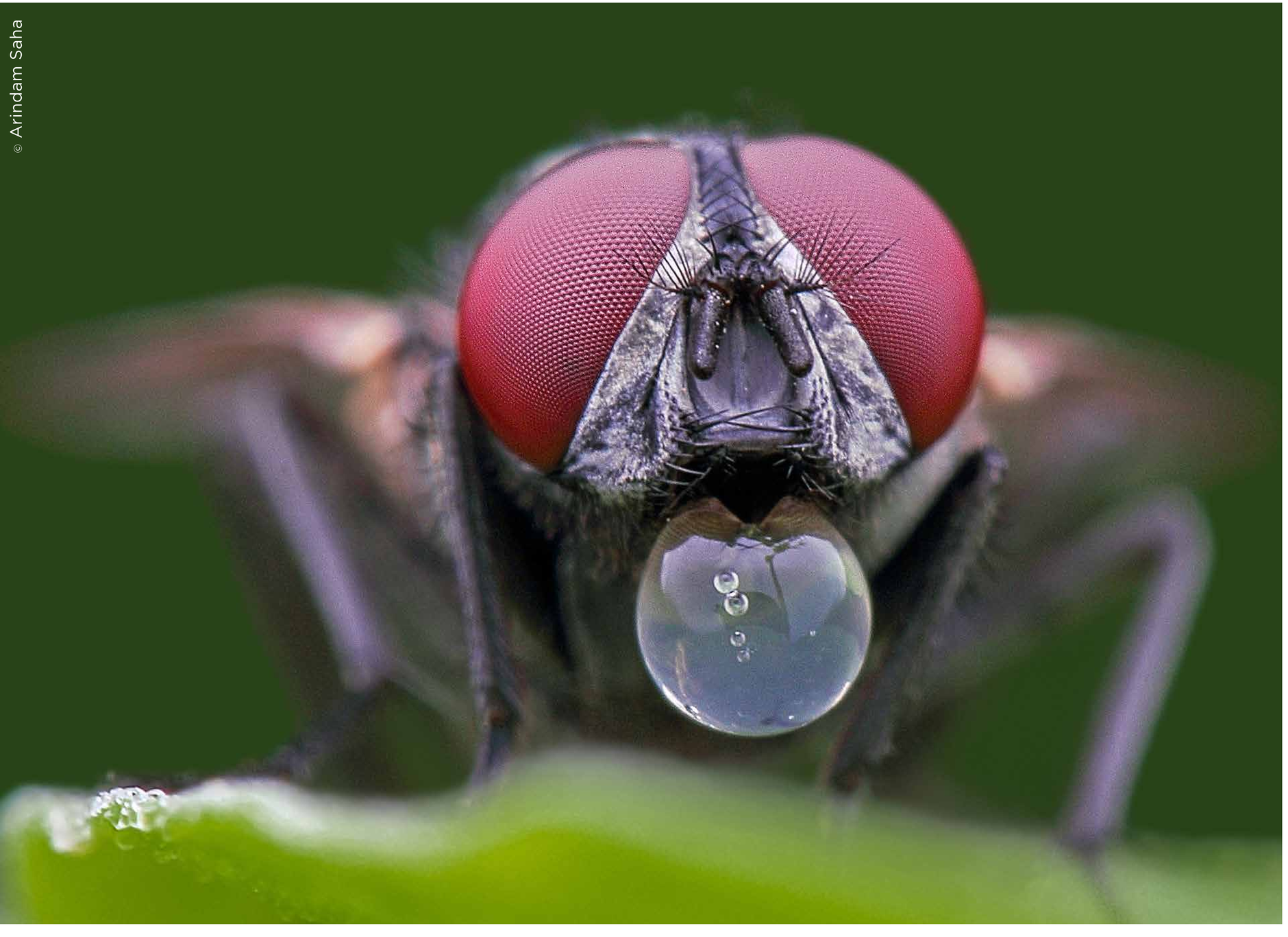

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The Enchanting World Through Compound Eyes

Nearly twelve years ago, on a languid Sunday afternoon, I found myself doing what had become a comforting habit - slowly strolling through our garden. Time seemed unhurried that day, the air heavy with calm, as if nature itself had decided to pause. Over the years, this modest garden, rich with flowering shrubs, fruit-bearing trees, and wild corners left untouched, had evolved into a sanctuary for birds and insects alike. It was a living ecosystem, constantly humming with subtle life.

Among the greenery stood several Ixora bushes, their dense clusters of tiny flowers glowing in shades of red and orange. These bushes were not merely decorative; they served as shelter and feeding grounds for countless small creatures. Butterflies hovered above them, ants marched methodically along their stems, and unseen insects buzzed softly within the foliage.

It was during one such aimless walk that my attention was drawn to an unusually large fly resting quietly on a leaf. I had no idea what species it belonged to, but something about it instantly arrested my senses. What truly captivated me were its eyes - shimmering, complex, and astonishingly beautiful. They reflected light like finely cut gemstones, alive with patterns I had never consciously noticed before.

Driven by curiosity, I rushed indoors to fetch a magnifying glass, eager to study this marvel more closely. But nature, as

© Arindam Saha

always, remained one step ahead. Within seconds, the fly sensed movement and lifted off, vanishing into the afternoon air.

The moment was fleeting, yet transformative.

Something shifted within me that day.

A spark of wonder was ignited.

A quiet thrill settled deep in my mind.

That brief encounter - so ordinary, yet so profound - opened a new door in my life: a journey into the observation and photography of insects. Even today, that memory remains vivid, preserved in a bright, cherished corner of my mind, reminding me how a single moment of attention can change the way we see the world.

The Allure of the Compound Eye

As time passed, experience naturally accumulated. I began to observe insects more deliberately, studying their forms, behaviours, and habitats. Among all the marvels of the insect world, the compound eye, particularly in flies, emerged as one of my deepest fascinations. What once appeared merely functional now revealed itself as a masterpiece of evolutionary design.

Insects are among nature's most diverse creations, inhabiting nearly every environment on Earth. Their success as a group is owed largely to their remarkable adaptations, and one of their most extraordinary, yet often overlooked, features is the structure of their eyes.

© Arindam Saha

© Arindam Saha

Unlike the single-lens camera-style eyes familiar to humans and other vertebrates, insects possess compound eyes: an optical system both ancient and highly specialized.

A compound eye is composed of hundreds to thousands of tiny visual units known as ommatidia. Each ommatidium functions like an independent eye, complete with its own lens and light-sensitive cells. Instead of forming a single, detailed image, each unit captures a small portion of the visual field. The insect's brain then integrates these fragments into a mosaic-like representation of its surroundings.

This mosaic vision differs fundamentally from human sight. While insects may not perceive fine details the way we do, they excel in detecting movement, changes in light intensity, and spatial orientation. For creatures whose survival depends on rapid responses, this form of vision is incredibly efficient.

Anatomy of a Marvel

Each ommatidium consists of several specialized components. At the outermost layer lies the transparent cornea, which allows light to enter. Beneath it is the crystalline cone, responsible for focusing incoming light. Below that are photoreceptor cells, containing light-sensitive pigments that convert light into electrical signals.

These signals are transmitted to the insect's brain, where they are processed and interpreted. The number, arrangement, and sensitivity of ommatidia vary across species, determining how sharp or sensitive an insect's vision is. Dragonflies, for example, possess some of the most advanced compound eyes in the insect world, with nearly 30,000 ommatidia, enabling them to track prey with astonishing precision.

Flies, too, are visual specialists. Their compound eyes grant them an almost panoramic field of view, often approaching 360 degrees. This explains their uncanny ability to evade danger. What seems like a lightning-fast escape is, in reality, a well-timed response to visual cues detected long before a threat comes close.

The outward curvature of the compound eye plays a crucial role in this wide-angle vision. Unlike flat retinal surfaces, the rounded structure allows insects to monitor multiple directions simultaneously. In the broader context of evolution, the compound eye stands as one of nature's most ingenious solutions to survival challenges.

Seeing the World Differently

One of the most fascinating aspects of insect vision is their ability to perceive ultraviolet light, something invisible to the human eye. Many flowers display ultraviolet patterns that guide insects toward nectar, effectively communicating through a hidden visual language. What appears plain to us may, to an insect, glow with vibrant signals and directional cues.

This realization reshaped the way I looked at my own garden. What I once considered familiar now felt layered with unseen dimensions. Every leaf, every

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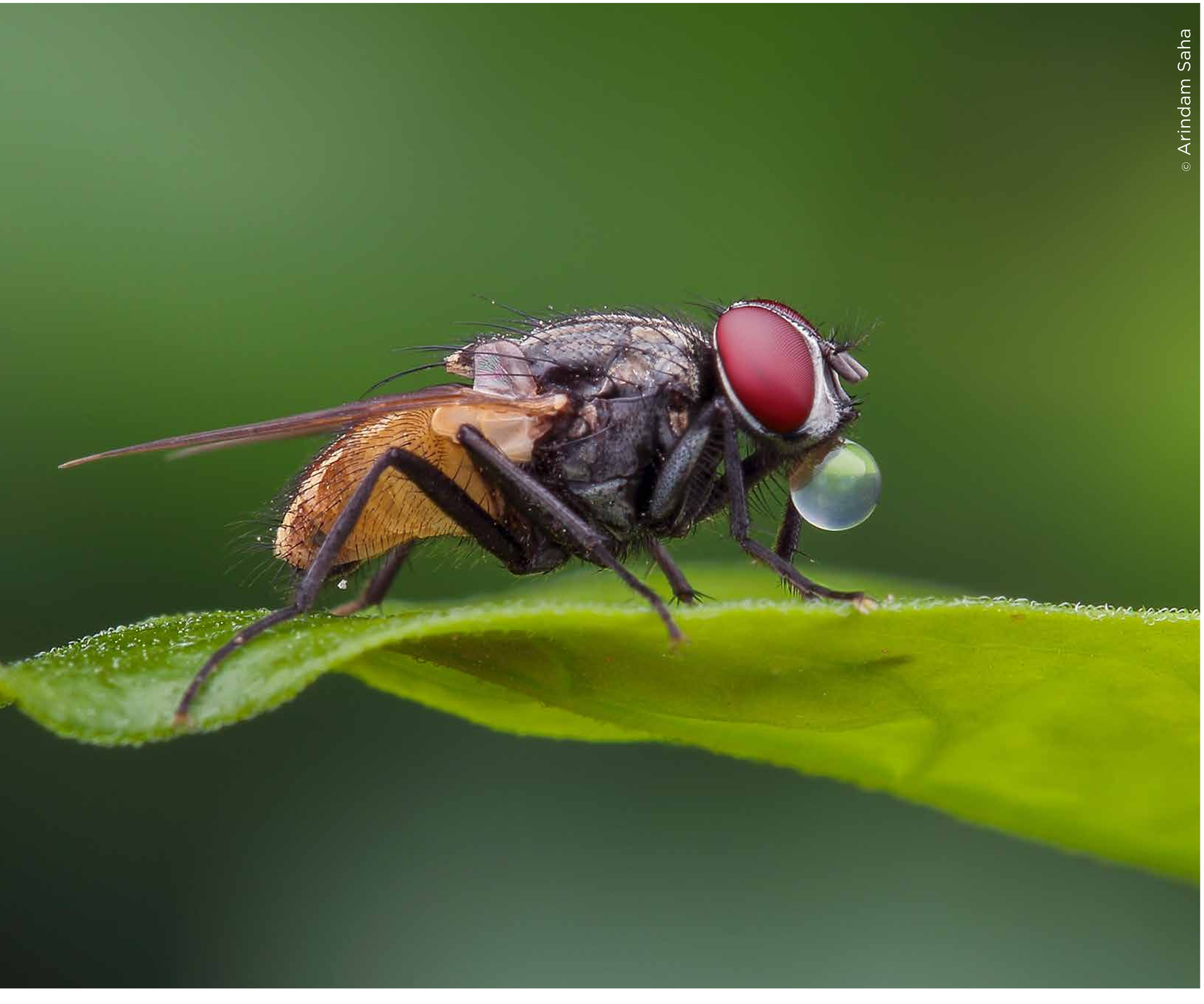

petal, and every movement held meanings beyond human perception. Through the lens of insect vision, the garden transformed into a complex, dynamic universe.

Photography became my way of bridging this gap, of revealing, even partially, what usually goes unnoticed. Macro photography, in particular, allowed me to explore details invisible to the naked eye: the intricate patterns of compound eyes, the fine hairs on an insect's body, the subtle textures of wings.

Each photograph felt like a small act of discovery.

A Window into Nature's Finest Work

The elegance and complexity of the compound eye continue to inspire scientists, engineers, photographers, and nature enthusiasts alike. Researchers study these eyes to develop advanced imaging systems, motion-detection technologies, and even artificial vision models. What evolution perfected over millions of years now guides human innovation.

For people like me, who simply love observing insects, the compound eye is more than a biological structure. It is a gateway into an astonishing world, one that exists all around us yet remains largely unseen. It teaches patience, attention, and humility, reminding us that beauty does not always announce itself loudly.

This journey, which began with a single fly in a garden, has grown into a lifelong pursuit of quiet observation and learning. With every encounter, I collect fragments of knowledge, moments of wonder, and images that tell stories beyond words.

I hope to continue this pursuit for as long as I can, guided by curiosity, grounded in nature, and inspired by the smallest of lives.

In the following section, I have included a selection of photographs captured in the garden of my home in Narayanpur, the very place where this journey first began, and where the enchanting world through compound eyes continues to unfold.

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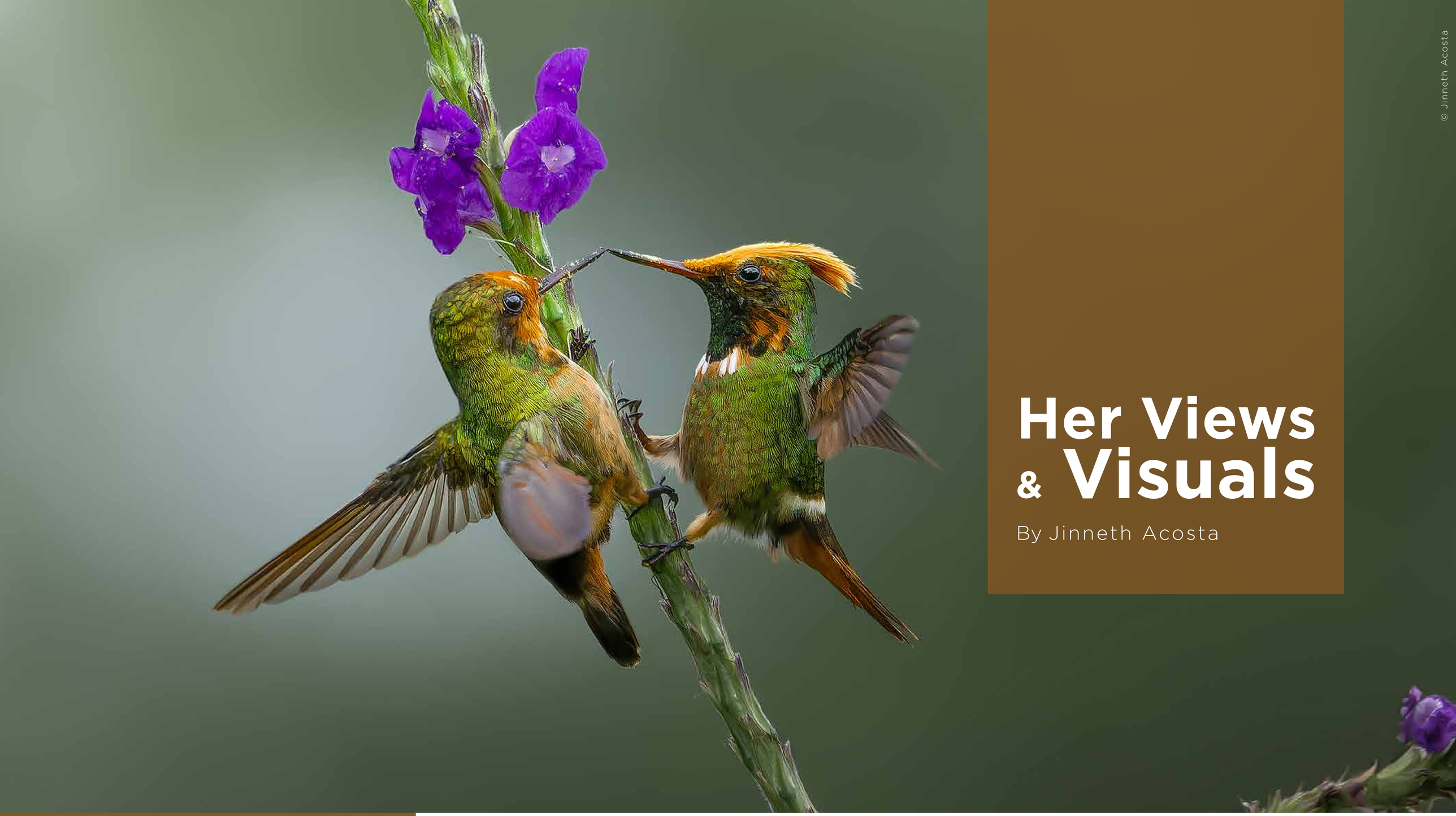

Her Views & Visuals

By Jinneth Acosta

© Jinneth Acosta

Jinneth Acosta is a Colombian nature photographer whose passion for capturing wildlife began just three years ago. Inspired by her deep connection with nature, she has traveled across Colombia and Ecuador, discovering the beauty and diversity of bird species in their natural habitats.

Through her lens, Jinneth tells compelling stories of the birds she encounters, aiming to raise awareness and inspire conservation efforts.

instagram.com/jinnfotografia/

Her Views and Visuals

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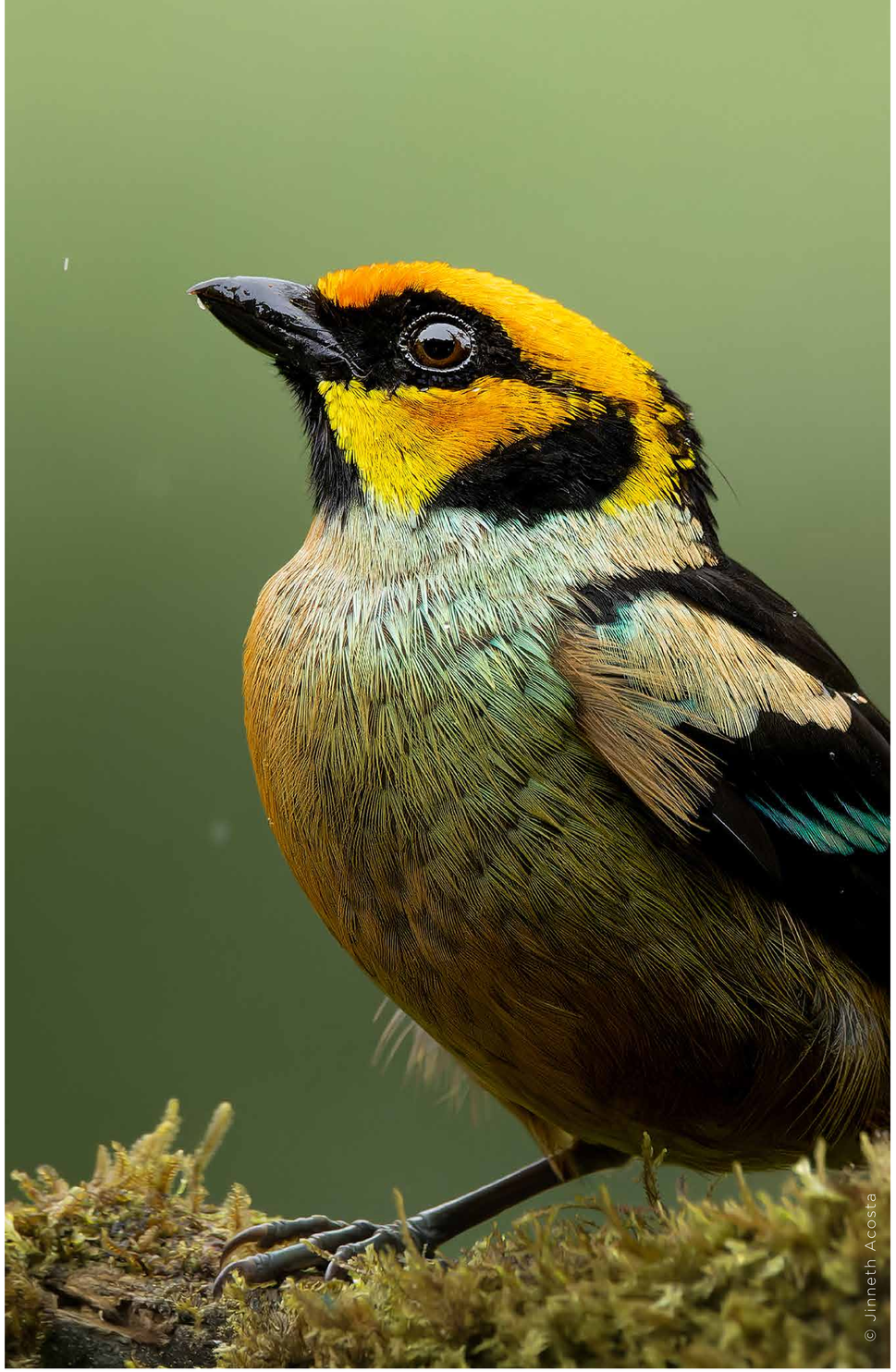

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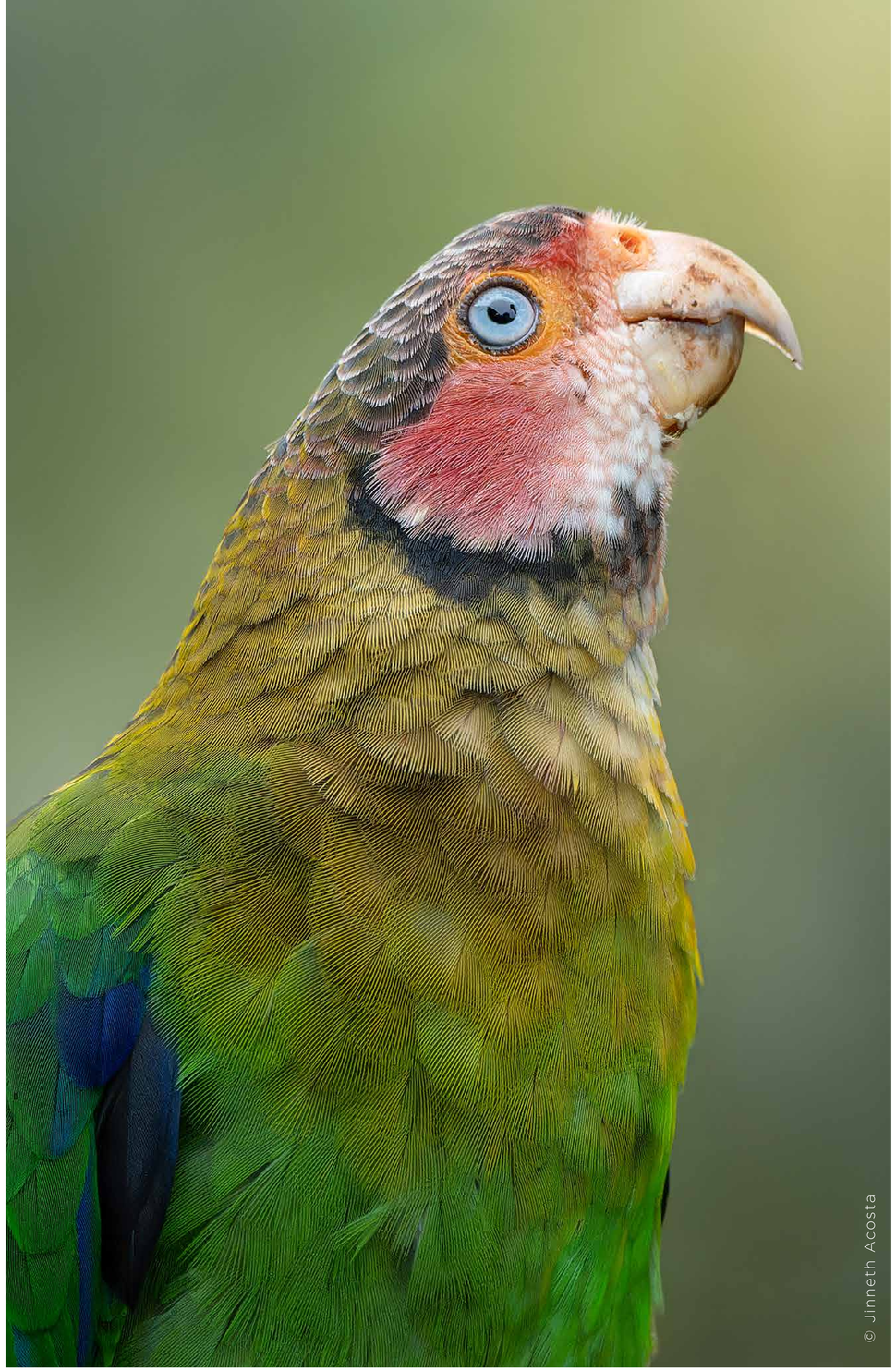

© Jinneth Acosta

How did your interest in wildlife arise?

While exploring nature, I began to realize there were countless details that often go unnoticed by the naked eye - the subtle colors of a bird's feathers, the way light filters through the trees, the quiet interactions between animals. I felt a desire to preserve those moments and share them with others. That's when I picked up a camera and started photographing birds. Over time, I discovered that I wasn't just capturing images, but unrepeatable moments that told stories about the natural world. Through this process, my fascination grew into a passion - one that continues to inspire me to observe, learn, and protect the wildlife around us.

How do you describe your journey as a photographer and a person?

I see it as a path of personal transformation and a growing, more intimate appreciation for life itself. Photography has taught me to slow down, to be present in each moment, and to observe the world with both curiosity and respect. As a person, this journey has expanded my patience, sharpened my awareness, and strengthened my connection to nature and to others who value it. It's a continuous process of learning, feeling, and translating emotions into visual stories.

What is your view on Wildlife Conservation? How can we, as wildlife photographers, help to protect Mother Nature?

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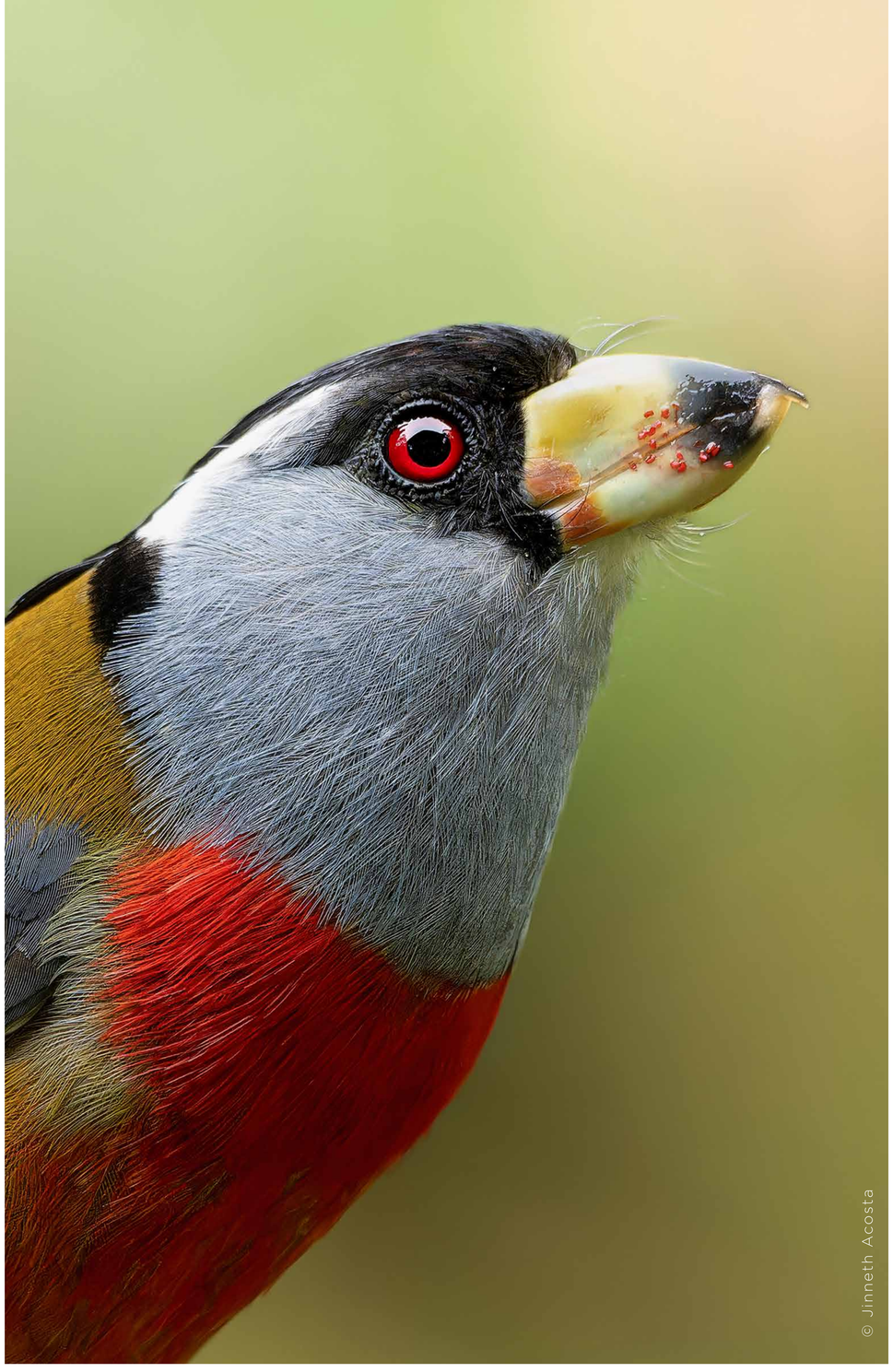
I believe photography is a powerful tool to convey emotions and reveal the incredible diversity of species that often remain hidden from those who don't have the opportunity to see them firsthand. Through images, we can spark curiosity, foster empathy, and help people form a personal connection with the natural world. This connection is essential - because when people care, they are more likely to take action. My goal is to use my photographs not only to showcase beauty, but also to deliver a clear call to action: to protect, preserve, and respect the delicate balance of life that surrounds us.

Can you give our readers the best wildlife photography tips? Do you have a recommendation on settings or gear for wildlife photography?

In my experience, good lighting is absolutely essential- it can make the difference between an ordinary shot and a truly captivating image. Equally important is knowing your gear inside and out: understanding how it works, how it responds in different conditions, and how to adapt quickly. Don't let yourself be limited by the equipment you currently have; great photography is more about the eye behind the camera than the camera itself. Train your eye, by observing nature patiently - notice the patterns, behaviors, and moments that make each scene unique. As for gear and settings, a telephoto lens is often ideal for wildlife, and using a fast shutter speed can help freeze motion, while keeping ISO and aperture balanced to maintain image quality.



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What plans do you have in the future related to Wildlife Photography?

My dream is to see and photograph as many bird species as possible around the world - not just to admire their beauty, but to share their stories and raise awareness about the need for their conservation. Each species, no matter how common or rare, plays a vital role in the ecosystem, and documenting them is a way to show that importance. Through future travels, projects, and collaborations, I want to create a visual archive that inspires people to value biodiversity and take action to protect it.

Tell us something about the gear you use.

My main setup is a Nikon Z8 paired with a Sigma 150–600 mm telephoto lens. This combination gives me both the resolution, and the reach needed to capture fine details in wildlife from a respectful distance, without disturbing the animals.

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My Journey into the World of Nature

By Hardika Subhash

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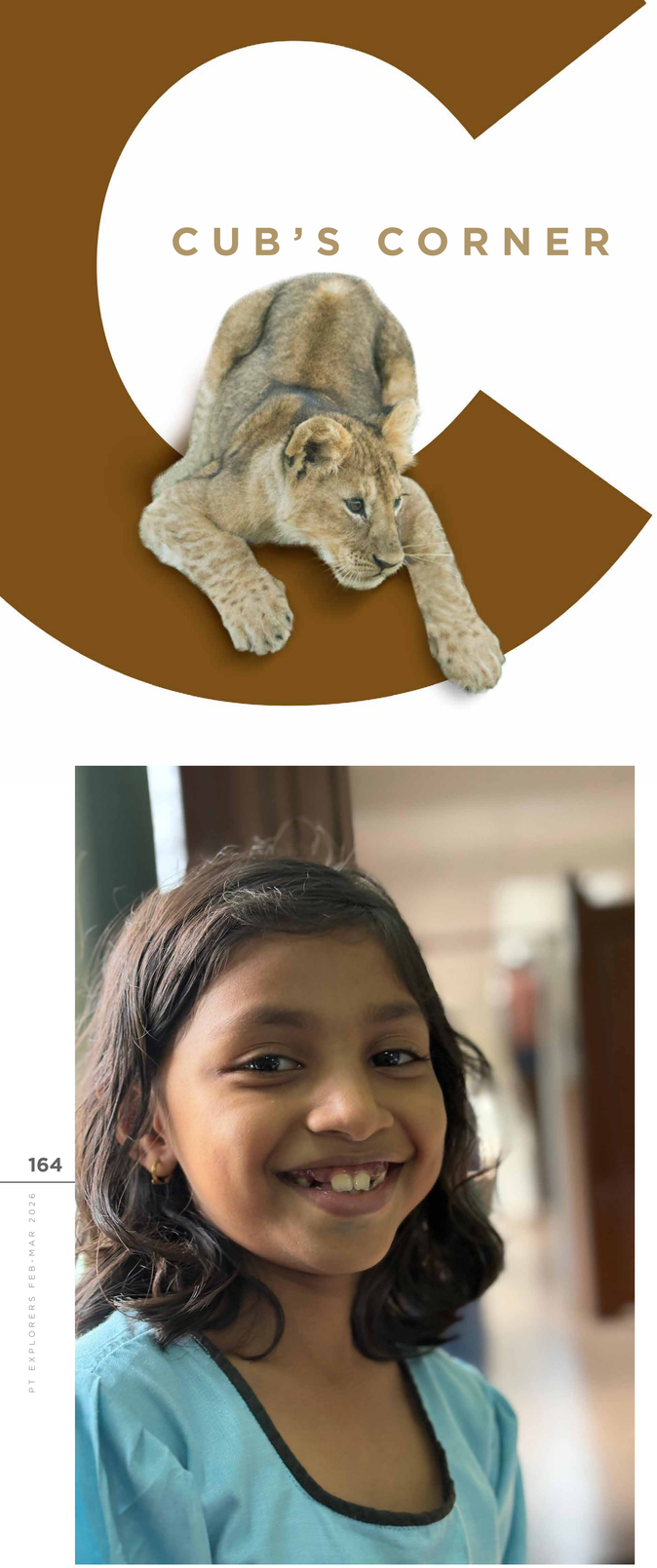
CUB'S CORNER

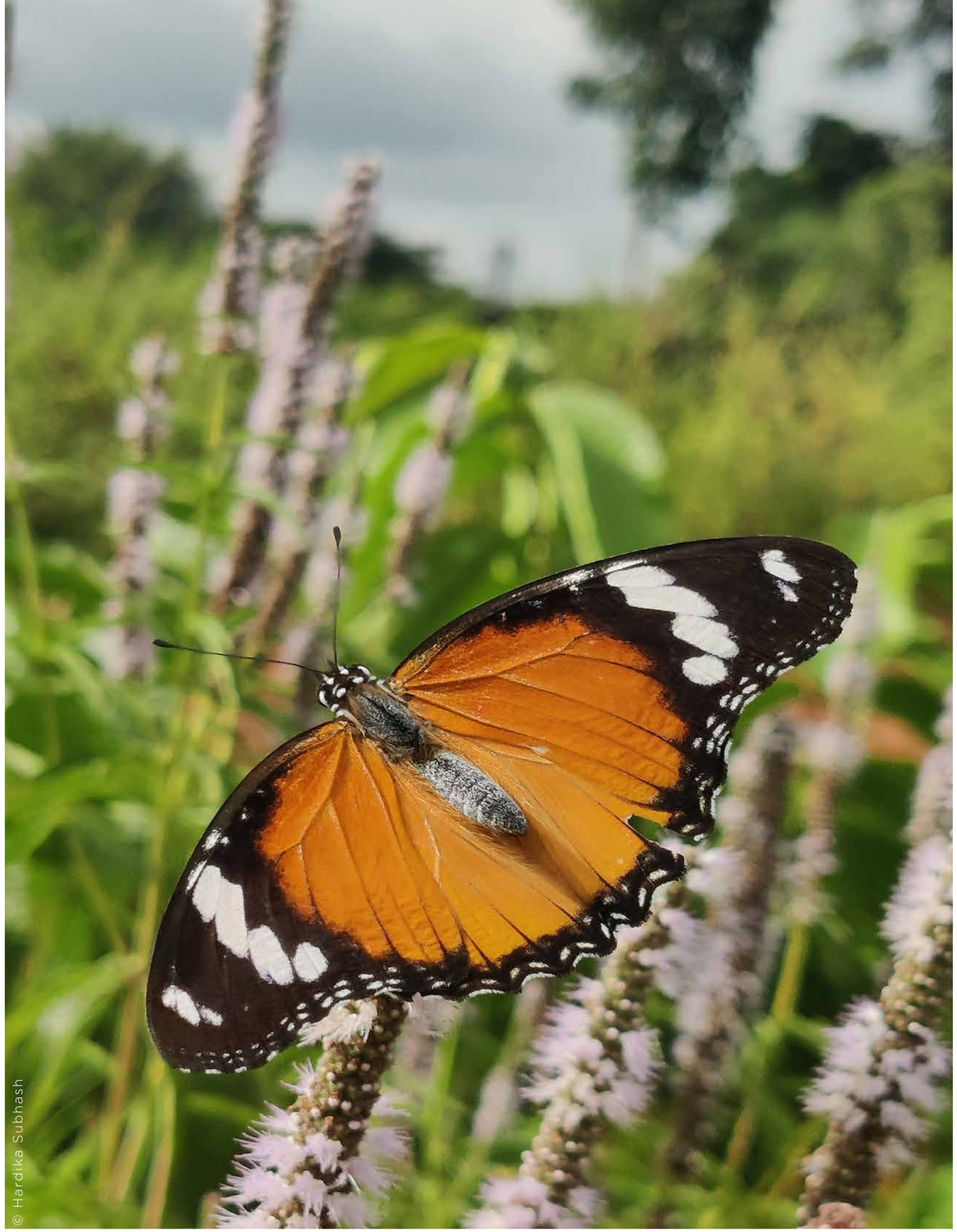


Hardika Subhash is an 8-year-old young nature explorer and wildlife enthusiast with a deep love for birds, butterflies, and dragonflies. Inspired by her mother, a nature educator, Hardika spends her time observing and documenting biodiversity through photography and field notes. She is the youngest member of the "Walk With VC" community and has earned recognition from WWF-India and iNaturalist for her work on dragonfly diversity. Through her curiosity and keen observation, Hardika hopes to inspire other children to explore nature and care for the world around them.

instagram.com/hardika_subhash

My name is Hardika Subhash, and I am 8 years old. Nature has always been my best friend. My journey into its beautiful world started with my mother, who is a nature educator. From a very young age, she introduced me to the wonders of forests, birds, butterflies, and dragonflies. Whenever she talked about trees, flowers, or tiny insects, her eyes sparkled with joy, and I soon shared that joy.

I have been lucky to visit many forests in Kerala and other parts of India. Each trip has opened a new door of wonder for me. I still remember the first time I stood under the tall trees of a forest.



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The air felt different, filled with sounds of birds and buzzing insects. It was like a living classroom where every leaf, wing, and drop of water had a story. These experiences made me curious and inspired me to observe nature more closely.

One of the biggest turning points in my journey was joining “Walk With VC,” a social media community focused on studying, documenting, and conserving biodiversity. As the youngest member, I found myself surrounded by nature lovers who shared their knowledge. They encouraged me to start documenting biodiversity on my own. Gradually, I began taking photographs of butterflies, birds, and especially dragonflies and damselflies. Holding a camera and closely observing these tiny creatures made me feel like a little explorer discovering hidden worlds.

Through this community, I had the chance to participate in the Odonata Challenge for Kids, which was very exciting. I began observing and identifying different species of dragonflies and damselflies, learning about their behavior, colors, and habitats. At that moment, I realized how fascinating odonates are, not just beautiful, but also important indicators of healthy ecosystems.

In 2024, my project on Dragonfly Diversity brought me one of the happiest moments of my life. It won 3rd place in the Bioblitz Challenge: Dragonfly Diversity 2024, organized by WWF-India. For me, it was not just about winning a prize; it was about showing that even children can make meaningful contributions to understanding biodiversity. This achievement gave me the confidence to continue my journey more seriously.

The following year, I took part in the Young iNaturalist Challenge 2025 and was thrilled to secure 1st place. Documenting species for this challenge was both fun and challenging. Every day felt like a treasure hunt, and I learned how patience and keen observation are essential in nature. Standing on the winners’ list brought me great joy, but what mattered most was knowing that I was helping to create records that might be useful for conservation.

My passion has grown into three main loves—birds, butterflies, and odonates. Birds fascinate me with their colors, calls, and migration stories. Every time I hear the lovely song of a sunbird or see the swift flight of a kite, I feel inspired. Butterflies make me believe in magic; their transformation from tiny caterpillars to beautiful winged jewels teaches me about change and hope. Dragonflies and damselflies, on the other hand, are like flying acrobats. Their incredible colors, delicate wings, and secret lives near water have made me a true admirer.

With each observation, I also began keeping records—photographs, notes, and species lists. At first, they were just personal memories, but I soon realized how important such documentation is for biodiversity conservation. Every small record adds to the larger story of how species survive in changing environments. Even as a child, I feel proud to contribute to something bigger than myself.

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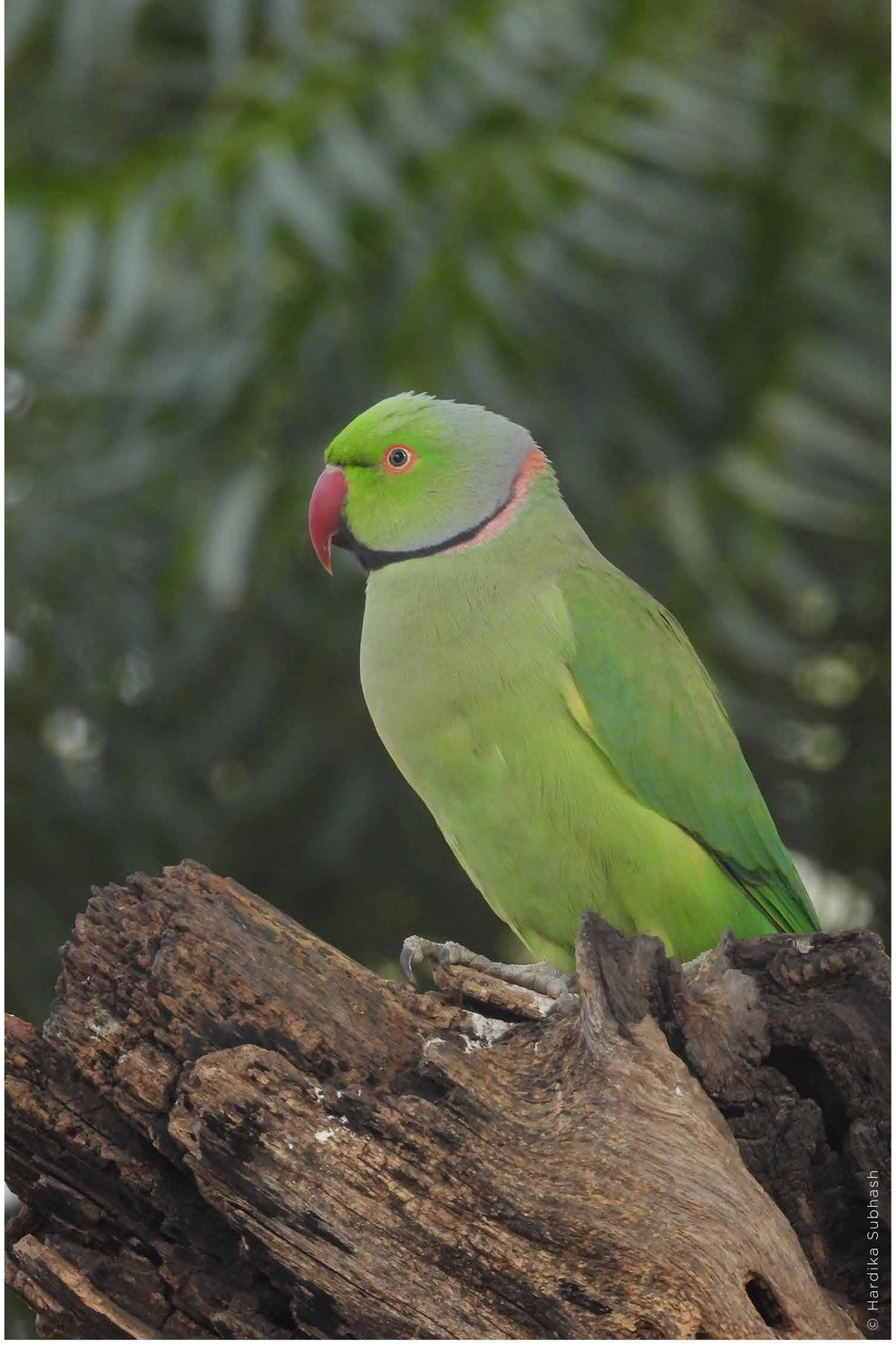
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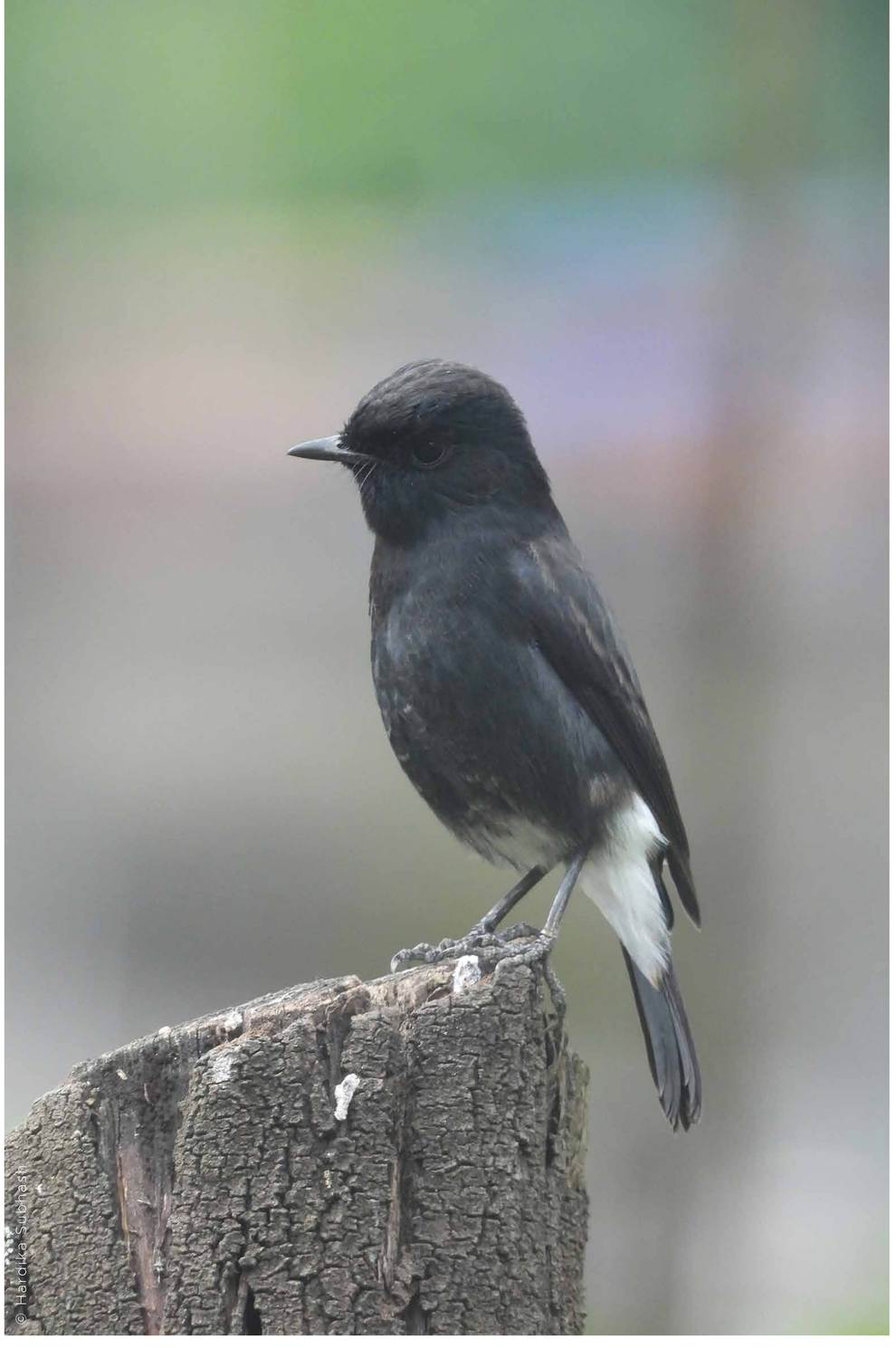
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Of course, there have been unforgettable experiences along the way. Once, while walking in a forest, I spotted a dragonfly with shimmering blue wings that I had never seen before. My heart raced as I took photographs and later learned that it was a species not commonly recorded in that area. On another occasion, I waited for over an hour to capture a butterfly that kept fluttering around but never rested. That day, I learned that patience is a key quality for every wildlife photographer.

Sometimes, people ask me why I enjoy spending so much time outdoors instead of playing regular games. My answer is simple: nature itself is the best playground. Every day, it offers something new, a bird's song, a butterfly's flight, a dragonfly's dance over water. Unlike computer games, nature never repeats; it always surprises me.

Looking ahead, I have many dreams. I want to continue my journey as a young wildlife photographer and biodiversity documenter. I wish to visit more forests in India, especially the Western Ghats, which are rich in plants and animals. One of my biggest dreams is to travel to national parks and sanctuaries, documenting rare species and sharing their stories. Through my photographs and writings, I hope to inspire other children to observe the natural world around them.

I also dream of contributing to conservation efforts. I believe that if more children start observing and documenting, we will have stronger voices for protecting nature. I want to show my friends that photography is not just about beautiful pictures—it is also about caring for the living beings we share our planet with.

My mother often tells me that every small step counts, and I truly believe that. Whether identifying a butterfly in my garden, photographing a dragonfly near a pond, or recording the call of a bird in a forest, each act of observation is valuable. It makes me happy to know that children like me can be part of something as important as conservation.

When I hold my camera and step into the world of nature, I feel free, happy, and full of wonder. The forests of Kerala, the colourful wings of butterflies, the swift flights of birds, and the shining eyes of dragonflies have all become part of my life's story. I know this is just the beginning, and I look forward to all the adventures, discoveries, and lessons ahead.

I am grateful to my parents, my community "Walk With VC," and organizations like WWF-India and iNaturalist for giving me opportunities to grow. Most of all, I am thankful to nature for being the most patient teacher and the best friend.

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The World Beneath Our Feet: A Macro Perspective

By Anirban Dutta

THROUGH THE LENS

Anirban is an award-winning Indian wildlife photographer and a high school mathematics teacher from Cooch Behar. Deeply inspired by nature since childhood, his work spans mammals, birds, macro worlds, and conservation stories. He is actively involved in habitat protection and black soft-shell turtle conservation, and his images have received wide national and international recognition.

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Macro photography is more than just a capture in 1:1 magnification ratio; it is a gateway into a hidden universe. While the technical definition means the subject on my camera sensor is life-sized, the reality of capturing it is far from simple.

For over a decade, I have lived this craft. It is, without a doubt, the most demanding form of nature photography. It requires a heavy backpack, immense patience, and the physical grit to endure heat, insect stings, and the constant watch for snakes. Behind every sharp “focus” or “perfectly lit shot” using extension tubes and reversal rings, there is hours of labour in the dark and damp.

Beyond the Lens: A Different Intention

My goal isn’t just to master the “depth of field” - it is to reveal the untamed elegance of the forest floor. We often walk right over a masterpiece without looking down.

While the World focuses on conservation of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, the tiny ecosystems under our boots are often forgotten. But forest floor is an integral part of the whole ecosystem. And it is getting polluted every day every minute.

This leads me to a vital question: Where does our trash truly go?

Every Piece of Trash Has a Story

The forest floor shouldn’t be a graveyard for our convenience. Before you discard a glass bottle, a plastic cup, or a Styrofoam wrapper, I ask you to pause.

- Is there another way?
- Can it be reused?
- What story will this piece of trash tell a hundred years from now?

We have the power to change the narrative of our planet, starting with the smallest creatures and the dirt beneath our feet. It’s time to look closer. It’s time to think.

In the shadows of the forest lies a world often misunderstood. Most people overlook or dislike the tiny creatures around us, but they are the silent heartbeat of our ecosystem. If these small wonders disappear, the entire forest will suffer. My macro photography is a journey into tiny world, a mission to capture their delicate beauty and the deep mysteries they carry within their small frames.

1. NATURE’S DESIGN: Through the lens of macro photography, a hidden drama unfolds in the backyard, transforming common garden pests into a work of art. What initially resembles the delicate, pleated layers of a chiffon saree or elegant curtains draped over a window is actually the intricate webbing of Red Spider Mites. These tiny creatures, measuring a mere 1–2 mm, create silken pathways to escape predatory ants that guard nearby aphids. While they appear as beautiful “prints” upon a fabric of web, these mites are formidable plant enemies, hatching from eggs to feast on leaf cells and damage garden life.

The photographer captured this “unseen world” using an impressive in-camera technique, merging five separate exposures into a single, geometric composition. By positioning external flashes with colored cellophane from both the front and back, the photographer highlighted the translucent depth of the webs. This creative approach turns a biological struggle for survival into a dramatic, abstract masterpiece. By blending the technical precision of multiple exposures with a poetic eye for texture, the artist reveals that even the smallest “enemies” of the garden possess a complex and striking beauty when viewed from a different perspective.

2. SNAIL ENJOYING SPORULATION: I know snails can eat mushrooms and may carry and disperse mushroom spores. Snails eat fungi for nutrition and flavour. Snails may promote fungal growth by grazing on leaves and depositing

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2. SNAIL ENJOYING SPORULATION

nitrogen-rich faeces on wounds. Fungi get benefit from snail grazing by gaining access to nutrients and inner plant tissues. Snails have chemical receptors that help them differentiate between different types of fungi.

In this image I have documented a snail enjoying mushroom spores. I had to spent a long time and work hard to make this photo. In late monsoon, forests are very dangerous due to leech, snakes and other insects. It's very hard to find snails near mushrooms.

3. LONG-LEGGED LOVE: Deep in the quiet forest, where tall trees stood like sleepy giants, two long-legged creatures met. They were crane flies, sometimes called mosquito hawks, though they don't actually bite like mosquitoes!

The forest floor was a soft, green carpet, and a small, hopeful sapling reached for the sky. The two crane flies were clinging to one of its bright green leaves. They looked a little awkward and very delicate with their thin, stilt-like legs.

They were having a special moment, a meeting of love. The larger one, likely the female, held onto the leaf, while the male was carefully attached to her back. They stayed perfectly still, a tiny, fragile pair of dots against the big, blurry background of the woods.

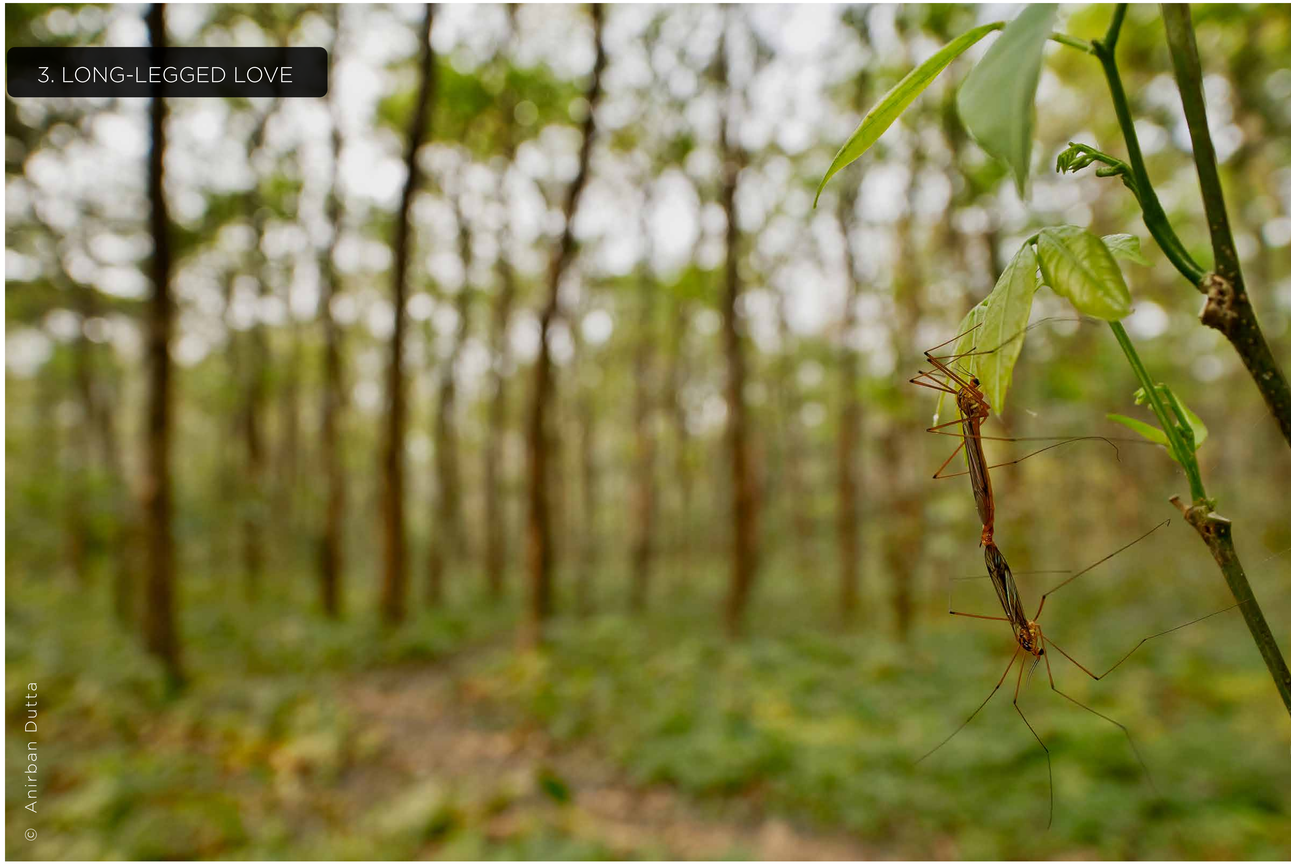
The air was still, and the light filtering through the canopy made everything feel peaceful. For these two tiny insects, this small leaf was their world, a perfect, quiet spot for their long-legged love story to begin.

Here I have used Laowa 15mm F/4, wide angle macro lens, the toughest manual focus to achieve this perspective.

4. AQUEOUS COURTSHIP: During the rainy season in our Himalayan foothills we find many creatures. Snails are one of them. I planned for an image which depicts the habitat and behaviour of this species. I am very much lucky that I have got these couple mating.

As macro photographer I always try to present the small creatures in its natural habitat. But to photograph snail's courtship in continuous rain is not so easy, because of several problems, light setup and threats like leeches, snakes and other unknowns. I made several attempts to document this scene, but failed each time. Finally, I managed it by using in-camera multiple exposure technique.

5. BEARING THE BURDEN: This is a unique behaviour of Red Weaver Ants. This species has always been a point of interest for a long time. I clicked this image near the bank of river Jayanti, Buxa Hills, Buxa Tiger Reserve Forest, and West Bengal. Two years back I was in a macro photo tour at the aforesaid place. We started waking to find our macro subjects. Suddenly I saw an ant running with a broken wing of a butterfly. At once I lay down on wet sand of the riverbed. I clicked so many shots in different position. This is a worker ant collecting article for colony. Workers perform tasks that are essential for colony survival, including foraging, nest building, and colony defence. They often fight for their territory and articles. The worker ant's exchange of information and modulation



of worker behaviour that occur during worker-worker interactions are facilitated using chemical and tactile communication signals. These signals are used primarily in the contexts of foraging and colony defence.

6. PARENTAL CARE: The most important task of any organism is to breed. Parental care is a part of it, so that the future generation can be fit and fine to take part in the struggle for existence in Nature and become victorious. Parental care is one of the most important phenomena in animals. It is, if we simply define, an endowment on the behalf of the mother or father or both of them for the fitness and well-being of their offspring. It may even start before laying or giving birth. Naturally, it is also found in insects. As a photographer it fascinates me very much.

Cantao Shield Bug Sitting on Eggs. This bug, as observed by me, constantly sits on the laid eggs from laying to hatching without a single moment's departure. It

4. AQUEOUS COURTSHIP

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5. BEARING THE BURDEN

never leaves its eggs however odd the situation may be. In heavy shower or in terrible storm it does its duty without any break. The remarkable thing of this bug is maternal care. Female bug lays 50-60 eggs on a leaf and covers them to protect from predators. From my 4 months continuous field observations, female bugs lay eggs on back side of the leaf of the host tree (*Mallotus Paniculatus*) and sit over them until babies come out; their determination to guard eggs and babies from all kinds of external disturbance is very much interesting

7. SOLAR SYSTEM: At the heart of a chaotic universe, a single orb weaver spider rests a silent sun in its own solar system. Its intricate web, a delicate and invisible thread, stretches out like the fabric of space. Within this sticky cosmos, countless flies, like frantic planets and stars, orbit the central figure. Their paths are not orderly but wild and desperate, each one chaotically drawn to the spider's gravitational pull.

The unseen lines of the web are their destinies, and they dance on this ethereal stage, a desperate ballet of life and death. They move with reckless speed, sometimes colliding with one another, forever bound to the orb weaver's silent, patient watch. This is a universe in miniature, where the spider is the ruler and the flies are its subjects, their lives forever intertwined in a fragile, glittering net of fate.

8. SUSPENDED CHOREOGRAPHY: In humans, men and women use clothing, perfumes, songs, dance, or fitness to impress and attract each other. Insects

6. PARENTAL CARE

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also do the same; they use pheromones, sounds and dances etc. to find a mate.

The crane flies are known for their unique mating behaviour called “genitalic stridulation”, where the male produces sustained, rhythmic vibrations using specialized structures on his genitalia. This movement is rapid, with a rate of around 15-30 cycles per second. This behaviour serves to stimulate the female during copulation. While many insects use vibrations for communication, this particular form is notable for its use during the act of copulation itself.

Crane flies (family Tipulidae) show a behaviour known as “vibratory bouncing” or “bobbing.” The blurred, streaky lines are a result of the insect’s rapid, up-and-down movements captured over time. During copulation, the male performs a series of stereotyped, rhythmic movements. He scrapes the scraper across the file, generating a burst of vibrations.

9. THE ALIEN EMERGING: This is a mesmerizing photograph of snail, emerges from the bottom of the frame, its two delicate eyestalks reaching upward into a dark, star-like expanse. The background isn’t a galaxy, but a deep, inky space filled with countless brilliant droplets of water, in a rainy night, each one a tiny world of light. The snail’s form is a silhouette against this cosmic scene, its body a rich, earthy brown. A small creature seems to be navigating a universe of its own, turning a simple natural scene into something otherworldly and profound. The play of light and shadow transforms the familiar into the

7. SOLAR SYSTEM

© Anirban Dutta

8. SUSPENDED CHOREOGRAPHY

© Anirban Dutta

9. THE ALIEN EMERGING

© Anirban Dutta

fantastic, creating a feeling of wonder and mystery.

Under a vast, dark sky, a tiny explorer began its slow journey. Raindrops, like a million scattered stars, fell all around, each one a shimmering jewel against the deep blue. This little creature, a snail, poked its curious head upwards, its delicate feelers reaching out as if to touch the sparkling world above. It wasn't just a simple climb; it was an adventure into the cosmos of its own making. Every droplet held a reflection, a tiny universe the snail was navigating. With each gentle slide, it moved through this twinkling downpour, a testament to resilience and the quiet wonder of a small life embracing the grandeur of the night.

10. BEAUTY OF LOVE: This is a unique presentation of mating pair. In the season of monsoon we get mating of stink bug. Urolabida histrionica is a species of Stink Bug from the Family Urostylididae. It has bright green, yellow and golden colours in back. It has 3 pairs of legs and a pair of long horn. I have shot this image in teak wood forest locally called "SAL BON" which was made by Royal Rajas of Cooch Behar about 250 years ago. Their life cycle starts from first rain and ends with monsoon. In this period, they mate, lay eggs, babies hatch etc. The insects that are born at a certain time of the year and disappear after that period also have an important role in nature. Their numbers are decreasing day by day due to deforestation and increase in human settlements. 5 years back there were plenty numbers of stink bugs, but now it is a bit hard to find.

10. BEAUTY OF LOVE

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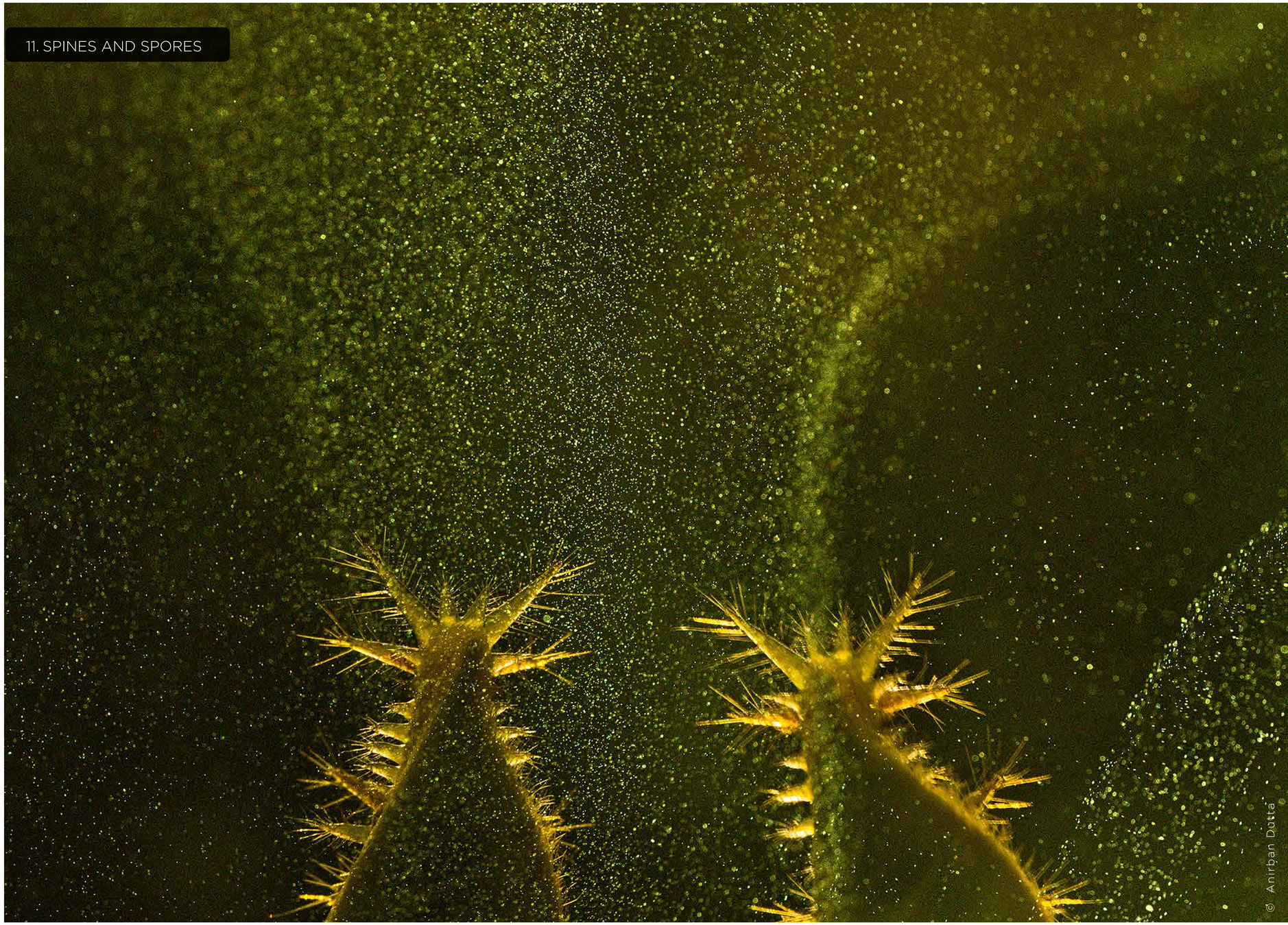
To make this dream like image, I used in-camera multiple / double exposure technique. The first image of mating was taken with Tamron 90mm VC USD. I used Godox flash MF12 K2 with diffuser from back to create a rim light. Keeping the camera on I replaced the lens with old vintage lens Pentacon Auto 50 mm F/1.8 multi coating lens. I obstruct the entering of light by placing an opaque black coloured hard board in front of lens to make back bokeh. Camera itself merged them into one raw.

NEF file. I have pre-visualized the whole scene before capturing it with the camera.

11. SPINES AND SPORES: Don't be afraid by seeing the sharp spines or stings? This is slug caterpillar moth or cup moth. Cup Moth larvae are often highly ornamented and brightly coloured. It has stinging spines called nettle caterpillars. A stinging slug caterpillar generally bears warning coloration and stinging hairs. These hairs can inject venom from poison sacs carried at their base that are used as defensive weapons. Reactions can range from a mild itching to a very painful sting. We can see various types of caterpillars in our daily life from our backyard garden to jungle.

Here I wanted to create eye-catchy and attractive image by combining stings with the mushroom spores. I have got this image at the forest called "SAL BON", outskirts of Cooch Behar town. This forest is under social forestry department where I frequently go with my camera. This forest is full of flora and fauna.

One of the main objectives behind my



nature photography is to present nature to the people in such a way that they feel interest in knowing and understanding our nature. That's why I always want to photograph all the amazing, magical, unknown and unseen phenomenon of nature. To achieve this image, I had to think and plan very hard. This is an in-camera multiple / double exposure image. Keeping the camera on a sturdy Sirui tripod I have taken both shots with Tamron 90 mm VC USD but in different places. I have used different white balance to achieve attractive colours.

12. EPHEMERAL ELEGANCE: In a world bleached clean by light, a delicate creature clings to the edge of existence. This is Ephemeral Elegance, a study in high-key minimalism. This is a mayfly, appears spun from golden thread and mica, a faint whisper against the vast, blinding white.

Its wings are a masterpiece of nature's lace, translucent and veined with the finest black lines, catching the light like stained glass in miniature. They hover over its slender, tawny body, which tapers down into long, gossamer tails that drift like calligraphy strokes across the blank canvas.

It is caught in a moment of pure, fragile grace; a tiny, complex life form isolated in an infinite void. The composition pushes the subject to the upper right, granting it a stark importance that belies its small size, transforming a simple insect on a wall into a beacon of ethereal beauty. It is a fleeting vision, an elegant secret whispered on the cusp of disappearance.

13. BENEATH THE CANOPY: This is a millipede eating mosses on a tree. This is a low angle shot, looking up, which makes the tree trunk appear tall and majestic. It has many legs and segmented body, is in sharp focus against the blurred green leaves of the canopy.

This image shows a small world on the forest floor, a place of damp, dark earth covered by a blanket of fallen leaves and decaying wood. This is the perfect home for a millipede.

Millipedes are fascinating, slow-moving creatures. They spend most of their time in these moist, hidden places, working to clean up the environment. As detritivores, their main activity is to eat and break down dead plant matter, like the leaves and wood you might see in this photo. They move slowly but purposefully, using their many legs to push through the leaf litter.

When a millipede feels a threat, it doesn't run away quickly like a centipede. Instead, its defence is to curl into a tight spiral, protecting its soft belly with its hard outer shell. This activity makes them an essential part of the ecosystem, as they recycle nutrients back into the soil and help keep the forest healthy.

14. DEADLY ROAD CROSSING: In my hometown of Cooch Behar, West Bengal, we share our lives with a special creature—the baby peacock softshell turtle. We affectionately call them "Mohan". These turtles are a vulnerable species on the IUCN Red List and can only be found in a few places in the world, including India. They thrive in the ponds around the Baneswar Lord Shiva temple, a place where generations of these turtles have lived. But their home is becoming a trap.

12. EPHEMERAL ELEGANCE

© Anirban Dutta

13. BENEATH THE CANOPY

Every year, from June to July, the female turtles need to leave the water to find sandy banks to lay their eggs. A few years ago, the temple committee made a well-intentioned but disastrous decision: they poured concrete around the ponds, removing all the sand and gravel. Now, to find a place to lay their eggs, the turtles are forced to migrate. Their only path is the nearby high-traffic road, especially at night. This journey is incredibly dangerous, and many turtles, both adults and hatchlings, are tragically killed by passing cars.

On the night of July 16, 2025, I received a phone call that a group of baby turtles were trying to cross the road. When I arrived, the scene was heart-breaking. Four tiny turtles, each no bigger than 2.5 cm, were crushed by cars. They were probably only a week old. Thanks to some kind-hearted locals, 23 others were saved. My friend, with the help of police and residents, even blocked the busy road to protect them.

I stayed until 9 p.m., watching in the dark as these helpless babies tried to cross the road again and again. Their small size made them impossible for drivers to see. Each time we found them; we carefully picked them up and returned them to a nearby pond. The image of those three little turtles on the busy road, with the headlights of cars and bikes approaching, is one I'll never forget. These creatures need our help to survive. I've done what I can to inform the forest department, local police, and the community. It's up to all of us to protect these precious beings and give them a fighting chance.

15. COLOURS OF NUPTIAL FLIGHT: These are flying termites. We all know before the start of monsoon every year, some species of termites fly swarms in the late afternoon and in early evening. This is called nuptial flight. We can find the mound of termites in wet abandoned places. Each mound is built by a king and queen. They have also king, queen, soldier and worker termites like weaver ants. And in a mound, there are millions of termites of a single colony. When they become adult, wings grow on their body. Now they are capable of building new colonies, they are attracted towards light. They fly around light to find their partner. Like most nocturnal insects, the pests will be drawn to light sources around the home, such as streetlamps, motion lights etc. It is very common to see swarms of termites flying around utility lights inside the room as well. One day I saw this near a petrol pump.

This is a multiple exposure image. As the termites are flying around a long high streetlamp, I have to use tripod. There are 5 shots, camera merged them into one. Blue and yellowish tones are due to kelvin and tungsten white balance mode. To make it more eye catchy I have taken some shot in slow shutter and some in high.

16. MUSHROOM MAGIC: I always feel attraction towards the natural phenomenon which is a bit rare and uncommon. My subconscious mind always searches for such unseen events. In this image I am showing a rare and hard to see the natural phenomenon of oyster mushroom. Oyster mushrooms are edible and largely cultivated. Oyster

14. DEADLY ROAD CROSSING

© Anirban Dutta

mushrooms are simple to cook. You can add them to stews and soups and sauces, or use them as a pizza topping. It is rich in Vitamin C and B complex and protein. It has most of the mineral salts required by the human body. The niacin content is about ten times higher than any other vegetable. The folic acid present in oyster mushrooms helps to cure anaemia.

Mushroom spores are tiny microscopic reproductive units that are produced by fungi. Releasing spores is the phase as both the beginning and end of a mushroom's life. On one hand, a mushroom has fulfilled its purpose once it has fully matured and released its spores for future generation and starts decomposing. On the other hand, spores are carried via wind or water until they ultimately settle on a surface with favourable conditions to start growing.

To make this natural phenomenon dramatic and eye-catchy I have used some harsh flashlights masked with coloured cellophane paper to achieve my coveted shot. This is an in-camera multiple exposure / double exposure image. I have taken first and second image of mushroom placed in extreme left and right side of the image. Then I have taken the image of waves of spores released by mushroom. It is very tough to locate and take photos of the spore waves. Unidirectional light can be the only process to achieve this spore waves. I have taken multiple images and camera itself merged them and produced one NEF raw file.

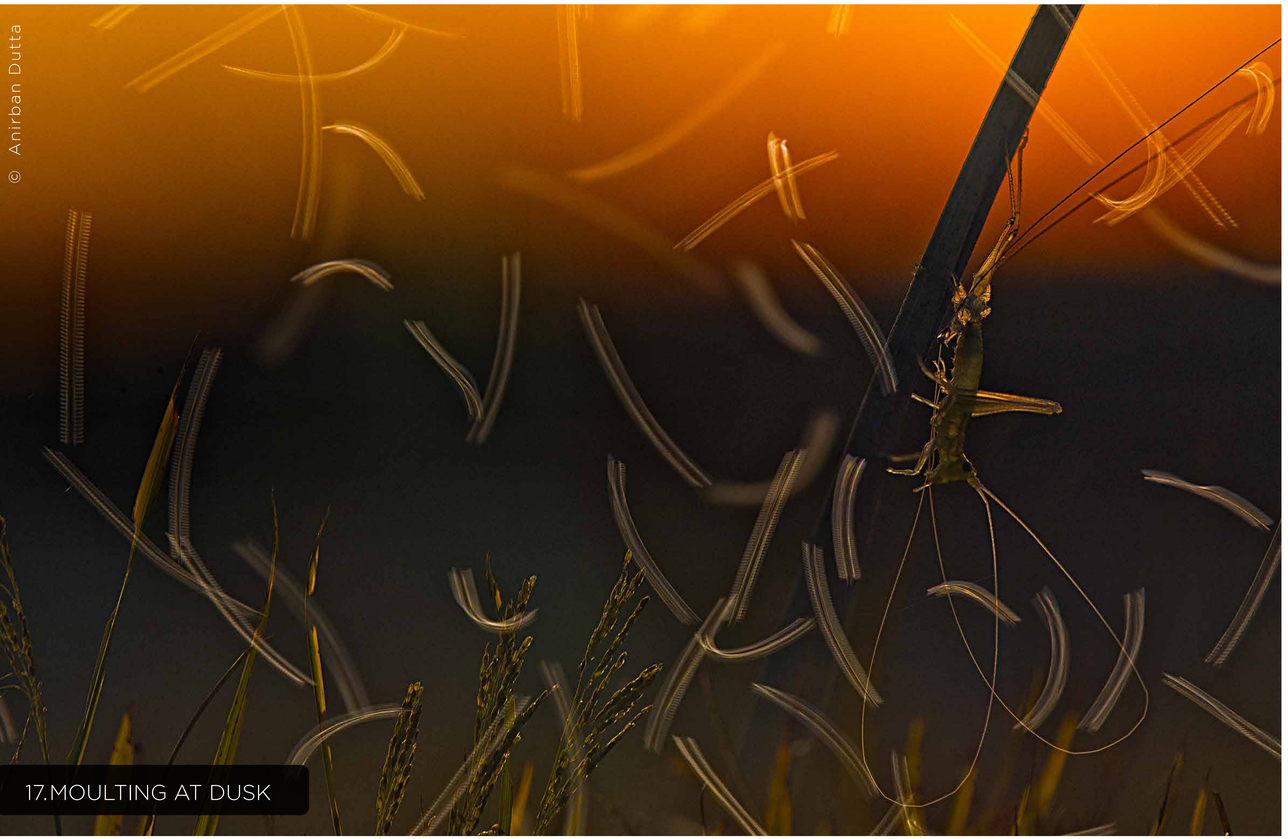
17. MOULTING AT DUSK: This is a natural history moment I witnessed. This is a

15. COLOURS OF NUPTIAL FLIGHT

© Anirban Dutta

16. MUSHROOM MAGIC

© Anirban Dutta



17.MOULTING AT DUSK

moulting scene of bush cricket. I found this near a paddy field. Moulting is an essential activity in insect. All invertebrates, amphibians, arachnids and other animals do moult or shed, ie; casts off their exoskeleton, either at specific times of the year or at specific points in its life cycle. Moulting or shedding is the replacement of skin or feather. For young grasshoppers to continue their growth, development and reach the adult stage, they must periodically moult or shed their outer skin. Depending on species and sex, they moult four to six times during their nymphal or immature life. The young grasshopper sheds the outer skin, the hard exoskeleton and the nymph starts feeding and growing. After moulting five times it becomes an adult and gains fully functional wings. I have seen many numbers of moulting of different bugs, beetles, and insects. This is the unique behaviour of animals.

I have pictured this just before the dark. The chaotic moving objects you can see in the background were small sized flies. To capture the whole scene, I had to use in camera multiple exposure / double exposure technique. Here I have taken total 3 shots. My first shot was of moulting in reddish tone (WB kelvin). Second shot of some ripe paddy to show the actual scene. And the last one for the moving flies in background. Camera itself merged the above three image taken and supplied me a single RAW NEF file.

But some scientific study suggests that this bouncing behaviour is a way of Defence mechanism or for the fly to disperse residual flight momentum, helping it to land and stabilize itself.

18. COLOR RIOTS: Suspended in a web that seems spun from moonlight and midnight, a tiny hunter becomes the radiant star of a cosmic spectacle. This is not just a spider's lair, but a stage set for a "Colour Riot," where light itself is shattered and flung in a dazzling, anarchic spray.

The dark backdrop melts away into a cascade of vibrant, elongated prisms—electric blues, startling pinks, acid greens, and gold—all streaking outward like a meteor shower captured in slow motion. These luminous bars of light don't just illuminate the scene; they feel like the very energy of the universe is vibrating through the taut, invisible silk. The spider, centred in the chaos, is an island of delicate focus. Its legs splay across the glittering tapestry, appearing almost ghost-ly against the explosive light. It is both the architect of its gossamer trap and the conductor of this brilliant, ethereal orchestra. It is a moment where the mundane reality of a garden spider transcends into a breath taking, abstract masterpiece, proving that even the smallest life can be wrapped in the most spectacular, silent light show.

19. LIGHT TRAILS: In the deep velvet dark, a ribbon of molten gold dances, tracing the invisible air with ephemeral light. It's a whisper of fire captured in motion -not a flame, but the luminous echo of movement itself. The streaks are both sharp and soft, suggesting the rapid, kinetic energy of something moving through the frame, leaving behind a ghostly, vibrant signature. This abstract illumination cuts across the void, transforming the simple concept of a "light trail".

Hanging gently beneath a cool, damp leaf, this cranefly is captured in a single, luminous moment. Look closely! Its long, exquisitely delicate legs are a clever escape artist's trick easily shed to leave a hungry predator empty-handed.

But its most captivating act is its vibration. Observe how it trembles, creating a shimmering blur of movement.

I used the sunlight filtering from behind to frame the creature, and a long shutter speed transformed its constant, tiny movements into streaks of light a ghostly, beautiful record of its secret dance.

20. UNIK SIGNATURE: Photography is a matter of beauty, conservation, awareness and restoration of Mother Nature. As a passionate nature photographer my core intention is to inspire viewers through my works. I always try to do something new, eye catchy and thought-provoking. This is a simple signature spider. This tiny unique

18. COLOR RIOTS

© Anirban Dutta

spider has something attractive. It is a kind of Orb-weaver spider but the web is dense, prominent structure of white, zigzag silk woven into the centre of their large, wheel-shaped signature like orb webs. It may help them camouflage while resting at the centre of the web. Females are brightly coloured, often displaying bold patterns of yellow, black, and sometimes white on their abdomens. They are diurnal (active during the day) and primarily prey on small to medium-sized flying insects caught in their webs. They are found in a variety of habitats, including gardens, shrub lands, forests, and fields, typically spinning their large webs in low vegetation about 1–2 meters (3–6 feet) above the ground.

But the best part of the image is the barrel type background effect. To make this dream like image, I have used in-camera multiple / double exposure technique. The first image of mating was taken with Tamron 90mm VC USD + Godox flash MF12 K2 with diffuser. Keeping the camera on I replaced the lens with old vintage lens Helios 44M-4 58mm F/2 (front glass flipped/reversed) lens and second shot was taken. Camera itself merged them into one producing a raw NEF file. I have pre-visualized the whole scene before capturing it with the camera. It is very risky to change lens in the forest keeping camera on. If the audience appreciates this, the difficult work and risk will have been worth it.

20. UNIK SIGNATURE

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TRAVELOGUE

Nature's Way

Eric Seemann

© Eric Seemann

Eric Seemann is a professional wildlife photographer known for capturing intimate, emotional moments in the wild. Widely recognised as “The Wildlifer,” he is the creative force behind ES Wildlife Photo Images, blending fine-art aesthetics with raw, authentic wildlife behaviour. Born and raised in British Columbia, Canada, Eric’s deep connection to nature shapes both his imagery and his small-group wildlife photography tours, which take photographers to iconic wild regions including Canada and Kenya.

instagram.com/eswildlifephotoimages/
facebook.com/eswildlifephotoimages
wildlifer.ca

On a typical winter afternoon in northern British Columbia, Canada, I head north of Prince George to one place I know the water won’t be frozen. My subject is Trumpeter Swans.

Most Trumpeter Swans migrate south from Alaska, the Yukon, and across Canada to escape winter, but a small, hardy group chooses to stay, surviving the harsh northern cold in a narrow stretch of river that never freezes. I can only assume this open water provides enough food to sustain them through the winter. Seeing and photographing these powerful birds in such an unforgiving landscape is a reminder of nature’s resilience.

The location I head to that day is known as the 100 Forest Service Road, an active logging road during the winter months. The river below me is the Cooked River, and I find myself standing on a square-timber bridge, looking down at the swans gathered in the open water beneath me.

As I stand on the bridge watching the swans, movement catches my peripheral vision, upstream in the bush. I slowly raise my camera and bring the lens to my eye to see what’s there.

It’s a Canada Lynx. This is where things get exciting. The cat moves deliberately, circling the area before finally settling down—a familiar ritual shared by all cats, wild or domestic. It’s instinctive, deeply rooted behavior, and witnessing it here, in this frozen northern landscape, makes the moment even more remarkable.

It’s at this point that the Lynx slips out of sight. Darn it! I can’t see him anymore, and that’s disheartening to say the least. I scan the area carefully but there’s no sign of movement. The snow here is nearly four feet deep, and getting closer for a better view won’t be easy. Still, I decided to go for it. I begin the slow, exhausting

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walk upstream, pushing through deep snow on the opposite side of the river from where I first spotted the Lynx. The distance I need to cover is roughly one hundred meters, but in snow this deep it takes nearly fifteen minutes. When I finally reach the spot, I'm exactly where I hoped to be, across a narrow section of river where I should be able to see the Lynx. There he is! He's an older male. It's just after 2 p.m., and he's settled in for an afternoon nap.

I tell myself; this is the moment to slow down and wait. As I settle into position, I notice a mule deer carcass lying along the edge of the frozen river. The Lynx will stay with that deer until it's completely consumed. I know he won't leave the area. How the deer ended up here is hard to say. The river is shallow enough that it may have tried to cross, slipped on the ice, possibly broke a leg, and succumbed to the cold. Perhaps it was taken down by the Lynx himself, as he is certainly large enough to bring down a deer of this size

I'm now sitting in an improvised seat carved into the snowbank, waiting for this well-fed and content Canada Lynx to wake from his nap. About an hour later, he rises from his snowy bed. It's around 3:30 p.m., and I know the light won't last much longer. This is the moment.

I start shooting as he sits up, scans his surroundings, and stretches, long and deliberate. Wow! Things are getting more exciting now. After a nap, he's clearly hungry again, and who can blame him? Napping is hard work. He makes his way down a well-worn path toward the river's edge, where dinner awaits.

© Eric Seemann

© Eric Seemann

The pulling and tugging begin at what remains of the mule deer's hindquarters, nearly consumed already. The front half is buried in snow and ice, but that won't stop him. Rested and strong, he digs in and hauls at the frozen carcass with everything he has.
Watching this is a powerful reminder of just how strong Canada Lynx are. Despite weighing only 8 to 17 kilograms, they possess strength comparable to much larger carnivores. While snowshoe hare makes up most of their diet, Lynx are fully capable of killing deer or even caribou, especially when the animal is weakened. They also have an impressive bite force, up to 635 psi. In comparison, a grey wolf's bite measures around 400 psi, while a black bear's bite reaches roughly 800 psi.

With the carcass finally free, the Lynx has everything he needs for now, and this is where patience pays off. From my makeshift seat tucked into a snow-covered willow bush (surprisingly comfortable, I might add) I continue watching. Suddenly, a mink appeared no more than half a meter to my left. It stands up on its hind legs, looks at me, looks across the river, then looks back at me again, before deciding to swim across. Now things are getting even more exciting. I'm already thinking about how incredible this moment is and how much I can't wait to share my experience. As the mink swims across the river, it catches the Lynx's attention. He lifts his head from the carcass and watches, waiting to assess the situation.

In one smooth motion, the mink slides up onto the ice directly in front of the Lynx. The Lynx peers over the deer carcass,

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using it as cover, poised for an intrusion. The mink sits there for what feels like a minute or two before making its decision. Then it commits jumping from one ice shelf onto the same ice the Lynx is standing on. Suddenly all hell breaks loose! It's an incredibly rare interaction to witness, let alone photograph. As the mink approaches the carcass, seemingly unaware of the Lynx, the cat launches himself over the deer in pursuit. The mink spots him at the last second and dives back into the river. Despite what many people believe, Canada Lynx are not afraid of water. They are strong, capable swimmers and regularly cross rivers and lakes within their range. Lynx have even been documented swimming in temperatures as cold as –27°C.

Without hesitation, the Lynx plunges into the river after the mink.

The struggle lasts roughly 30 to 45 seconds before the Lynx surfaces with his prize. The mink gambled and at this moment, it appeared to have lost.

The Lynx carries its prey back to the spot where he had been resting earlier. Surprisingly, the fight isn't over yet. The mink is still alive and refuses to give up.

A fight erupts between the two, snow exploding into the air. I can see the mink fighting desperately for its life, but to no avail.

The struggle lasts roughly forty-five seconds before everything goes still, right in the same place where the Canada Lynx had been resting peacefully just an hour earlier. Although moments like this are

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something we, as wildlife photographers, hope to witness, it's impossible not to feel sadness watching such a beautiful animal meet its end.

Under normal circumstances, minks are well protected from predators for several reasons. They are aggressive, highly defensive, and notoriously unpleasant to deal with. Their coats are extremely oily and water-repellent, but it's more than just oil that keeps predators at bay. Minks are ferocious for their size and possess powerful scent glands. When threatened or injured, they release a strong, ifferent scent but in the same manner as their distant relative, the Skunk. This animal demonstrated that defensive nature clearly as it fought for its life.

This helps explain what I discovered later. When I returned to the area days later, the Lynx was gone. Higher water levels had erased any sign of the deer carcass, and I noticed something, the mink had not been eaten. The Lynx had killed it, not for food, but for invading his territory. It's nature's way.

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Eric Seeman

Exploring Nature Through Creativity.

By Avleen Kaur Palna

© Avleen Palna

Avneen is a 15-year-old wildlife artist and photographer based in Kenya. Inspired by growing up close to nature and frequent wildlife encounters, her work focuses on capturing the form, movement, and character of animals through painting and mixed media. Working with watercolours, acrylics, coloured pencils, and mixed techniques, Avneen embraces the natural imperfections of her subjects, allowing each piece to develop organically. Her wildlife-inspired artworks have been featured in school publications, and she continues to explore nature as her primary source of creative inspiration.

instagram.com/artsbyavleen

© Avleen Palna

Art has always been more than just drawing on paper for me. It has been a way to express my thoughts, feelings and imagination. For the past four years, art has been an important part of my life, helping me grow as not only an artist but also as a person. What began as a simple interest slowly turned into a passion that continues to inspire me every day. Being born and raised in Kenya has played a huge role in shaping my love for nature and wildlife. Growing up, I was fortunate to go on wildlife safaris where I saw animals in their natural habitats and experienced the beauty of the environment up close. These experiences helped me develop a deep appreciation for animals, their movements and unique characteristics. Seeing wildlife made me want to capture their strength and beauty through art. Nature doesn't strive for perfection and this is what exactly makes it so beautiful and mesmerizing to me.

I started experimenting with colors, sketching shapes and creating small drawings whenever I had free time. At first, I didn't focus on perfection-I just loved the process of creating. Overtime those simple sketches encouraged me to explore art more seriously and challenge myself to improve.

As I continued practicing over the years, I began experimenting with different mediums such as water colors, acrylic paints, color pencils and mixed media. Each medium taught me something new. Water

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colors and acrylics helped me learn patience and control, while color pencils improved my observational skills and attention to detail. Mixed media allowed me to combine textures and colors freely, pushing me to take artistic risks and think creatively.

Creating art based on nature also helps me feel calm and connected to the world around me. When I draw or paint natural subjects, I pay closer attention to details that might be overlooked such as the animals' movements, unexpected colors or unique patterns. These details influence the way I create art reminding me that small details can add character and meaning to a piece. Throughout my artwork I try to reflect on the honesty of nature. I do not aim to make every line straight or every color exactly the same. Instead, I allow my work to develop naturally, just like the subjects I draw or paint. This approach has helped me become more confident and open minded, both in art and everyday life.

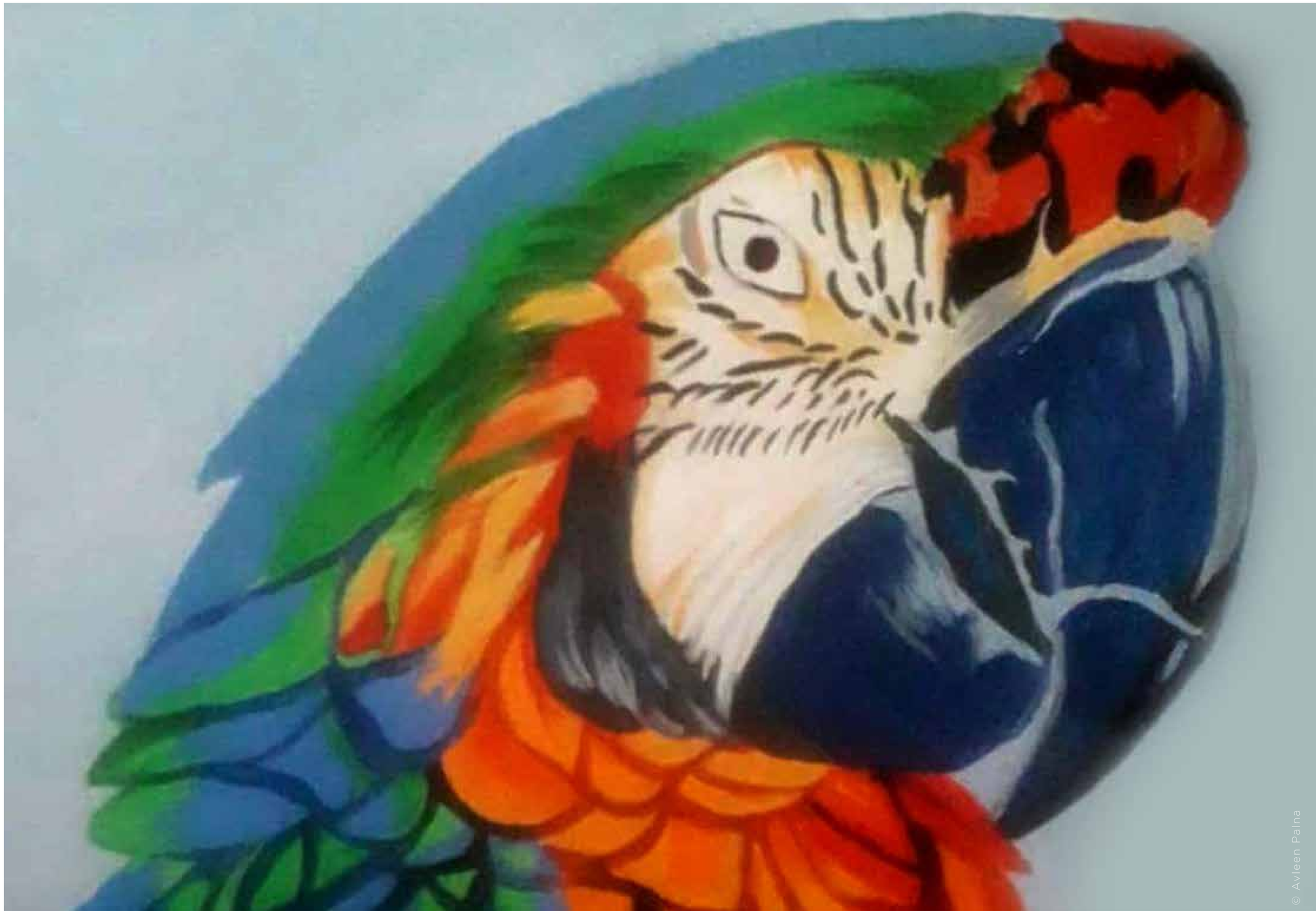
One of my proudest moments was when one of my wildlife inspired art works, featuring a herd of elephants was selected as the cover of the school magazine. I also had the opportunity to paint the school banner for sports day, which featured a lion representing my house, Simba. These experiences reflected both my artistic journey and my strong connection to wildlife, and it motivated me to continue

© Avleen Palna

challenging myself and keep creating.

Throughout my four-year journey, I have learned that mistakes are a part of creativity. Not every artwork turns out as planned, but each one teaches me something new. Each stroke of a paintbrush and the countless hours spent painting or coloring reminds me that progress comes through effort and practice. Art also helps me express emotions that are sometimes difficult to explain in words. Whether I feel happy, calm, stressed or thoughtful, creating art pieces helps me relax and refocus. It has become a free space where I can express myself freely without pressure.

As I continue my art journey, I hope to explore natural themes in new ways and experiment with different techniques. Nature offers endless inspiration and no two pieces are ever the same. This motivates me to keep learning, creating and growing as an artist.



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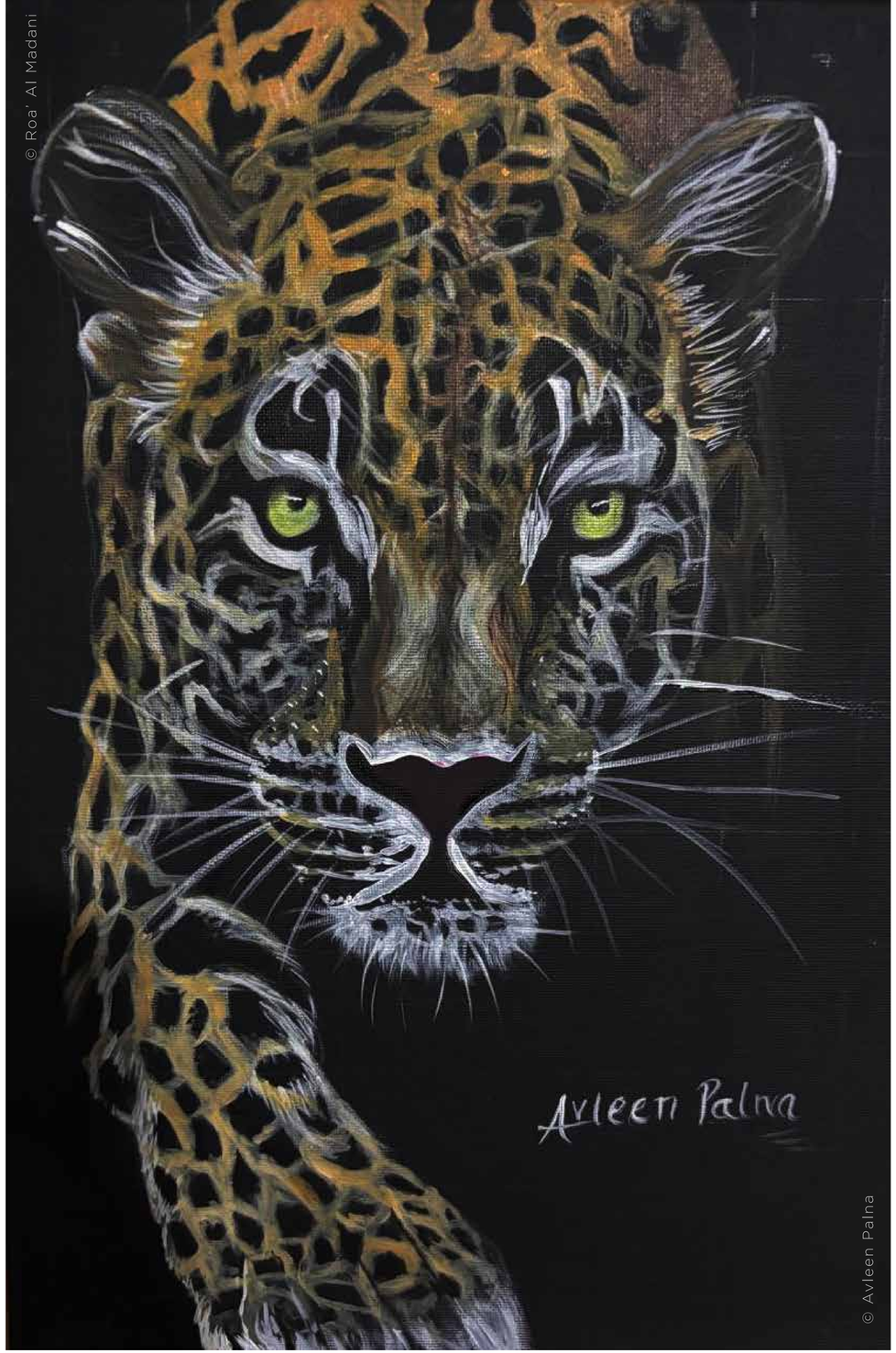

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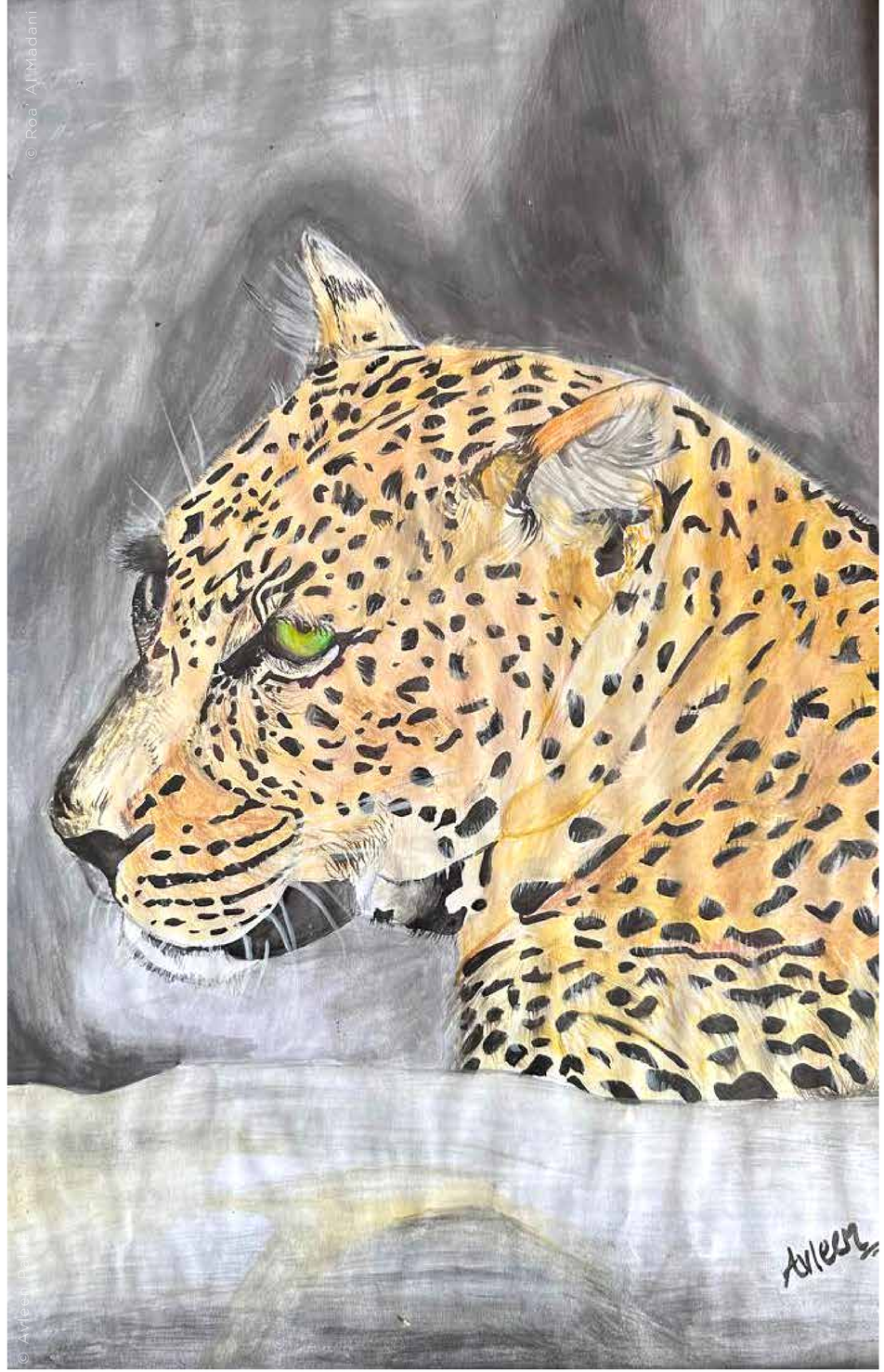

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WHERE EVERY FRAME TELLS A WILD STORY

EDITION 50

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YOUR GALLERY

EXPLORERS

Hermis Haridas

Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) and (*Aepyceros melampus*)
Imapala Masai Mara, Kenya

YOUR GALLERY

Aslam Muhammed
Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*)
Salalah,Oman

YOUR GALLERY

Amit Krish
Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*)
Spiti Valley, India

YOUR GALLERY

Najumudeen Koroth
Dik-dik (*Madoqua*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

YOUR GALLERY

Nishim Hameed

Long-tailed Macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*)

Kalimantan, Borneo, indonesia

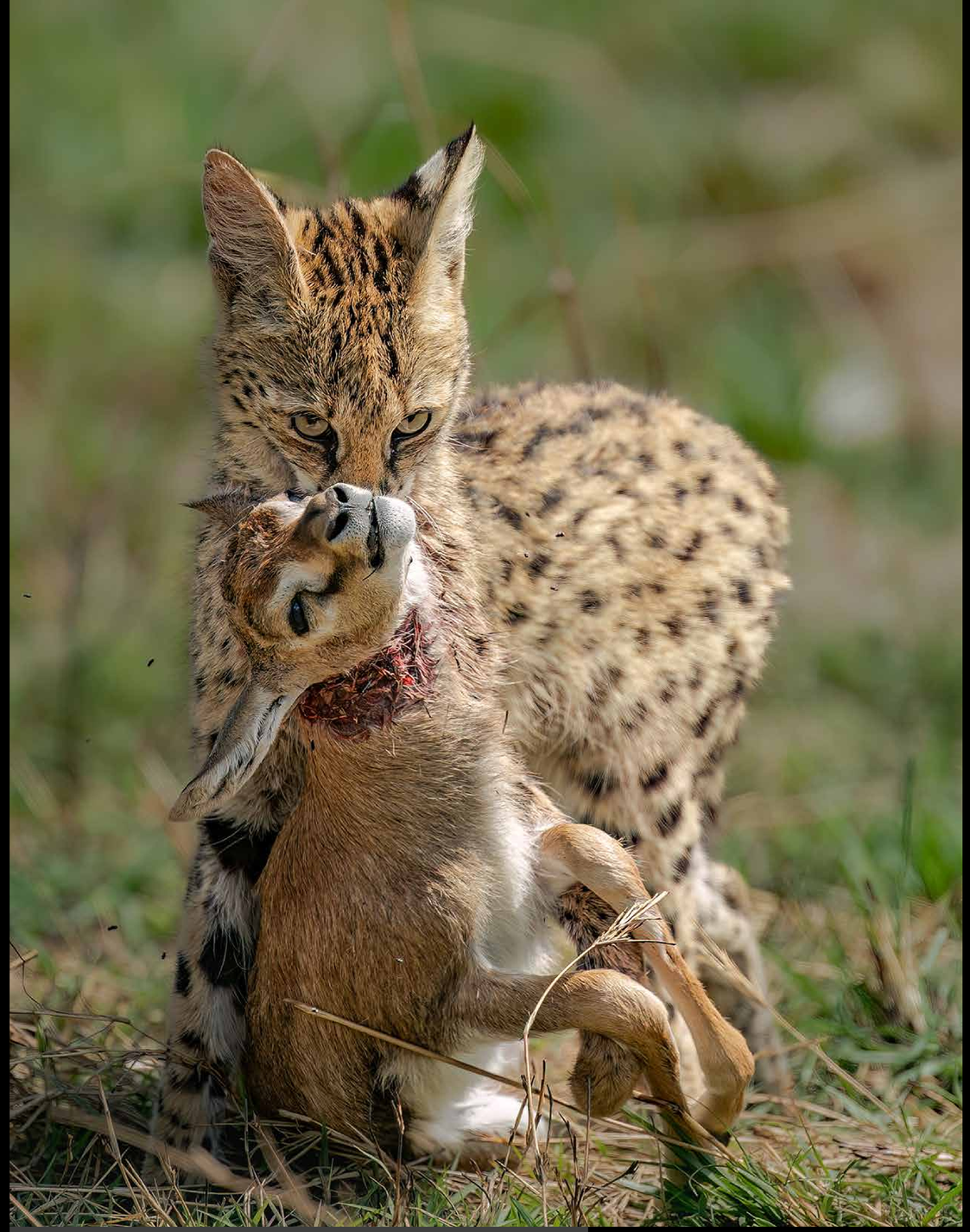
YOUR GALLERY

Sachin Rastogi
Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)
Tadoba Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra, India

YOUR GALLERY

EXPLORERS

Shafi Rasheed
Lion-tailed Macaque (*Macaca silenus*)
Valparai, Tamil Nadu, India



YOUR GALLERY

Deepa Girish
Serval (*Leptailurus serval*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

YOUR GALLERY

Prasanth Tatineni
Pharaoh Eagle-owl (*Bubo ascalaphusi*)
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

YOUR GALLERY

Rithved Girish
Robber Flies (*Asilidae*)
Kerala, India

YOUR GALLERY

Rahul Meledath
Spotted Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

YOUR GALLERY

EXPLORERS

Sanoj Sakhaf
Lion (*Panthera leo*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

YOUR GALLERY

Divyesh Shrikanth Bhai Pathak
Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

YOUR GALLERY

Harikumar GK
Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*)
Al Qudra Lake, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

YOUR GALLERY

Nisha Purushothaman
Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya

EXPLORERS

UPCOMING FEATURES

HER VIEW & VISUALS WITH ANGELA RATNAM

FROM ICE AGE TO ARCTIC TUNDRA

By Eric Seemann

BALD BEAUTY

By Nisha Purushothaman