PI EXPLORERS

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ON THE ETHICS OF SAFARI PHOTOGRAPHY BY GABRIELLA COMI

INTO THE WILD WITH LAKSHITHA K

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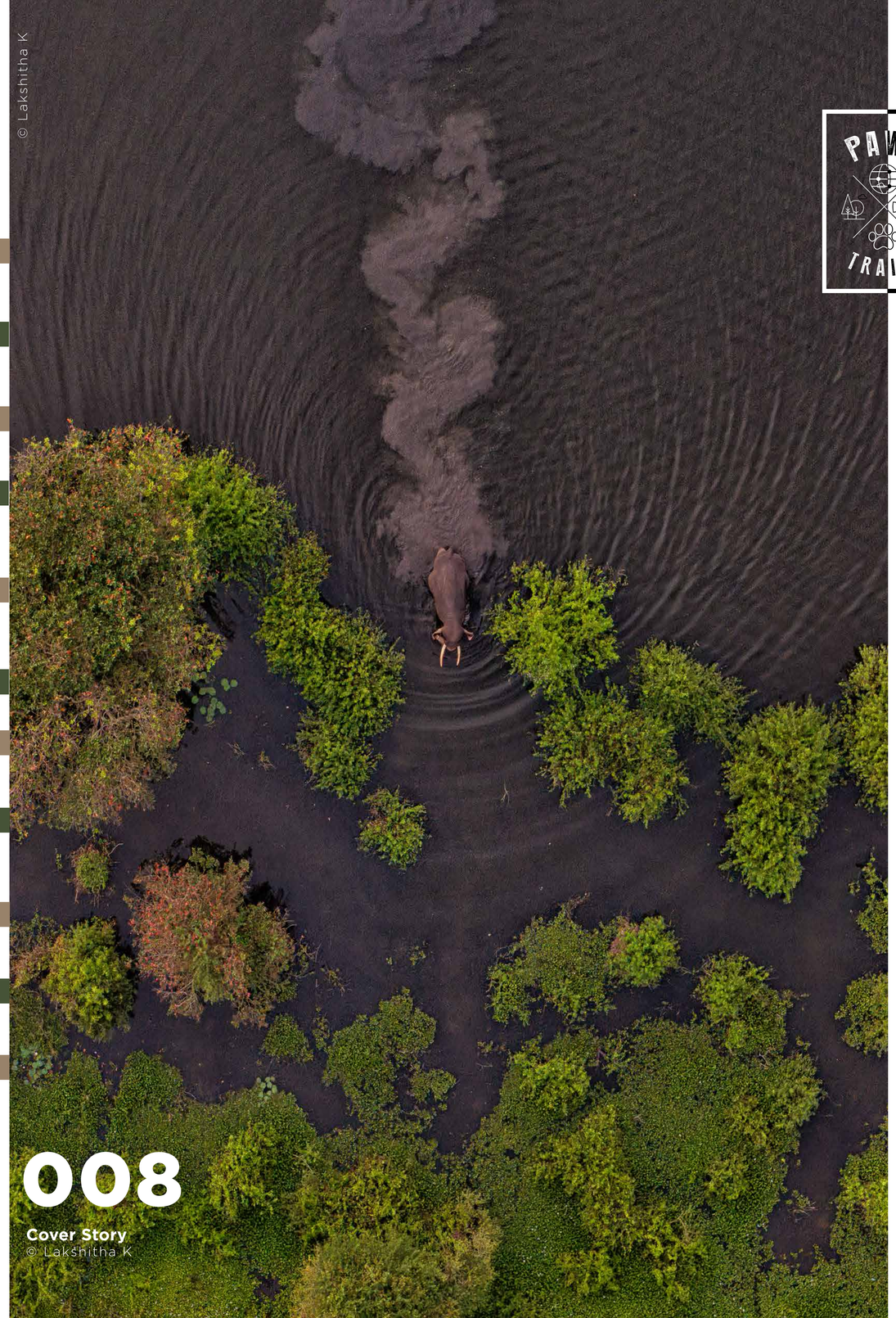
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PT Explorers Editors
Ragul Patteri, Cynthia Bandurek, & Bruno Ferreto Fiorillo

EDITORS DEN

Welcome to the **51st edition of PT Explorers.**

This issue brings together stories that reflect not just the beauty of the wild, but also our growing responsibility towards it.

Our cover story features **Lakshitha Karunarathna**, whose work blends art and conservation. In our conservation feature, **Gabriella Comi** highlights the importance of ethical safari practices.

In Species, **Sachin Rastogi** explores the majestic Golden Eagle, while **Angela Ratnam** shares her journey in Her Views & Visuals.

In Cub's Corner, young **Ram Madhav** reminds us how curiosity can spark a lifelong connection with nature. **Eric Seemann** brings a powerful story of survival in Travelogue, and **Ata Hassanzadeh Dastforoush** reveals urban bird diversity in Through the Lens.

In Wild Arts Showcase, **Ranjisha Raghavan** expresses nature through art, and we close with Your Gallery, a collection from **our global community**.

If these stories inspire you, we invite you to be part of this journey, by observing, sharing, and speaking for the wild in your own way.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

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FOUNDERS' NOTE

Every once in a while, we begin to notice small but meaningful shifts in the way people connect with nature

Today, more than ever, people are starting to question not just what they see in the wild, but how they see it. Ethical choices in travel, photography, and storytelling are no longer optional; they are becoming essential.

This shift matters.

Because conservation is not built only in protected spaces, it is shaped by everyday decisions. The way we observe, the way we share, and the way we respect the natural world all contribute to a larger impact.

Through this edition, we bring together voices that reflect this evolving mindset, stories of awareness, responsibility, and deeper connection.

Because protecting the wild does not begin in the field.

It begins within us.

For the latest & past issues,
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Hermis Haridas & Nisha Purushothaman
Founders - PT Explorers and The Team PT Explorers

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COVER STORY

Into The WILD with Lakshitha K



Lakshitha Karunarathna FRPS is an award-winning wildlife photographer, educator, and Sony Regional Brand Ambassador whose work beautifully bridges art, science, and conservation. Inspired by Sir David Attenborough, he has spent over a decade documenting wildlife across Sri Lanka, Africa, the Arctic, Europe, North America, and Asia, using photography as a powerful storytelling tool.

His work has earned global recognition, including top honours at Nature's Best Photography, Africa Photographer of the Year, Golden Turtle, Nature Photographer of the Year, and accolades at the Wildlife Photographer of the Year by the Natural History Museum, London. In 2020, he became the first Sri Lankan to be awarded Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society (FRPS). Known for his distinctive style blending fine-art aesthetics with documentary depth, Lakshitha often uses monochrome and drone perspectives to capture the emotion of the wild.

His impactful projects on human–elephant conflict and plastic pollution have been featured on BBC, National Geographic, and the Smithsonian Channel. Beyond photography, he is deeply committed to education, inspiring others through workshops and talks to see, think, and connect with the natural world more meaningfully.

instagram.com/lakshithak
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What first drew you to wildlife photography, and how did your journey begin?

I was born and raised in rural Sri Lanka, where wildlife and nature were not distant concepts but part of everyday life. Growing up in such an environment meant that encounters with animals, birds, and forests were quite normal, and from a very young age I developed a deep curiosity about the natural world around me.

Another strong influence in my early years was the work of Sir David Attenborough. At that time, his documentaries were not as easily accessible as they are today, and whenever I managed to find one, it felt like discovering something truly special. Watching those programs opened my eyes to the incredible diversity of wildlife across the planet and sparked a fascination that stayed with me.

Over time, that fascination naturally evolved into photography. I realized that a camera could become a powerful tool, not only to observe wildlife more closely, but also to document and share these moments with others. What began as a personal interest gradually developed into a deeper commitment to storytelling and conservation through wildlife photography.

Your Instagram highlights powerful images of Asian elephants in difficult situations. What inspired you to document these stories?

Elephants have always been deeply woven into the cultural and historical fabric of Sri Lanka. For centuries they have held a special place in our traditions, religion, and collective identity, so for many of us who grew up here, elephants were never just another wild species, they were part of our cultural landscape.

Sri Lanka is also home to nearly 10% of the world's remaining Asian elephant population, which makes the responsibility of protecting them even more significant. Despite this importance, Sri Lankan elephants today face immense pressure. The human - elephant conflict has reached a critical level, driven by habitat fragmentation, expanding agriculture, and increasing interaction between people and wildlife.

As a wildlife photographer who strongly believes that photography can serve as a powerful tool for conservation, I felt compelled to document these realities. While beautiful wildlife imagery can inspire admiration, showing the challenges elephants face can create awareness and encourage meaningful conversations. My intention has always been to use my images not only to celebrate these magnificent animals, but also to highlight the urgent need to ensure their survival for generations to come.

How do you balance artistic expression with conservation messaging in your work?

For me, the balance between artistry and documentation often depends on

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the context of the story I am trying to tell. In situations where the conservation message is critical, such as when documenting the effects of erratic waste disposal on elephants, I tend to prioritize the documentary value of the image first. The primary objective in such moments is to clearly record the reality of what is happening.

However, if the situation allows, I then try to incorporate artistic elements through composition, light, or perspective. In other cases, particularly when photographing wildlife behaviour or landscapes, the artistic approach may naturally take the lead while still carrying an underlying conservation message.

At the same time, I try to avoid becoming overly activist in the way the story is presented. I believe powerful images should encourage reflection rather than dictate conclusions. By presenting authentic moments from the field and allowing viewers to witness the situation for themselves, the photograph can speak in a more balanced and credible way. My goal is not to persuade aggressively, but to create awareness through honest visual storytelling.

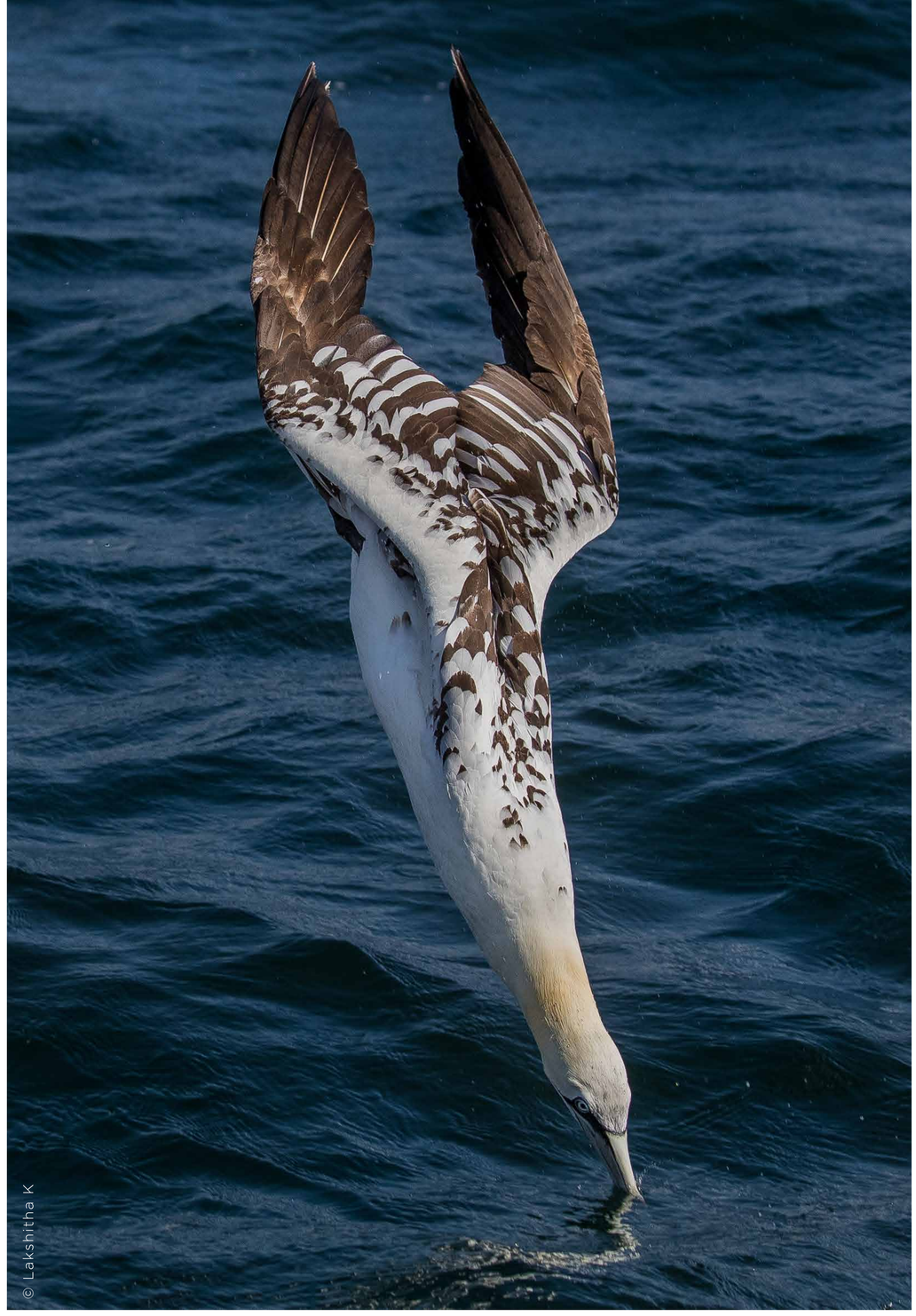
Aesthetics also play a crucial role in conservation photography. There are times when a straightforward documentary image clearly conveys the issue, but in other instances a slight change in angle, perspective, or technique can dramatically enhance the emotional impact. For example, experimenting with low viewpoints, dramatic light, or even approaches such as monochrome can introduce a stronger mood or sense of urgency. These artistic choices can sometimes add an element of surprise or intensity that helps the viewer connect more deeply with the conservation story behind the image.

Which photograph or series has been the most personally meaningful to you, and why?

One of the bodies of work that has been most personally meaningful to me is my ongoing documentation of the human - elephant conflict in Sri Lanka. Over the past four years, I have dedicated a significant portion of my wildlife photography time to this subject, spending many days in areas where elephants and people are increasingly forced to share the same landscapes. The deeper I went into these environments, the more I began to understand the complexity of the situation, not only the challenges faced by elephants, but also the realities experienced by rural communities. Photographing these interactions has been both powerful and emotionally challenging, and it has shaped my perspective as a conservation storyteller.

Closely connected to this work is my long-term interest in Sri Lanka's tuskers. Tuskers hold a particularly special place in our culture and history, and they carry a symbolic significance that goes far beyond their rarity. In Sri Lanka, tuskers represent a very small percentage of the wild elephant population, which makes them even more remarkable. Documenting these individuals has allowed me to explore a deeper cultural and ecological narrative surrounding elephants in the country.

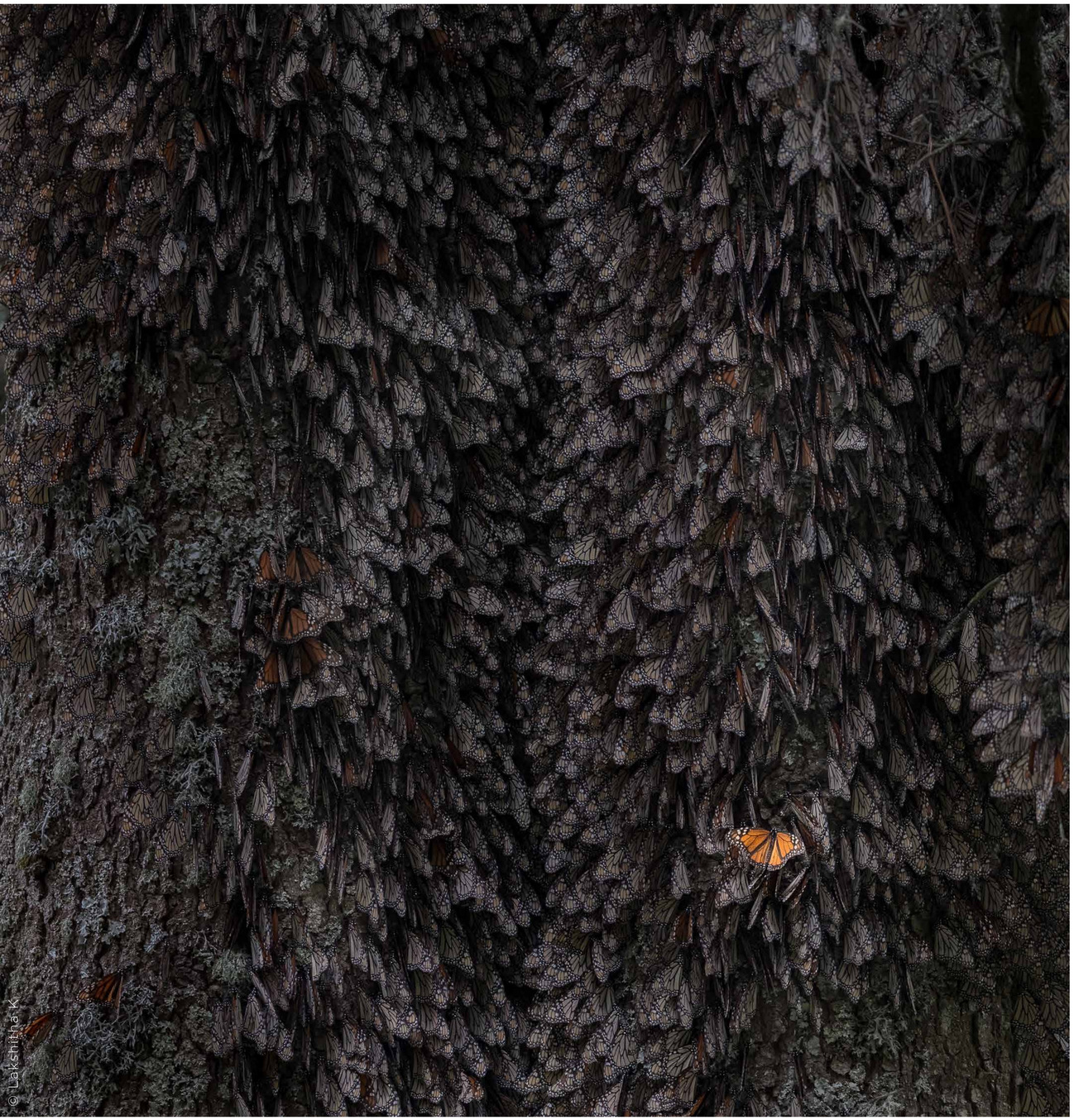
Working on these projects has also marked an important turning point in my photographic journey. When you spend



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extended time following a particular species or story, you naturally begin to develop a deeper emotional connection with it. Over time, elephants became more than just subjects in front of my camera, they became part of a larger story I felt responsible to document. That growing connection has guided much of my work in recent years and continues to shape the direction of my photography.

Can you share the story behind your award-winning image “Toxic Tip”?

“Toxic Tip” was born out of a growing concern I had while documenting the impact of erratic waste disposal practices in parts of Sri Lanka, particularly in the Eastern Province. In several locations, large open garbage dumping sites exist very close to important dry-zone forest blocks that are regularly used by wild elephants. Over time, elephants have begun visiting these sites frequently. Scientific studies and field observations have shown that elephants, much like humans, can become attracted to foods that are high in sugar, starch, and salt, which are commonly found in discarded household waste. These items provide quick energy and can create a form of behavioural dependence, encouraging elephants to repeatedly return to garbage dumps rather than forage naturally. Unfortunately, the consequences can be severe. Consuming plastic, polythene, and other non-digestible waste can lead to intestinal blockages, infections, malnutrition, and in many cases, slow and painful deaths.

From the moment I began observing one such site in Ampara and the herd that regularly visited it, I knew I wanted to create an image that would communicate the scale and seriousness of the issue in a striking way. My intention was to produce a photograph that would immediately shock viewers while still remaining truthful to the scene. Achieving that, however, required many elements to align. I specifically wanted a single elephant standing within the colourful layers of the dump, as this would visually emphasize the contrast between the animal and the overwhelming spread of human waste. This was not easy, because elephants typically arrive at these sites in groups. I also needed the elephant to position itself on a particularly vibrant patch of garbage, since the entire dumping site does not have the same visual intensity.

Because of the enormous scale of the area, it was impossible to observe the entire site from ground level. The use of a drone was essential to locate the elephants and understand their movements. Even then, the environment presented additional challenges. The region around Ampara is well known for sudden and unpredictable showers, which can complicate drone operations. In total, it took nearly eight months of repeated visits, observation, and careful planning to finally capture the moment I had envisioned. This also meant traveling frequently from Colombo, where I live, to Ampara, a journey of around seven to eight hours each way.

What the image ultimately represents is the collision between two worlds. On one side, there is the resilience of a wild elephant trying to survive in a landscape increasingly shaped by human activity. On the other, there is the visible footprint



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of our consumption and waste. The photograph does not stage a moment; it simply reveals the stark reality that wildlife today must often navigate environments profoundly altered by people.

I believe the image resonated internationally because the issue it highlights is not unique to Sri Lanka. Around the world, wildlife is increasingly forced to interact with human waste and expanding settlements. The photograph simplifies a complex conservation problem into a single, powerful visual moment that viewers can immediately understand. It reminds us that environmental challenges are rarely distant problems, they are often the unintended consequences of everyday human behaviour.

How do you choose the subjects and stories you want to capture?

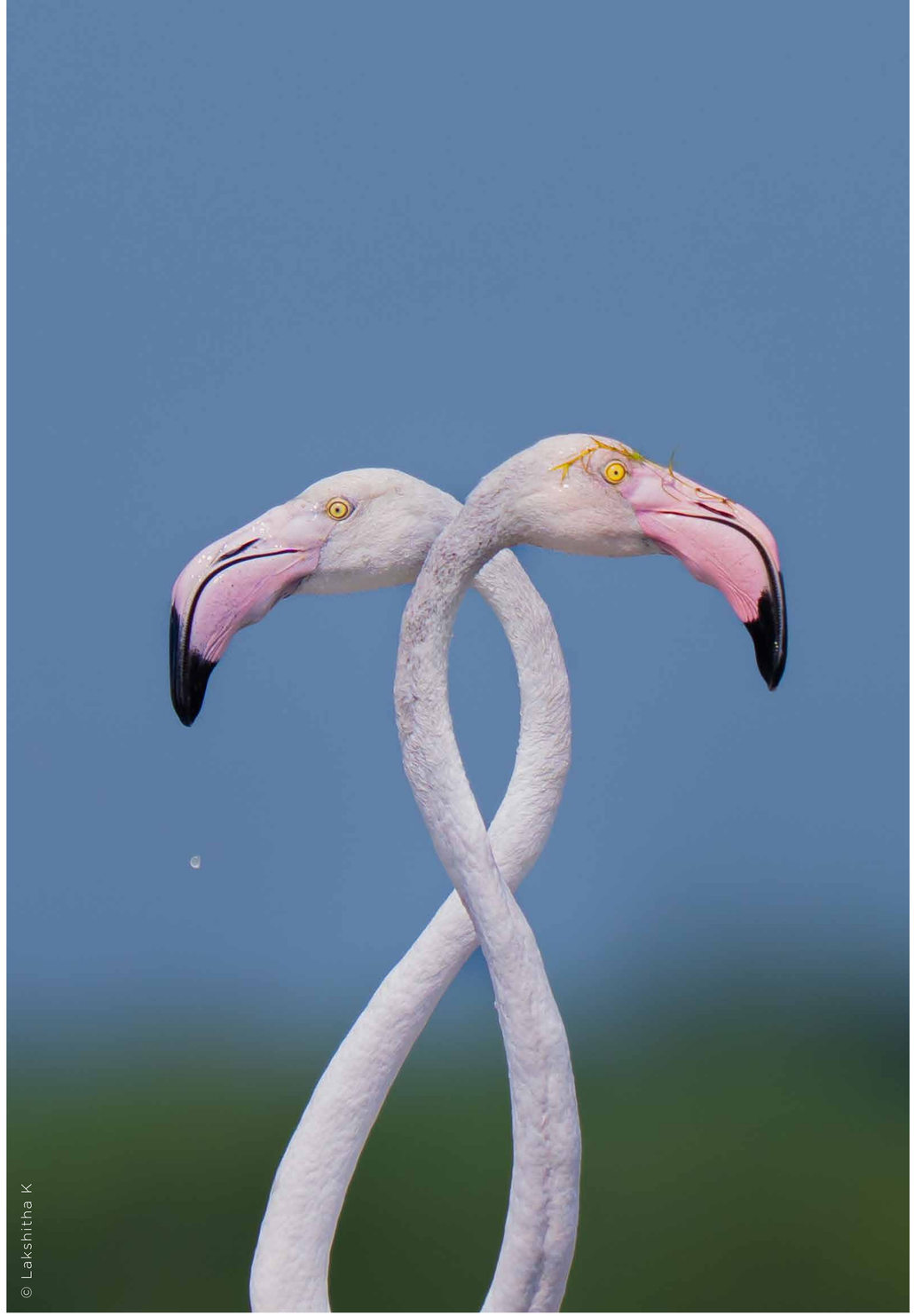
Choosing what to photograph is a process that involves a mixture of observation, research, and personal conviction. While I do keep an eye on prevailing trends in wildlife photography, I do not allow them to completely dictate the direction of my work. For example, there is currently a growing interest among wildlife photographers in documenting rare and elusive species such as Snow Leopards, Pallas's Cats, or even melanistic leopards in parts of India, Kenya, and Thailand. These are fascinating subjects, and like many photographers, I would certainly love the opportunity to work with them one day. However, pursuing rare species purely because they are trending has never been my primary motivation.

Instead, I try to focus on stories that are closely connected to conservation relevance. Many of the subjects I choose to document are linked to environmental challenges that are unfolding in the landscapes around me. Living in Sri Lanka provides a unique opportunity to observe and photograph wildlife that is deeply intertwined with human communities, and this dynamic often creates powerful and important stories that deserve attention. Because of this, I tend to prioritize subjects where photography can contribute meaningfully to awareness and discussion.

I also believe strongly in the value of long-term storytelling. Rather than constantly shifting between many different topics, I prefer to dedicate sustained time and effort to a limited number of projects. Typically, I try to focus on one or two long-term themes at a time. This approach allows me to study the subject more deeply, understand behavioural patterns, and build a more comprehensive visual narrative over the years. In my experience, meaningful conservation photography rarely comes from brief encounters, it often requires patience, continuity, and a long-term commitment to the story.

What challenges do you face when photographing wildlife in Sri Lanka's urban and wild environments?

Photographing wildlife in Sri Lanka presents a unique set of challenges because the boundaries between human settlements and natural habitats are often very thin. One of the most significant realities photographers encounter is the presence of human-wildlife conflict zones,



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particularly in areas where elephants move between forest reserves and agricultural lands. These landscapes are dynamic and sometimes unpredictable, as both wildlife and local communities are trying to coexist within limited space. While these environments provide important stories for conservation photography, they also demand a high level of awareness and responsibility from the photographer.

Safety is another important consideration. In conflict-prone areas, wildlife behaviour can be more unpredictable, especially with elephants that may already be under stress due to human disturbances. Photographers must remain extremely cautious, not only for their own safety but also to avoid creating additional stress for the animals. Careful observation, maintaining respectful distances, and understanding animal behaviour become essential aspects of working in such environments.

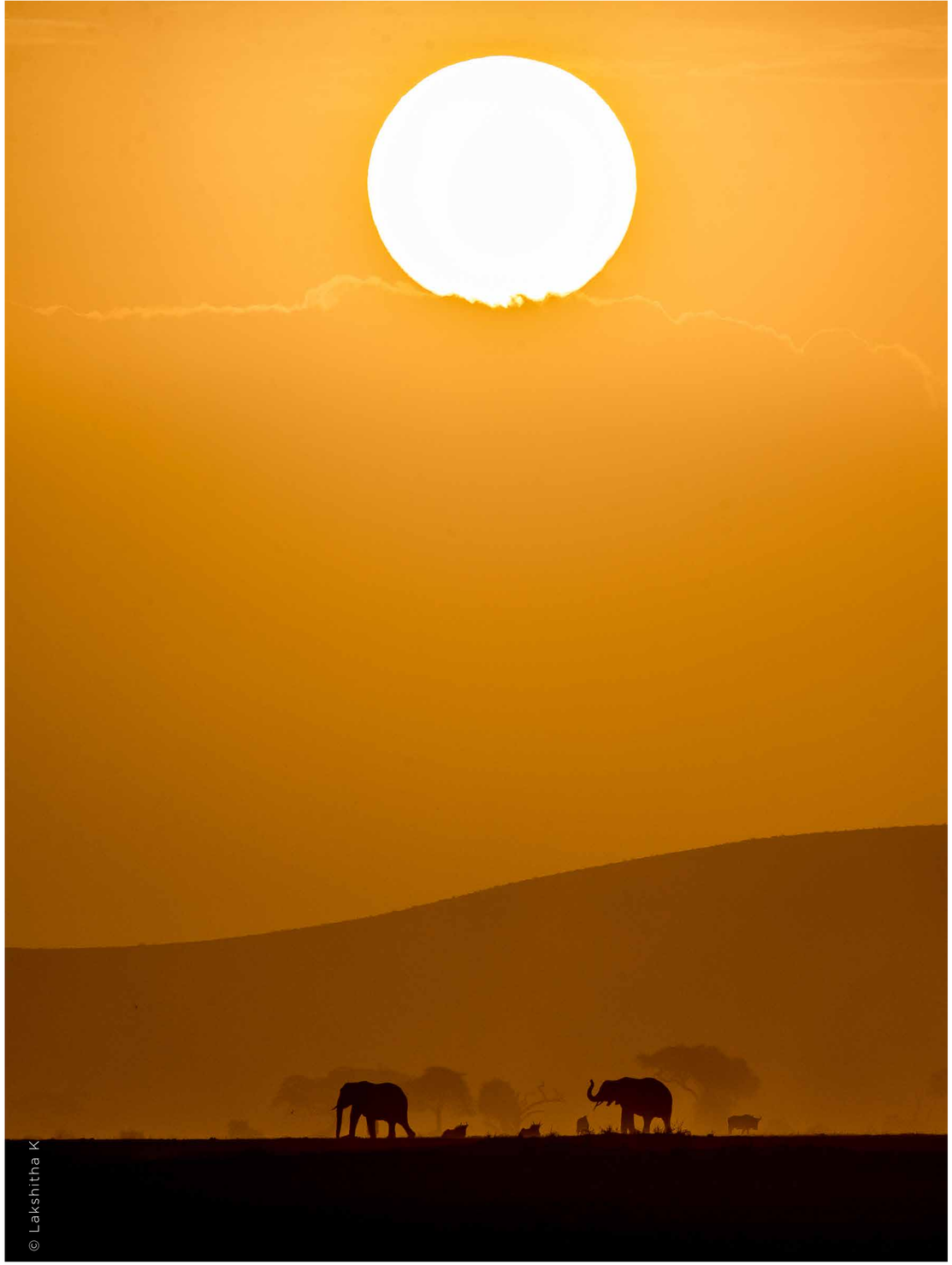
Access can also be challenging. Many wildlife areas in Sri Lanka fall under protected reserves managed by government authorities, where movement is restricted and permits are required. In addition, some of the most important conservation stories unfold outside national parks, often in remote rural landscapes where infrastructure is limited and gaining safe access requires building trust with local communities. Developing these relationships takes time but is often essential for understanding the broader context of wildlife interactions.

Ethical considerations are equally important in wildlife photography. In environments where animals are already facing pressure from habitat loss or human activity, photographers must be particularly mindful not to disturb natural behaviour or manipulate situations for the sake of an image. Responsible wildlife photography means observing patiently and allowing the story to unfold naturally rather than influencing it.

Environmental conditions themselves can also be demanding. Sri Lanka's tropical climate brings sudden rain, intense heat, humidity, and challenging terrain, especially in the dry-zone forests where elephants are commonly found. Equipment must be protected, and long hours in the field are often required to capture meaningful moments. Despite these challenges, these landscapes also offer extraordinary opportunities to document wildlife stories that are both visually compelling and deeply connected to conservation realities.

How important is storytelling in wildlife photography for conservation awareness?

Storytelling is absolutely central to wildlife photography, especially when it comes to conservation awareness. A single image has the ability to communicate across languages and cultures in a way that very few other mediums can. Throughout history, powerful photographs have played a major role in shaping public perception about environmental issues - from endangered species to habitat destruction. When people see an image that clearly shows the reality faced by wildlife, it can often create an emotional connection that statistics or written reports alone may struggle to achieve.



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In that sense, photographs can act as an important bridge between scientific knowledge and public understanding.

However, for wildlife photography to truly influence awareness, it needs to go beyond aesthetics. Beautiful images of animals can certainly inspire admiration for nature, but without context they may not fully communicate the challenges wildlife is facing. Storytelling adds that missing layer. By placing an animal within its environment, its struggles, and its interactions with the surrounding landscape, a photograph can begin to tell a much deeper story. This approach allows viewers to see wildlife not only as subjects of beauty but as living beings navigating complex ecological and human-influenced environments.

My own philosophy about visual storytelling is that a photograph should encourage curiosity and reflection rather than simply deliver a message. I try to create images that invite viewers to pause and ask questions, about the animal, the environment, and the circumstances surrounding that moment. Sometimes the story is one of beauty and resilience, and at other times it may reveal uncomfortable realities such as habitat loss or human-wildlife conflict. In both cases, the goal remains the same: to use visual narratives as a way of connecting people more deeply with the natural world and the responsibility we share in protecting it.

As a Sony Ambassador and accomplished photographer, how has gear influenced your creative process?

Modern technology has had a remarkable impact on wildlife photography, particularly when it comes to capturing natural behaviour that unfolds in fractions of a second. Wildlife moments are often unpredictable - whether it is a bird taking flight, a predator striking prey, or an animal suddenly reacting to its surroundings. Advances in camera technology such as high-speed burst shooting, intelligent autofocus systems, and pre-capture buffering now allow photographers to record these fleeting behaviours with far greater precision than ever before. Features like pre-capture recording, where the camera continuously buffers images before the shutter is fully pressed, help ensure that even moments occurring faster than human reaction time can still be captured.

Equipment also expands creative possibilities in the field. Modern sensors with extremely fast readout speeds, large buffers, and high frame rates allow photographers to track fast-moving animals while maintaining exceptional image detail. Improvements in dynamic range, low-light performance, and in-body stabilisation allow us to work in challenging environments, from dense tropical forests to dawn and twilight conditions where wildlife activity is often at its peak. In addition, the development of longer, lighter telephoto lenses enables photographers to maintain a respectful distance from animals while still capturing intimate behavioural moments.

From my perspective as a Sony Regional Ambassador, Sony's continuous innovation has played a particularly important role in shaping how wildlife photographers work today. Sony has invested heavily in research and development, pushing the boundaries of


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mirrorless technology and introducing features that were once considered impossible in field photography. One of the most transformative developments has been Real-time Eye Autofocus and AI-based subject recognition, which can detect and track the eyes of animals with remarkable precision, even when they are partially obscured by vegetation or moving unpredictably. This technology allows photographers to focus less on technical adjustments and more on anticipating behaviour and composing meaningful images.

Sony's flagship cameras, such as the Alpha 1 series, represent a remarkable combination of speed, resolution, and reliability. Capabilities like ultra-fast burst shooting, blackout-free electronic viewfinders, and advanced subject tracking algorithms have significantly improved the ability to capture critical wildlife moments. Just as importantly, Sony's lens ecosystem, including lenses such as the 400mm f/2.8, 200-600mm, and the newer long-range telephoto options, has given wildlife photographers versatile tools to work across a wide range of environments.

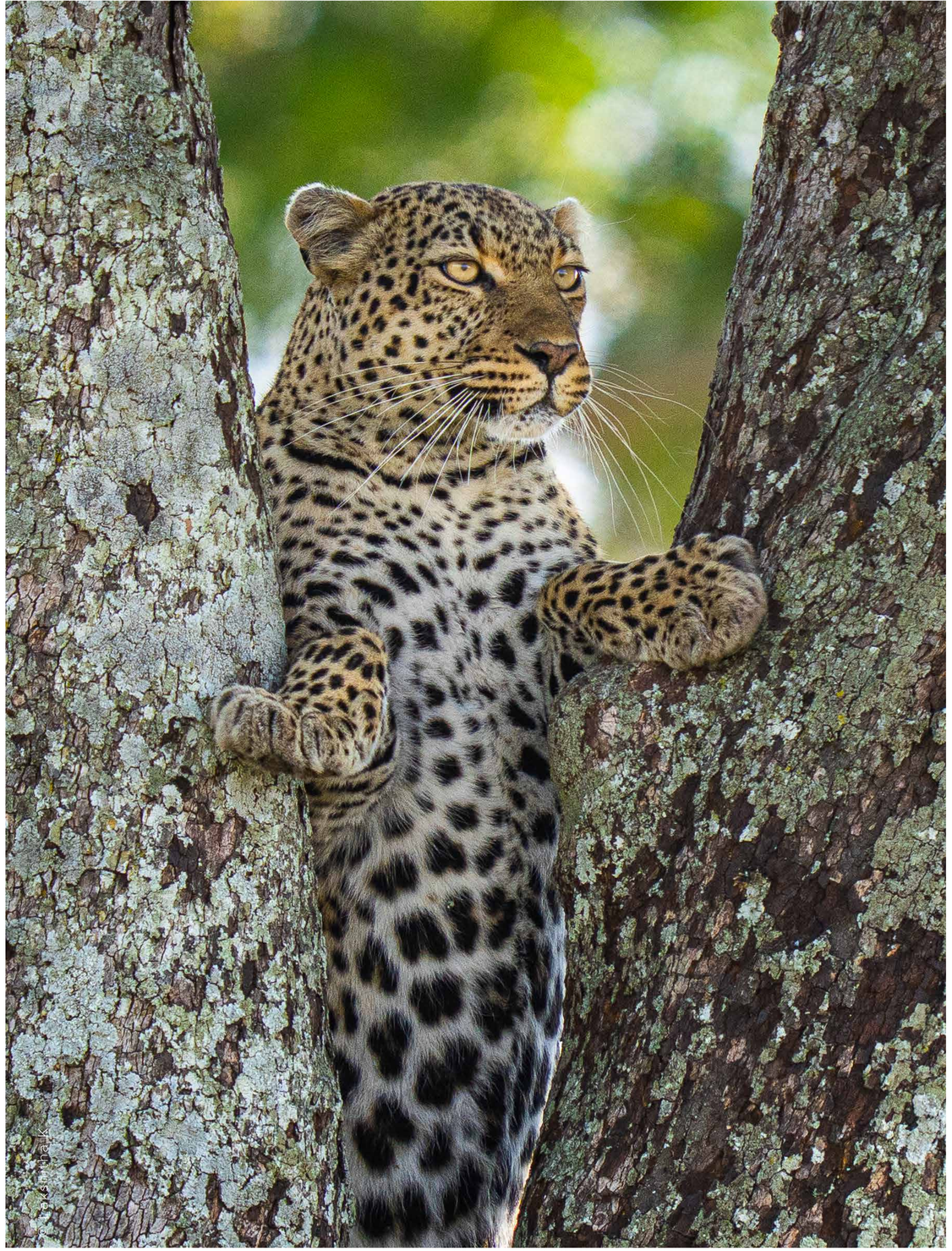
What I appreciate most is Sony's willingness to continuously refine and improve technology based on real-world field requirements. Their ongoing research and development efforts have not only enhanced camera performance but have also expanded what wildlife photographers are capable of achieving creatively. Ultimately, these technological advancements do not replace patience, field knowledge, or respect for wildlife, but they certainly allow us to capture and share the natural world with a level of clarity and immediacy that was unimaginable only a decade ago.

What techniques do you use to capture authentic animal behaviour in your images?

Capturing authentic wildlife behaviour requires much more than simply being present with a camera. One of the most important elements in wildlife photography is patience. Animals operate entirely on their own rhythms, and meaningful moments rarely occur on demand. Often it requires spending long hours, sometimes even days, in the same location, quietly observing and waiting for behaviour to unfold naturally. Patience allows the photographer to become a silent presence in the environment rather than a disruptive one.

Another critical aspect is careful field observation. Before I go out to photograph wildlife, I spend a considerable amount of time doing homework about the location and the species I expect to encounter. This preparation applies whether I am working in a familiar environment close to home in Sri Lanka or in a completely different ecosystem such as the Arctic. Studying habitat characteristics, seasonal patterns, feeding behaviour, and movement routes can make a significant difference in understanding where and when to position yourself. This kind of preparation allows a photographer to anticipate opportunities rather than simply reacting to them.

Closely connected to this is the anticipation of behaviour. Wildlife photography is often about predicting what an animal might do next. By



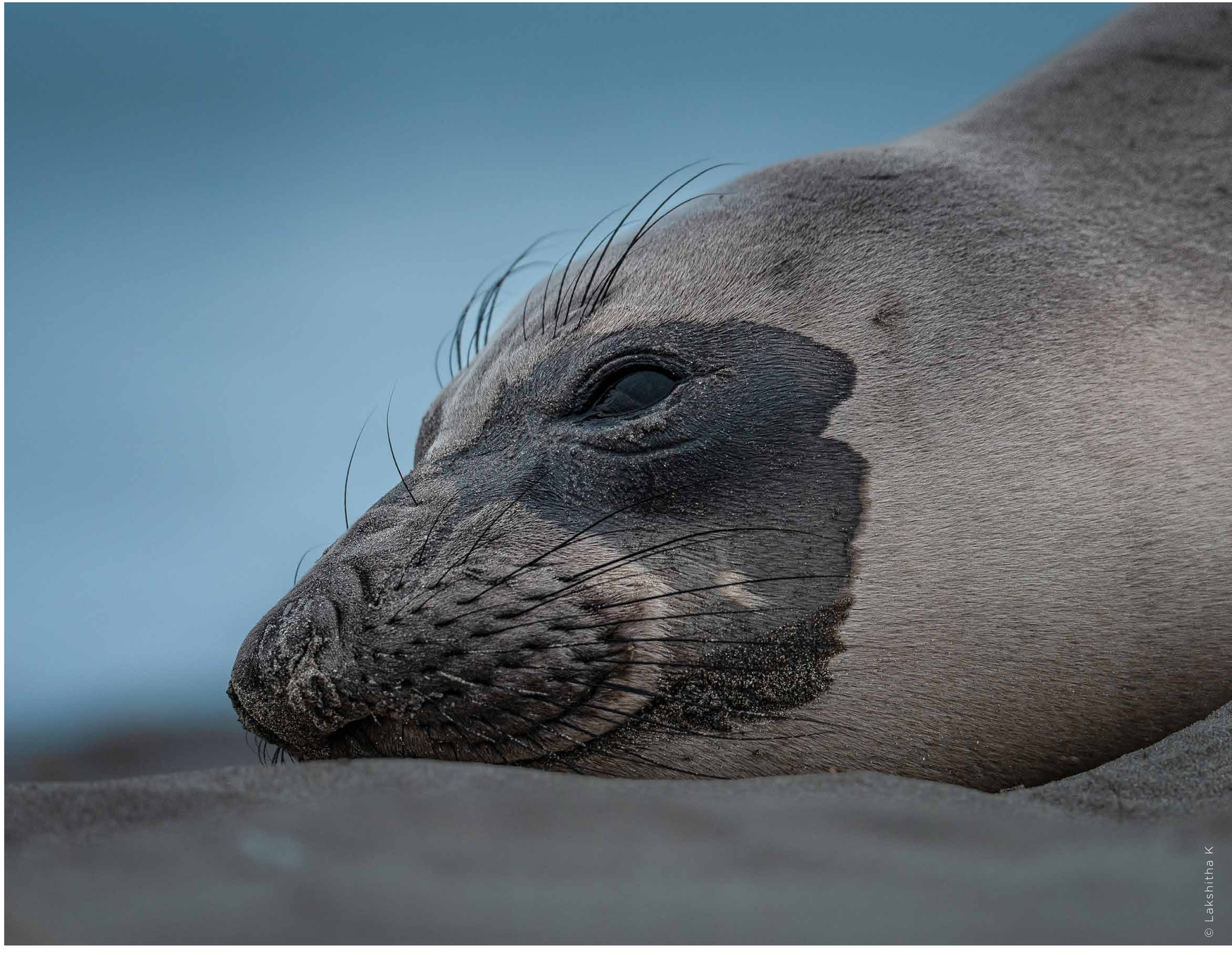
continuously studying animal behaviour, through both scientific resources and personal field experience, it becomes easier to recognise subtle cues. A slight shift in posture, a change in gaze, or body language between animals can often signal that something interesting is about to happen. When you learn to read these signs, you are better prepared to capture those decisive moments.

Equally important is maintaining a non-intrusive approach to photography. Respecting wildlife and ensuring that our presence does not alter their natural behaviour is a fundamental ethical responsibility. This means keeping a safe distance, using appropriate focal lengths rather than approaching animals too closely, and avoiding any actions that might stress or manipulate wildlife for the sake of an image. In my experience, the most powerful wildlife photographs are often the ones where the animal remains completely unaware of the photographer's presence, allowing its behaviour to unfold naturally within its environment.

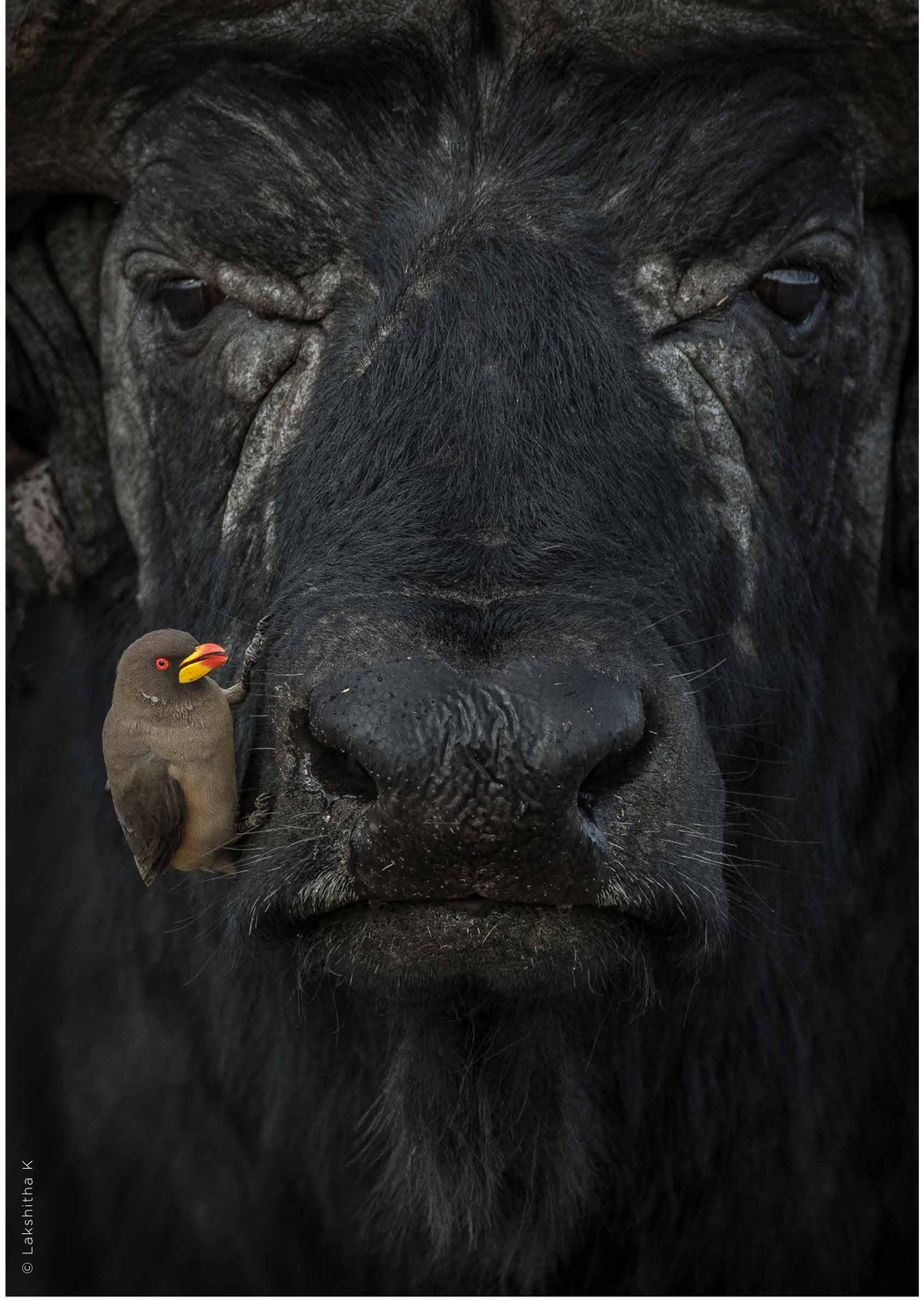
Do you follow a particular system for organizing and cataloguing your photos and reels?

Over the years, I have tried to keep my workflow as clean and efficient as possible without making it unnecessarily complicated. Wildlife photography often generates very large volumes of files, especially when working with high frame rates and extended field sessions, so having a simple but disciplined system is important.

For the initial culling process, I use a couple of different software tools depending on the situation. Programs such as Apollo One and Aftershoot are very useful in helping me quickly review large numbers of images and narrow them down to the strongest frames. These tools allow me to move efficiently through thousands



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of photographs while ensuring that the most important moments are identified and preserved.

When it comes to post-processing, I keep things straightforward by working exclusively in Adobe Lightroom. Over time, Lightroom has evolved into a very comprehensive platform that contains all the essential tools needed for professional image development—from colour correction and tonal adjustments to fine detail refinement. I prefer this streamlined approach because it allows me to maintain consistency across my images without having to move between multiple editing platforms.

For cataloguing and long-term organization, I primarily structure my archive based on geographical locations. Each location is then further divided into subcategories such as the specific park, region, or project I was working on. This method makes it much easier to retrieve images later when I am preparing submissions for competitions, exhibitions, publications, or educational presentations. By keeping the system logical and location-based, I can navigate through my archive quickly while still maintaining a clear overview of my work across different landscapes and projects.

How do you prepare mentally and technically before setting out on a shoot?

Preparation plays a crucial role in wildlife photography, and much of the work actually begins long before stepping into the field. One of the first steps is research. Before visiting a location, I spend time studying the ecosystem, the species that inhabit the area, and any seasonal patterns that may influence animal behaviour. Understanding migration cycles, feeding habits, breeding seasons, and movement corridors can significantly increase the chances of meaningful encounters. This kind of preparation applies whether I am working in a familiar environment in Sri Lanka or traveling to completely different ecosystems such as the Arctic.

Another important aspect is gear preparation. Wildlife photography often takes place in demanding environments, so ensuring that equipment is properly prepared and functioning is essential. Batteries must be fully charged, memory cards prepared, and camera settings optimized for the type of photography expected. Lens choices also depend on the species and landscape I am likely to encounter. Being technically prepared allows me to react quickly when unexpected moments occur in the field.

Equally important is studying weather conditions and animal behaviour. Weather has a significant influence on wildlife activity. For example, certain species may be more active during cooler early mornings, just before rain, or during specific seasonal changes. Understanding how weather patterns interact with wildlife behaviour can help determine the best times and locations to photograph. Monitoring forecasts, wind directions, and light conditions also helps in planning compositions and anticipating opportunities.

Finally, wildlife photography requires a great deal of mental patience and focus. Unlike many other forms of photography, wildlife moments cannot be controlled

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or staged. Photographers must be prepared to spend long hours observing, waiting, and adapting to changing conditions. Maintaining patience and a calm mindset allows you to remain attentive to subtle behavioural cues and ensures that when the right moment finally appears, you are ready to capture it. In many ways, mental preparation is just as important as technical preparation when working in the natural world.

What role do social media platforms like Instagram play in shaping your outreach and influence?

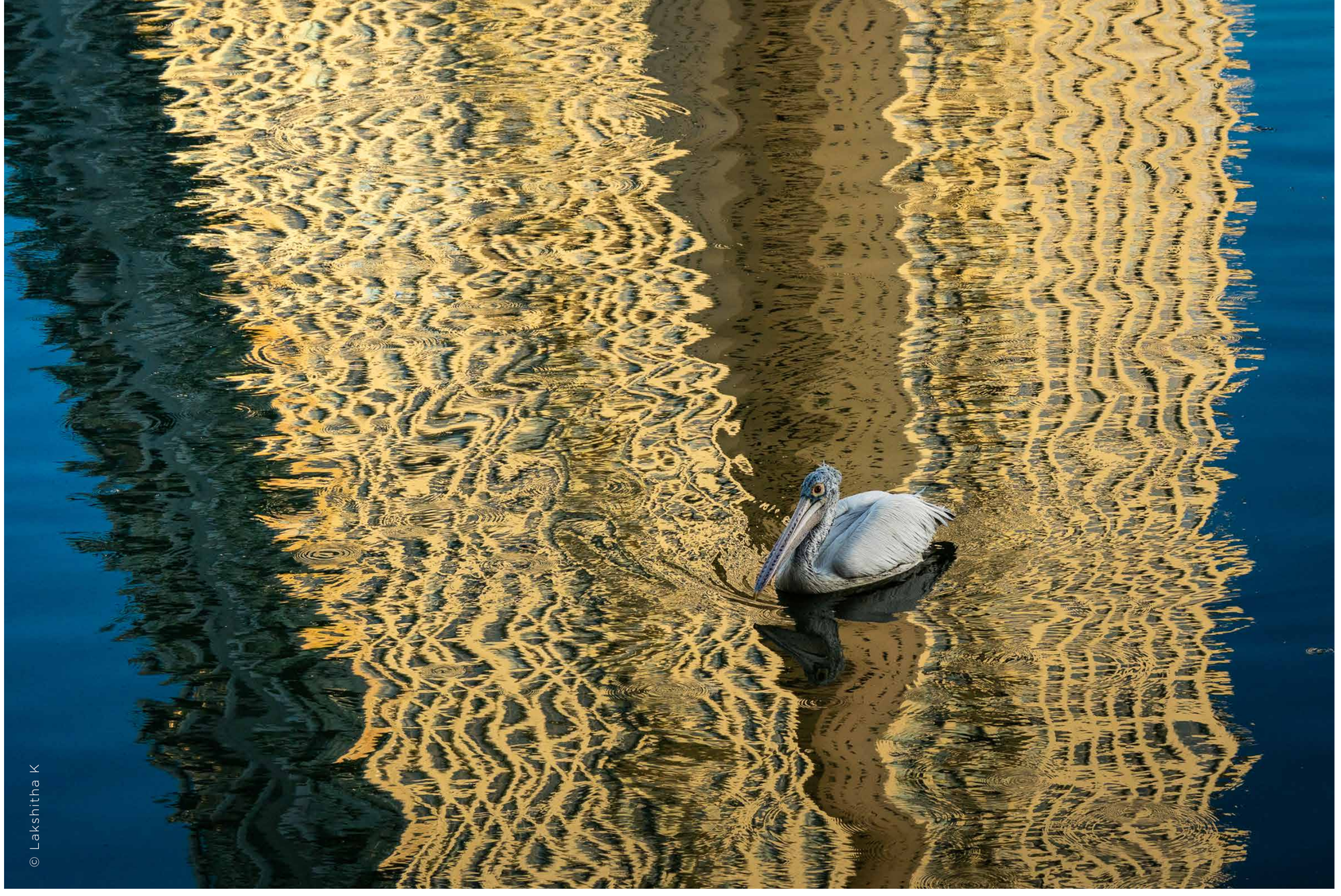
Social media platforms such as Instagram have become extremely powerful tools for wildlife photographers, not only for sharing images but also for education and outreach. In the past, wildlife photography was mostly seen through magazines, books, exhibitions, or documentaries. Today, platforms like Instagram allow photographers to present their work instantly to audiences across the world. This provides an opportunity to educate viewers about species, ecosystems, and conservation challenges in a way that is both visual and accessible.

One of the most important aspects of social media is its role in conservation awareness. A single photograph posted online today has the potential to reach millions of people across different countries and cultures within a very short period of time. When wildlife photographers share meaningful stories behind their images, whether it is about endangered species, habitat destruction, or human–wildlife conflict, it can help bring attention to issues that might otherwise remain unnoticed. In many cases, these visual stories encourage people to learn more about the subject, support conservation initiatives, or simply develop a deeper respect for wildlife.





Lakshitha



In that sense, social media has become one of the most effective platforms for spreading conservation messages on a global scale.

Social media also helps photographers connect with global audiences. Wildlife photography naturally transcends borders, because the appreciation of nature is something that people around the world can relate to. Through platforms like Instagram, photographers are able to interact with followers, fellow photographers, conservationists, and researchers from many different countries. This exchange of ideas often creates valuable discussions about conservation, photography techniques, and environmental responsibility.

At the same time, the reach of social media also brings a responsibility to practice responsible storytelling. When sharing wildlife images online, it is important to present stories in a way that respects both the animals and the ecosystems they inhabit. This includes avoiding misleading narratives, not revealing sensitive locations that could disturb wildlife, and ensuring that images are captured ethically without disturbing natural behaviour. Responsible storytelling helps maintain credibility while ensuring that social media remains a positive platform for wildlife awareness and conservation education.

How has your style or focus evolved from when you first started to where you are now?

Like many wildlife photographers, my early work was largely driven by the desire to create aesthetically pleasing images of wildlife. At the beginning, the focus was primarily on composition, light, and capturing visually striking moments in nature. While those elements still remain important to me today, over time my perspective gradually shifted toward something deeper. As I spent more time in the field and began witnessing the pressures wildlife faces, my photography naturally evolved from purely aesthetic wildlife imagery into conservation-driven storytelling.

Another important change has been the transition from capturing individual standout photographs to working on long-term projects. In the early stages of my journey, I was often focused on single images that could represent a memorable moment or behaviour. However, I soon realised that many conservation issues cannot be fully communicated through one photograph alone. They require sustained observation and a collection of images that together build a broader narrative. This realization led me to commit more seriously to long-term

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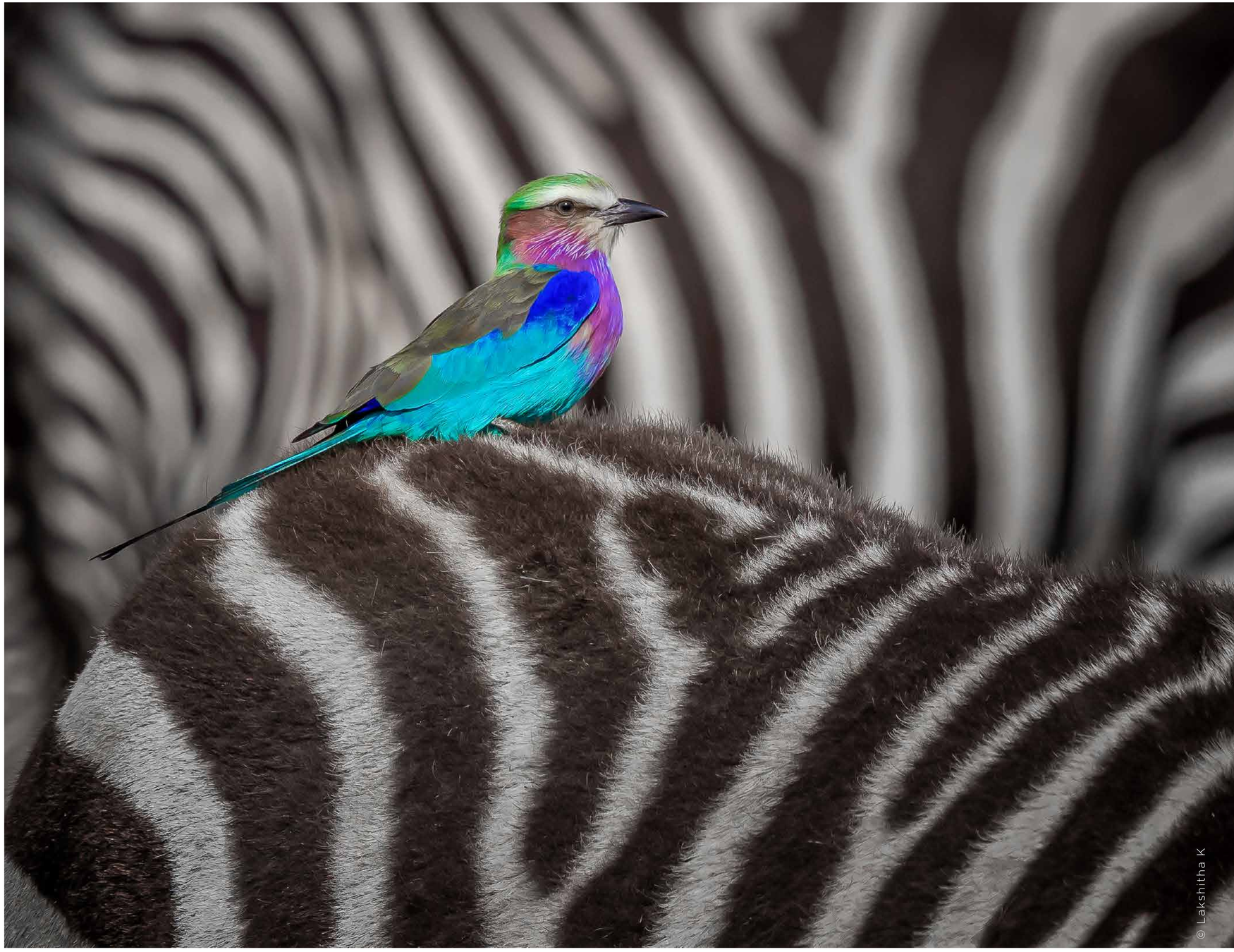
projects, such as documenting the human–elephant conflict in Sri Lanka and studying specific individuals like the country's rare tuskers.

My role as a photographer has also evolved from simple documentation toward advocacy. While documenting wildlife remains the foundation of my work, I increasingly see photography as a tool that can contribute to meaningful conversations about conservation. By presenting visual evidence of both the beauty of wildlife and the challenges it faces, photographers can help raise awareness and encourage more thoughtful engagement with environmental issues. In that sense, my photography today aims not only to record moments in nature but also to highlight the responsibility we share in protecting it.

Can you talk about an unexpected moment in the field that changed your perspective?

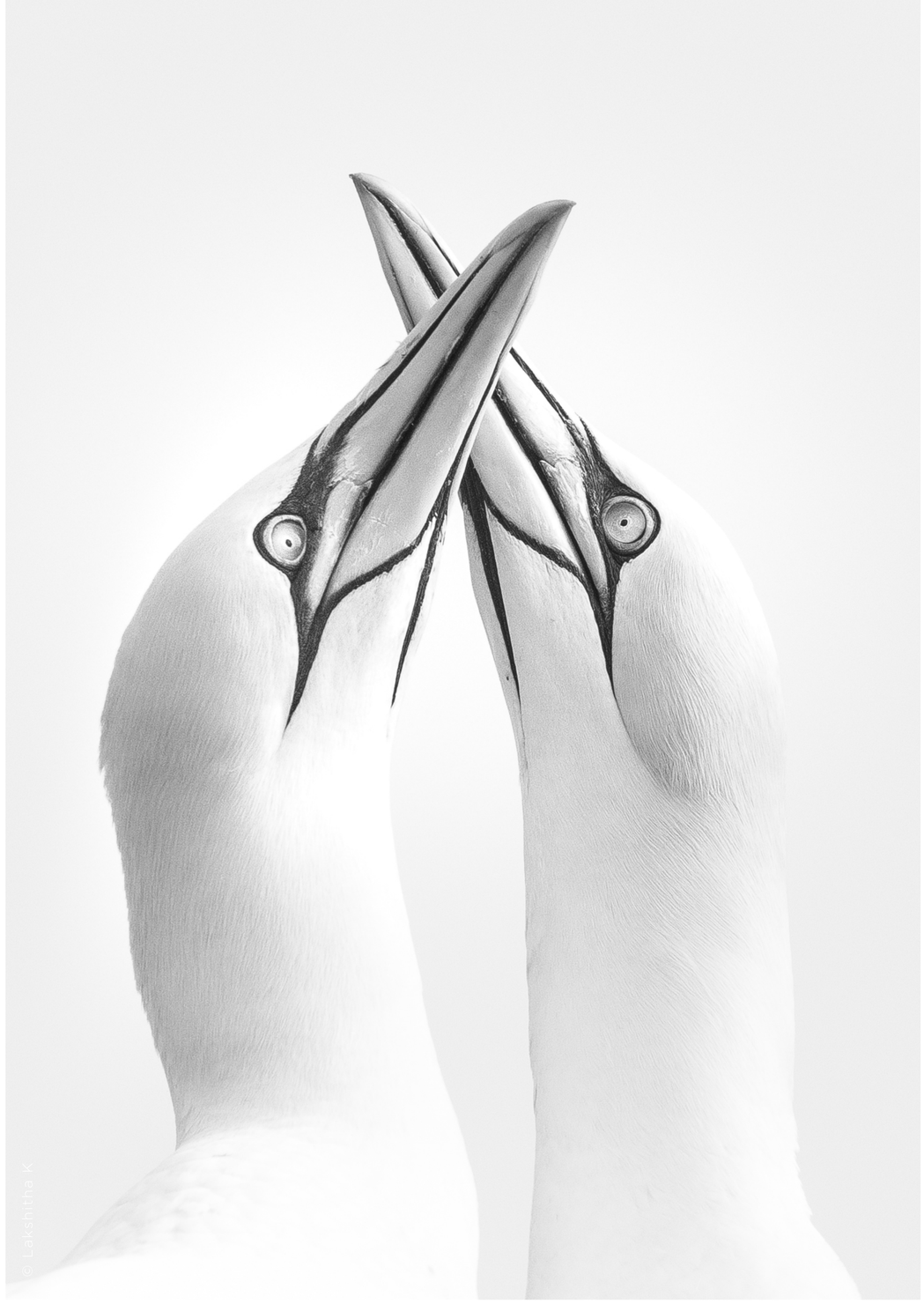
There have been several moments in the field that have deeply influenced how I see wildlife and conservation, but some stand out more strongly than others. One of the most striking experiences for me was watching elephant herds visiting garbage dumping sites in parts of Sri Lanka. What made it particularly shocking was not just seeing a single elephant feeding among waste, but observing entire family groups, including very young calves, walking into these sites together. Seeing such intelligent and socially complex animals navigating mountains of human waste was a powerful and uncomfortable reminder of how profoundly human activities can alter wildlife behaviour. That experience reinforced my determination to document the human–elephant conflict and highlight the urgent need for better waste management and habitat protection.

Another moment that left a lasting impact on me relates to the broader conservation challenges faced by wildlife in Sri Lanka. While human–elephant conflict remains one of the country's



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most serious conservation issues, there are also occasional but deeply troubling incidents such as the poaching of the Sri Lankan leopard, an endemic subspecies found nowhere else in the world. Although leopard poaching is not a frequent occurrence in Sri Lanka, when it does happen it is devastating. Leopards have been illegally killed for their skins, teeth, and in some cases even for bushmeat. Each of these incidents represents not just the loss of an individual animal, but a setback for the survival of an already vulnerable species.

At the same time, the field has also given me moments of extraordinary inspiration. I still remember encountering Craig, the legendary super tusker of Amboseli, at close range only a few months before he passed away. Standing in the presence of such a magnificent and iconic elephant was a humbling experience. Similarly, seeing polar bears for the first time in the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, from only a few meters away while photographing them from a Zodiac boat, was unforgettable. There are also moments that overwhelm you with the sheer scale of nature, such as witnessing hundreds of thousands of monarch butterflies gathering in the forests of the El Rosario Biosphere Reserve in Mexico, where the sound of millions of wings moving together fills the air. Another unforgettable experience was visiting Bass Rock in Scotland, where the cliffs are covered by vast colonies of nesting northern gannets, creating one of the most spectacular seabird scenes I have ever witnessed.

Experiences like these constantly remind me of both the beauty and fragility of the natural world. They reinforce why documenting wildlife matters, not only to celebrate these incredible encounters, but also to ensure that future generations will still have the chance to witness them.

What stories or species do you feel are under-represented in wildlife photography today?

In wildlife photography, there is often a strong focus on a handful of globally popular or charismatic species, and while these animals certainly deserve attention, many equally important stories remain under-represented. One area that is frequently overlooked is the wildlife that exists much closer to our everyday environments. Photographers sometimes travel across continents in search of iconic species while overlooking opportunities within their own landscapes. A good example from Sri Lanka is the Toque Macaque, an endemic primate found only on the island. Because it is relatively common and often seen around ancient cities and temples, it is sometimes taken for granted. Yet these animals are fascinating subjects, both behaviourally and ecologically, and their ability to adapt to human-dominated landscapes presents powerful storytelling opportunities.

Another important theme that needs far more attention in wildlife photography is human–wildlife conflict. Across many parts of the world, wildlife is increasingly forced to share space with expanding human populations. These interactions can lead to complex challenges for both people and animals. While such stories may not always be visually glamorous, they are incredibly important for

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understanding the real conservation issues of our time. Documenting these interactions helps highlight the pressures wildlife faces and encourages more thoughtful discussions about coexistence and sustainable land use.

Closely related to this is the growing phenomenon of urban wildlife. As natural habitats continue to shrink or become fragmented, more species are adapting to life within towns and cities. From primates and birds to foxes, leopards, and even elephants in certain regions, wildlife is increasingly navigating urban landscapes. These environments create new behaviours and interactions that are rarely explored in traditional wildlife photography. In many ways, urban wildlife represents one of the most important conservation narratives of the future, because it reflects how animals are adapting to a rapidly changing world.

Finally, there is also a tendency in wildlife photography to favour large, visually dramatic animals, while many smaller or less charismatic species receive far less attention. Yet these animals often play equally important roles within ecosystems. Amphibians, reptiles, insects, and smaller mammals are essential components of biodiversity, and their stories can be just as compelling when approached with curiosity and creativity. By expanding our focus beyond the most iconic species, wildlife photographers have the opportunity to reveal a much richer and more complete picture of the natural world.

For aspiring wildlife photographers, what's the biggest lesson you've learned along the way?

One of the most valuable lessons I have learned is the importance of serious field study and preparation. Wildlife photography is not simply about carrying good equipment and hoping for an interesting encounter. The more time you spend understanding the ecosystems, the species that live within them, and the behavioural patterns of animals, the more meaningful your work becomes. Before heading into the field, it is important to arm yourself with knowledge, learning about the habitat, migration routes, feeding habits, seasonal behaviour, and the ecological relationships that shape that environment. This preparation allows photographers to approach wildlife with greater awareness and respect.

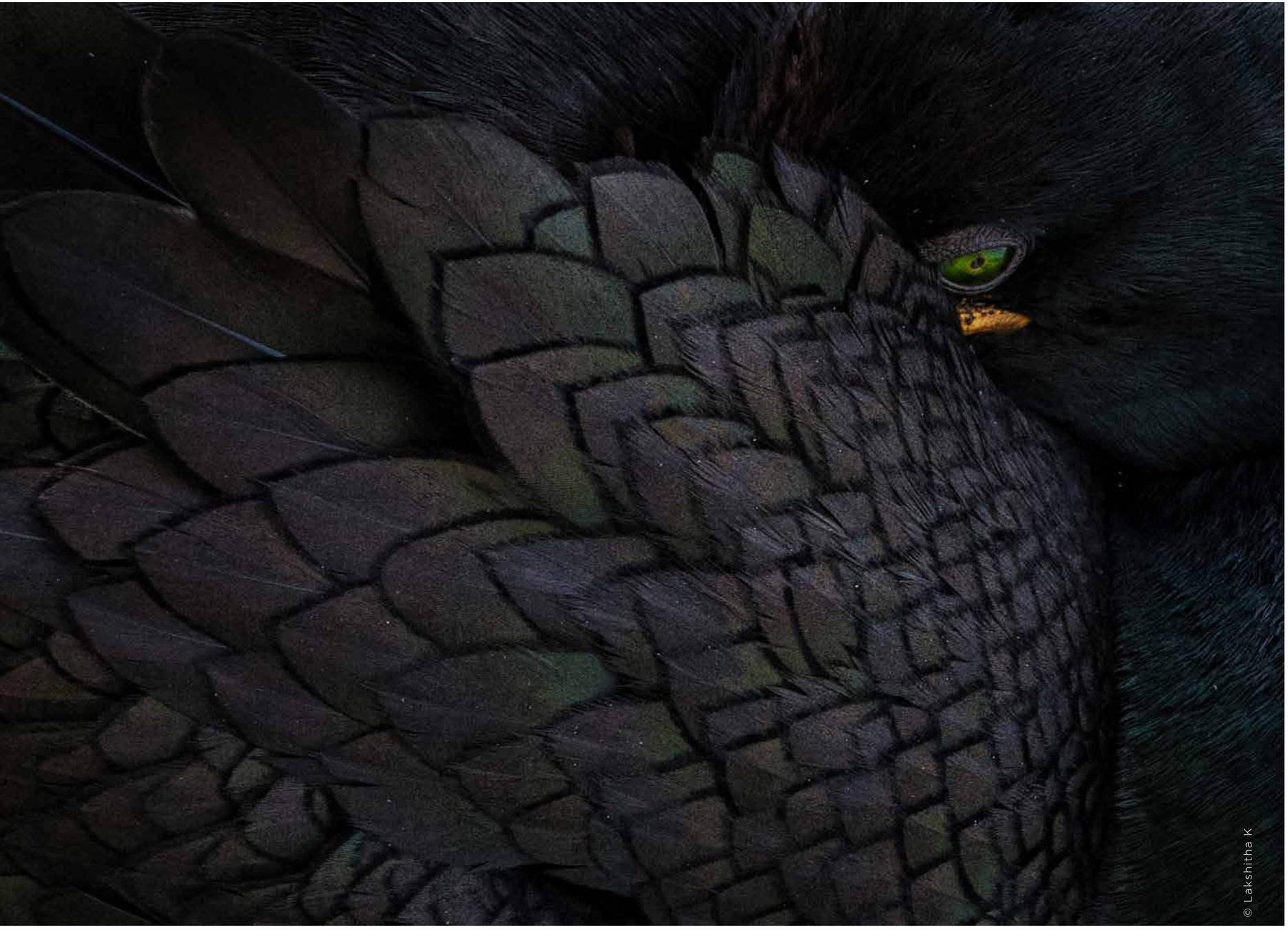
Another important part of learning is studying the work of other photographers. I believe it is extremely valuable to observe the work of acclaimed photographers from around the world, regardless of their age, where they are based, or even how many followers they have on social media. The goal is not to imitate their style, but to understand the thought process behind their images, their field craft, patience, dedication, and the way they build visual narratives. By studying diverse bodies of work, aspiring photographers can gain insights into different approaches to storytelling and develop a broader perspective on the craft.

At the same time, it is important to gradually build your own visual voice. Every photographer sees the natural world slightly differently, and over time your experiences in the field will begin to shape your personal storytelling style. Rather than rushing to define a style



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too early, it is often better to allow it to evolve naturally as you spend more time observing wildlife and exploring different photographic approaches.

Above all, I believe wildlife photographers carry a responsibility to give something back to nature. Photography has the power to inspire people, raise awareness, and encourage meaningful discussions about conservation. Using photography as a tool for conservation, whether by highlighting environmental challenges, supporting awareness campaigns, or simply helping people appreciate the beauty of wildlife, is one of the most meaningful contributions a photographer can make. In the end, the goal should not only be to create compelling images, but also to ensure that the natural world those images represent continues to survive and thrive.

What are your upcoming projects for 2025 and beyond, and what themes are you excited to explore?

Looking ahead, one of my main priorities is to continue documenting the human–elephant conflict (HEC) in Sri Lanka as extensively as possible. This issue remains one of the most urgent conservation challenges in the country. Sri Lanka is home to nearly 10% of the world's remaining Asian elephant population, yet the pressure on these animals continues to grow as habitats shrink and human settlements expand. In recent years, the number of elephants and people lost annually due to conflict has been deeply concerning. These realities highlight the importance of continuing to document the issue, not only to show the beauty and intelligence of these animals, but also

to present the complex challenges faced by both wildlife and rural communities. Through photography, I hope to continue contributing to the broader conversation about coexistence and sustainable solutions.

Alongside this work, I am also interested in developing longer-term conservation narratives around species that are often overlooked. One such subject is the Toque Macaque, an endemic primate found only in Sri Lanka. These monkeys are incredibly adaptable and are increasingly interacting with human-dominated environments, particularly around ancient cities, temples, and rural settlements. Their ability to survive within changing landscapes presents an important story about adaptation and coexistence that deserves deeper exploration.

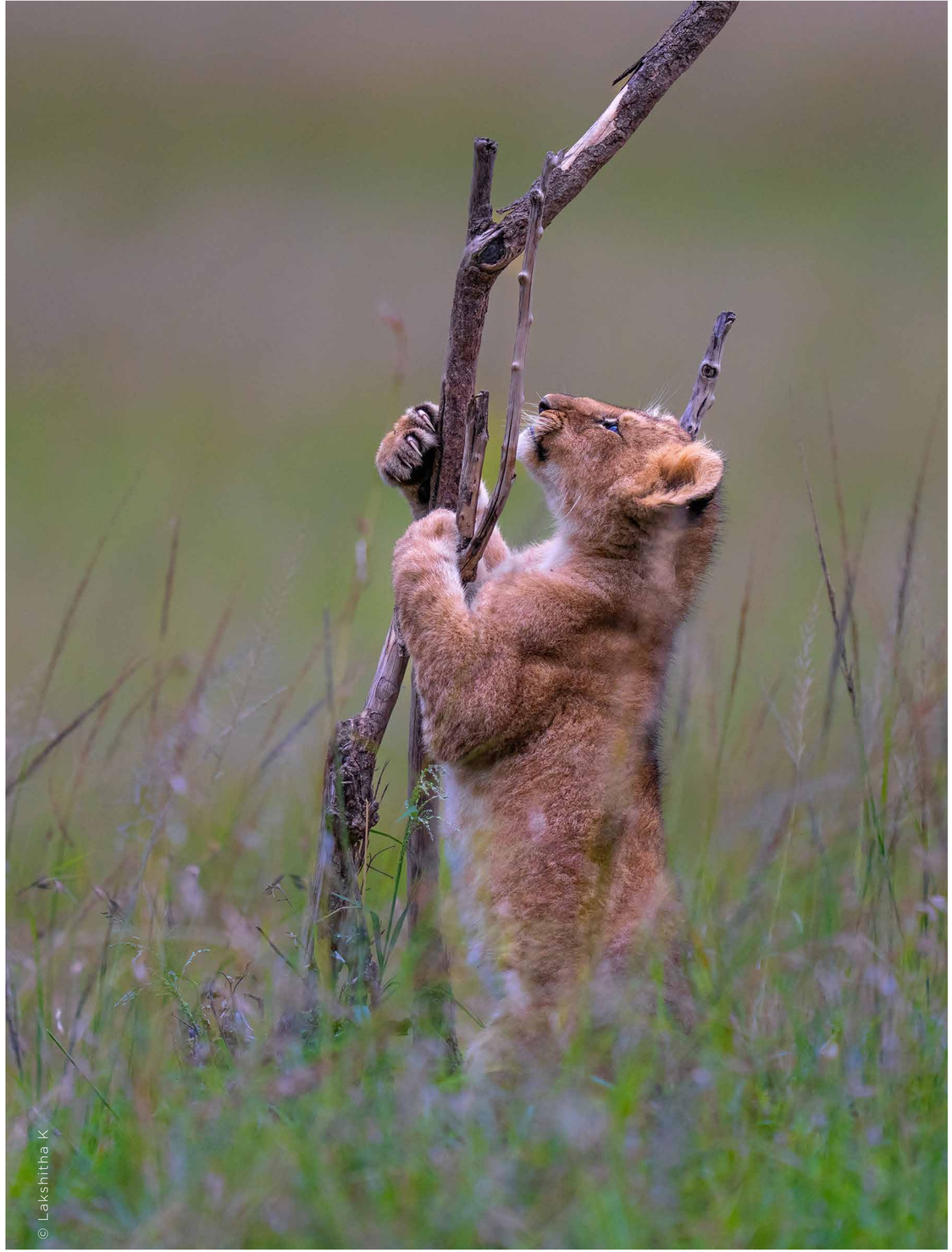
Another area I hope to spend more time documenting is marine conservation, particularly sea turtles in Sri Lanka. The island's coastlines serve as important nesting grounds for several species including green turtles, olive ridleys, hawksbills, and leatherbacks. However, these species face numerous threats ranging from coastal development and plastic pollution to accidental capture in fishing gear. Documenting the life cycle of these animals—from nesting beaches to the early stages of hatchlings entering the ocean—can help raise awareness about the fragile nature of marine ecosystems.

Geographically, I am also planning several projects beyond Sri Lanka. One of them involves returning to Alaska to photograph grizzly bears during the annual salmon run, an extraordinary natural event where bears gather along rivers to feed on migrating salmon. This interaction between predators and seasonal migration creates remarkable behavioural moments and offers opportunities to explore the dynamics between wildlife and ecosystems.

Another project I am excited about is photographing the nesting colonies of American flamingos in the Rio Lagartos Biosphere Reserve in the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, particularly focusing on the interaction between days- or weeks-old chicks and their parents. These early life stages offer fascinating behavioural moments that are rarely documented in detail.

I am also interested in exploring shorebird nesting colonies in human-dominated coastal areas, such as those found along the beaches of Sarasota in Florida. Species like Black Skimmers and Eurasian Oystercatchers often nest directly on beaches that are heavily used by people. Documenting how these birds navigate such environments can reveal important stories about wildlife adapting to human presence.

On a personal level, one of my long-standing ambitions is to eventually photograph wildlife in Antarctica, particularly the vast penguin colonies that define that remote continent. Antarctica represents one of the most extraordinary and fragile ecosystems on Earth. Experiencing and documenting the behaviour of penguins in such an environment would not only be a dream as a wildlife photographer, but also an opportunity to contribute to the visual storytelling of one of the planet's last great wildernesses.



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CONSERVATION

On The Ethics Of Safari Photography

By **Gabriella Comi**

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An animal lover and a fierce conservationist since childhood, my passion for wildlife photography stems from the irresistible need to capture through the small details the perfect beauty of Nature and share it with the world. Only when immersed in Nature and far from the madding human crowds I feel appeased. I am fascinated by predators, their raw power playing an essential role in the circle of life; big cats, especially cheetahs, have a special place in my heart.

My photos have been Highly Commended in Wildlife Photographer of the Year (2025) and Memorial Maria Luisa (2026), and have been published in books and calendars.

instagram.com/la_zia_gabri/



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Wildlife photography can be a powerful tool for conservation, and not only when it's photojournalism. It's probably the very reason that draw us to wildlife photography, and the way we choose to get our shots, that truly make a difference.

Whenever safari photography comes up, most people instantly think of unique sightings, moments frozen in time that go viral, the spectacular shot that brings fame or some prestigious award. In other words, all things that boost one's ego. This widespread social media narrative risks to prioritize the photographer persona and lose sight of what really counts.

Being awarded in a photo competition can be wonderful and sometimes life-changing, I won't deny that. But I strongly believe that a safari, for anyone and especially for a wildlife photographer, should first and foremost be an ethically grounded experience, to be undertaken with integrity rather than hastily consumed in search of a prize-winning picture to produce.

To me, being a wildlife photographer means capturing not only the beauty of nature, but also telling the story of its complexity, its fragility, and the urgency of preserving it. It's an act of mindful engagement, where every moment, even the apparently quiet ones, has its own value.

A safari demands commitment, patience, and respect. It's an immersive adventure involving waking up at ungodly hours, heading out when the world is still shrouded in murk and the air is crisp, and



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spending all your time out in the bush - be it in the scorching midday sun or in thunderstorms, until the sun sets the horizon on fire. Between sightings there's hours of waiting, of silence, of careful observation. Having the right camera gear is certainly important, but more than the latest or most expensive model what matters most is the mindset: the ability to watch without rushing, to listen to nature, and the intention to respect and protect it. Patience always pays off, I've heard it many times, and I can confirm: the shot that changes your life is often not the one you were chasing desperately, but the one that comes to you.

The ethical safari begins in the stage of planning the trip. It is crucial to select tour operators and safari companies that are genuinely eco-friendly and supporting the local economy. As travellers we have the responsibility to make sure our money doesn't end up in the wrong hands. It is appropriate to inquire about the actual sustainability of your accommodation rather than accepting vague claims and shallow greenwashing; reliable operators will always be ready to provide detailed info. Beyond solar energy and proper water and waste management to minimize the carbon footprint, also constant training and fair working conditions for guides and staff are equally essential to ensure that our enjoyment isn't built on exploitation or abuse. Safaris are expensive, and it's perfectly reasonable to keep an eye on the budget. But if a price comes too low, we should always question: at whose expense, and at what cost? Opting for operators with fair standards pushes the others to adopt similar practices, so the




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general level improves.

The choice of destination ultimately comes down to personal preference, but wherever you go, there's one fundamental thing to keep in mind: national parks and natural reserves are not zoos, and the often expensive entry fees (that are never enough to cover the enormous management costs anyway) are not to be mistaken for an entry ticket to an amusement park. Animals live and roam freely, and no sighting is ever guaranteed, so be wary of anyone promising a 100% success. An experienced guide can read the signs, but luck always plays a part too. And when the encounter does happen, respect comes first — before anything else, including the shot.

It can sound odd, but it's necessary to remind that everyone, including photographers, must follow local laws and park rules, and that ignorance is not an excuse. For instance, drone usage is now forbidden in the majority of national parks.

For all that is not explicitly regulated, common sense and consideration should come into play. When in doubt, the best approach is to pause and reflect: How would I feel if I were the subject on the other side of the lens? With this perspective, you would probably agree that it's unpleasant to have to deal with intruders who step uninvited into your personal space making a commotion, yelling, and using flashes or other artificial lighting in a way that distresses, endangers or blinds you.



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Ultimately, Wildlife Photography is more about wildlife than about photography itself. Most of us are essentially animal lovers who taught ourselves how to use a camera to create images as our tribute to the beauty of Nature. The integrity of that tribute rests on respect for the animal's safety and personal space: Keep Your Distance, and Keep Quiet.

I personally find it vital to research the species I want to photograph, learning all about their features and habits: it allows me to read their body language and anticipate their actions, and be ready for the photo opportunity that might come up next. Their body language is how you know if your presence is appropriate: if an animal changes its behaviour because of you, then you are too close and need to move, even if it means to miss the perfect angle. I will always prefer to give up the shot rather than cause a discomfort to an animal.

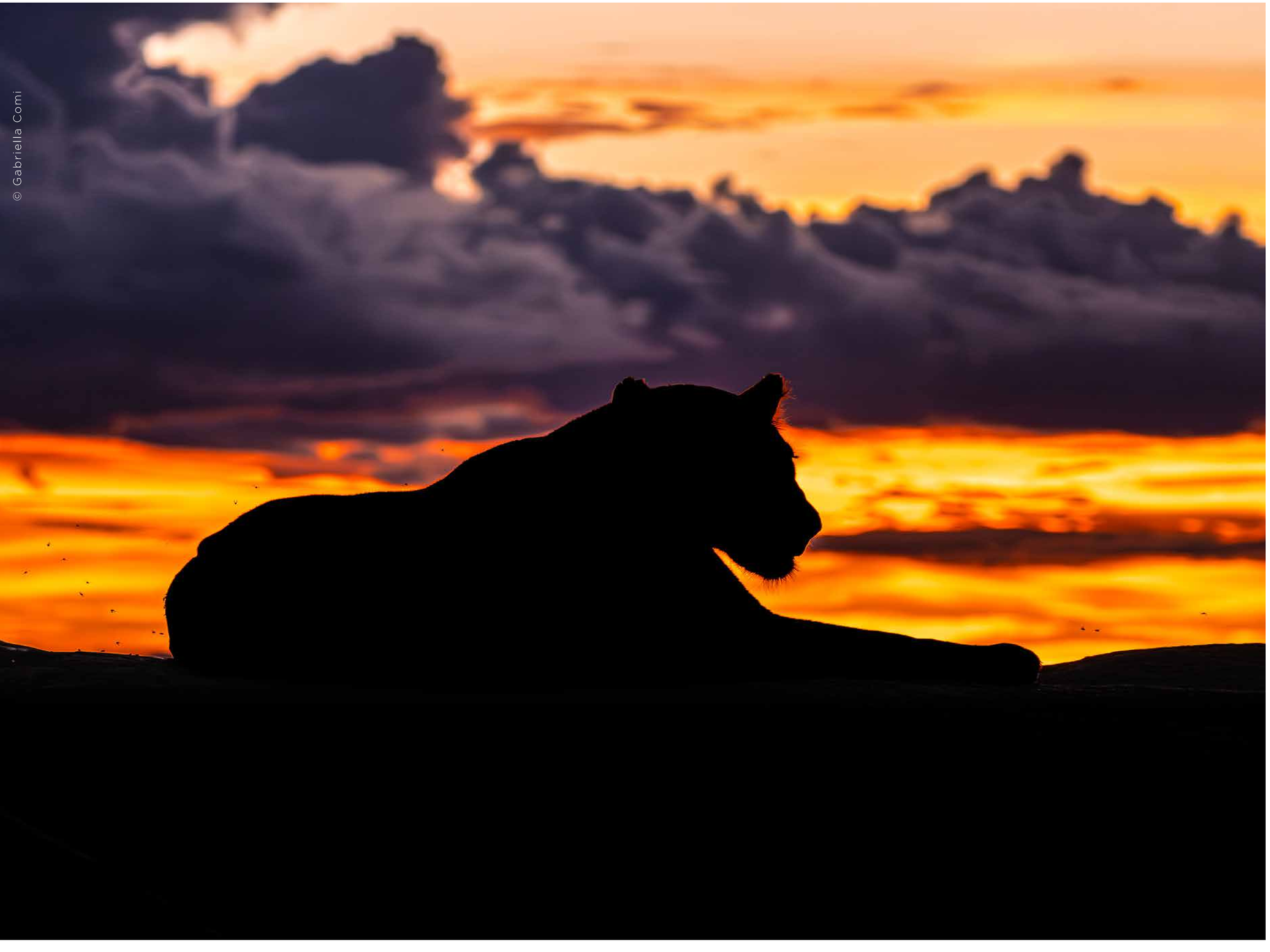
Unfortunately, not everyone has the same sensibility, which is why the major wildlife photography competitions have long implemented ethical rules along with the technical criteria: photos that are staged, or achieved with cruelty or baiting the subjects (i.e. luring with food, scent or sound) will always be disqualified. It's really just that simple: if you have to alter the environment to get the shot, it means the shot was never meant to be taken.

Nevertheless, some still won't hesitate to push the boundaries. Wisely, the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year organised by the Natural History Museum of London has recently enhanced the ethical rules stating that



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"You must not do anything to injure or distress an animal or damage its habitat in an attempt to secure a photograph (...) An animal's welfare must always come first".

Over more than ten years of safaris, I've witnessed many disrespectful behaviours. The most bothersome include vehicles chasing animals, or overcrowding and overstaying on sightings, especially when there's young animals or a kill. This blocks the view, not only for the animals, who need to be constantly vigilant for potential dangers around them, but for other guests and photographers as well, resulting in a very impolite monopolization of the scene (perhaps in a clumsy attempt to gatekeep photo opportunities to competitors? utter nonsense).

Another particularly despicable practice during game drives involves deliberately trying to force interaction with wildlife. While genuine encounters and interactions do happen, and are a true blessing, they must be spontaneous and not provoked. What I find most heinous is the sight of cheetahs climbing onto vehicles.

Now, before you jump in with "well, but .. cheetahs sometimes just do that!" .. I get it. We all know they look for vantage points on high ground, like termite mounds, and sometimes even vehicles. But that's not the point.

The core problem is, this behaviour is often presented online as "normal" and "fun", leading many to go on safari with the open expectation of experiencing firsthand the thrills of a close encounter and of having the chance to snap a "cheetah selfie" to post and brag about on social media. Certain irresponsible safari operators even advertise these "cheetah experiences" and actively encourage cheetahs to jump by approaching very closely and


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offering the bonnet, in blatant disregard of the safety of the cats. And then, shamefully, in the vilest expression of entitlement, some guests will pressure guides with threats of negative reviews or promises of large tips to ensure they get this experience.

Let me deinfluence you. This behaviour is harmful for the cheetahs and must be absolutely discouraged. Cheetahs have non-retractable claws, designed to grip on terrain while speeding, not for the smooth surface of a vehicle, where they visibly struggle to keep a balance risking a fall and serious injuries. Cheetahs are also the most trafficked of all cats, excessive habituation to vehicles and human beings makes them easier targets for traffickers and poachers. A knowledgeable and trustworthy guide can read the cues when a cheetah seems intending to jump, and will move away immediately, to protect the cat, because no photo ever is worth these dangers.

This leads to my final point regarding ethical wildlife photography: it is imperative to be always aware of what we share on social media, because showcasing questionable experiences can mislead the viewers' impression and set unrealistic expectations that feed the abusive practices.

The ethics of wildlife photography, in the end, is all about being constantly aware of the consequences of our choices and actions throughout the whole process: before, during, and after taking our pictures.



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SPECIES

Kings of the Arctic Sky: The Golden Eagle in a Changing World

By Sachin Rastogi

© Sachin Rastogi



Sachin Rastogi is a passionate wildlife photographer who balances his passion with a full-time job and family life. He first picked up a camera after moving to the UK around 15 years ago, initially to capture travel moments, but it soon grew into a deeper interest.

After exploring genres like street, events, astro, and sports photography, his corporate career took over and photography faded into the background until his wife encouraged him to return.

The pandemic marked a turning point, drawing him closer to nature and into wildlife photography, where he found his true calling. Today, he spends his time in local nature reserves, refining the patience and instinct that define his evolving style.

instagram.com/_sachinrastogi_/





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The golden eagle reigns as one of nature's most formidable predators

In the frozen expanses of the Northern Hemisphere, where mountains rise into empty skies and forests stretch beyond sight, the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) reigns supreme. There is no announcement of its presence, only a sudden shift in the air, a fleeting shadow, and then the unmistakable form of one of nature's most formidable predators.

To witness a golden eagle is to encounter power shaped by evolution. Yet beyond its majesty lies a deeper truth: its survival is inseparable from the health of the ecosystems it commands.

Its survival depends on vast, undisturbed landscapes

Golden eagles are creatures of scale, inhabiting some of the most expansive and remote regions on Earth: Mountains, tundras, and boreal forests across Eurasia and North America. A single breeding pair may require hundreds of square kilometres of territory, relying on open terrain for hunting, elevated sites for nesting, and stable prey populations.

These landscapes are essential for survival. Even small-scale fragmentation can disrupt hunting patterns, breeding success, and long-term sustenance. In many ways, to understand the golden eagle is to understand the importance of space in the natural world.

Every aspect of its body is built for precision and power



© Sachin Rastogi

The golden eagle is engineered for efficiency. With wingspans reaching up to 2.3 metres, it glides effortlessly across vast distances, conserving energy while scanning the land below. Its vision, estimated to be several times sharper than that of humans, allows it to detect even the slightest movement from remarkable heights.

When it hunts, speed and force converge. A dive can reach extraordinary velocities, ending in a strike delivered with immense power through razor-sharp talons. Yet beyond its physical capabilities lies a quieter complexity. Golden eagles are largely solitary, forming strong pair bonds that often last for years. They return to the same nesting sites, called eyries, building upon them season after season, creating structures that can endure for decades.

At the top of the food chain, it quietly shapes entire ecosystems

Golden eagles are apex predators, and their influence extends far beyond individual hunts. By regulating populations of mammals such as hares and ground squirrels, they help maintain ecological balance, preventing overgrazing and supporting vegetation health. This creates a cascading effect across the ecosystem, influencing biodiversity and landscape stability.

They also serve as indicators of environmental health. A decline in golden eagle populations often reflects deeper ecological disruption, whether through habitat loss, reduced prey availability, or toxic exposure. Even their interactions



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with other species hint at complex ecological networks, such as scavenger birds indirectly guiding them to food sources.

Despite its strength, it faces growing threats from human activity

The challenges facing golden eagles today are not natural; they are human-made and increasingly interconnected. Lead poisoning remains one of the most significant threats, as eagles ingest fragments from carcasses left behind by hunting. Even small quantities can cause fatal toxicity. Similarly, rodenticides accumulate through the food chain, disproportionately affecting apex predators.

Modern infrastructure introduces additional risks. Power lines can lead to electrocution, while wind turbines pose collision threats, particularly for inexperienced juveniles. In some cases, these developments also displace eagles from otherwise suitable habitats. At the same time, habitat loss and fragmentation continue to erode the open landscapes they depend on, driven by urban expansion, agriculture, and forestry.

Less visible, but equally damaging, is human disturbance. Activities such as hiking, climbing, or unregulated wildlife photography near nesting sites can lead to nest abandonment; often with fatal consequences. Overlaying all of this is climate change, which is expected to alter habitats, prey dynamics, and breeding ranges in the decades ahead.

Small human actions can have a lasting impact on its survival

While these challenges are significant, conservation is not beyond reach. Individuals can make meaningful contributions by avoiding lead ammunition and harmful rodenticides, supporting habitat conservation initiatives, advocating for bird-safe infrastructure, and reporting wildlife crime or injured birds.

These actions may seem small in isolation, but collectively they shape the conditions in which species survive. Conservation, ultimately, is the sum of many individual choices.

Wildlife photography carries both influence and responsibility

Wildlife photography sits at a powerful intersection where storytelling meets conservation. A single image can inspire awe, shift perception, and even influence action; but the process behind that image matters just as much as the result. Ethical practice is non-negotiable. If an eagle changes its behaviour (pauses feeding, becomes alert, or takes flight) it is a clear signal that the photographer is too close. Protecting sensitive locations is equally critical, as sharing nesting sites can expose birds to disturbance or harm.

Beyond ethics, photographers have the opportunity to shape narratives. Images that include habitat, scale, or even visible threats often carry stronger conservation value than isolated portraits. When used thoughtfully, photography becomes a form of advocacy; amplifying the story of



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the species rather than just capturing its image.

A single encounter in the wild reveals the true nature of the species

During a winter expedition in northern Sweden, I spent hours inside a remote hide, waiting in silence as temperatures plunged far below freezing. The experience demanded patience and stillness; qualities that wildlife photography often requires but rarely teaches so directly.

When a 24-year-old female golden eagle finally appeared, her presence was immediate and commanding. Larger than the males, she moved with quiet authority, her presence alert, composed, and entirely attuned to her surroundings. Watching her land just metres away, snow lifting softly around her talons, offered a rare insight into the nature of the species.

In that stillness, one realisation became clear: meaningful encounters with wildlife are not about proximity, but about respect.

Protecting the golden eagle means protecting the world it depends on

The golden eagle remains one of the most extraordinary predators in the natural world, but its future is not guaranteed. Its survival depends on landscapes that remain wild, ecosystems that remain balanced, and human choices that remain responsible.

Because in the end, the fate of the golden eagle is not decided in the skies it so effortlessly commands, but on the ground - in the decisions we make every day.

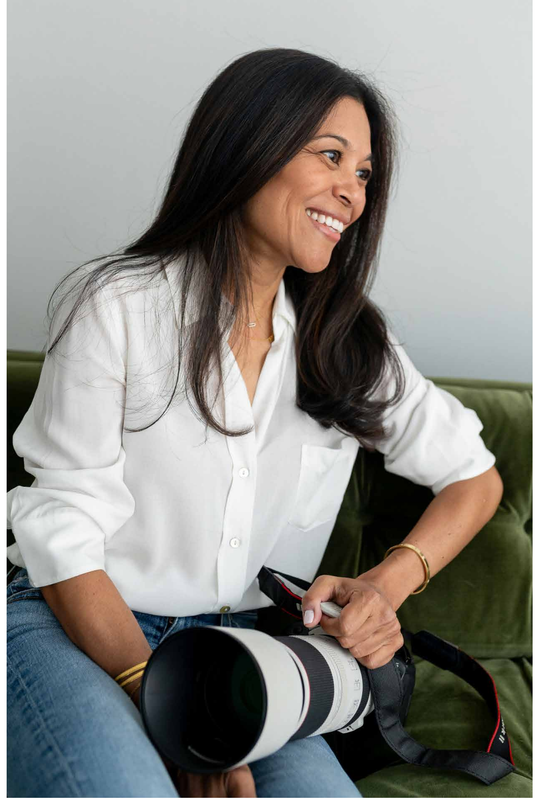


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Her Views & Visuals

By Angela Ratnam

© Angela Ratnam



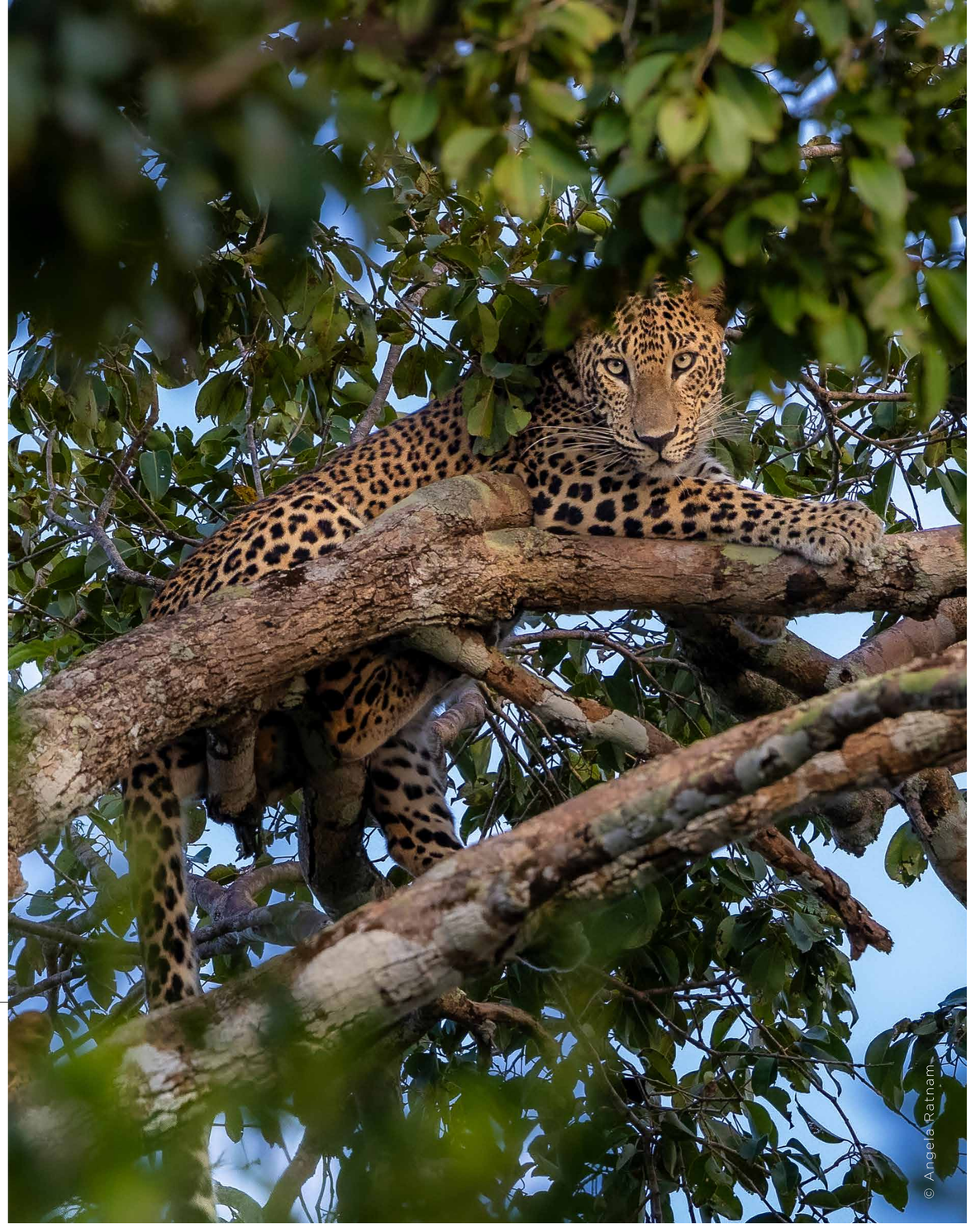
Angela is a pediatric dentist based in Arizona, with a deep love for wildlife photography that began in 2025. What started as a hobby has quickly become a passion she enjoys immensely, especially when it involves traveling to new destinations to learn about and photograph wildlife in their natural habitats. She loves sharing her images with friends and family, and whenever possible, enjoys planning trips together to experience and appreciate wildlife side by side.

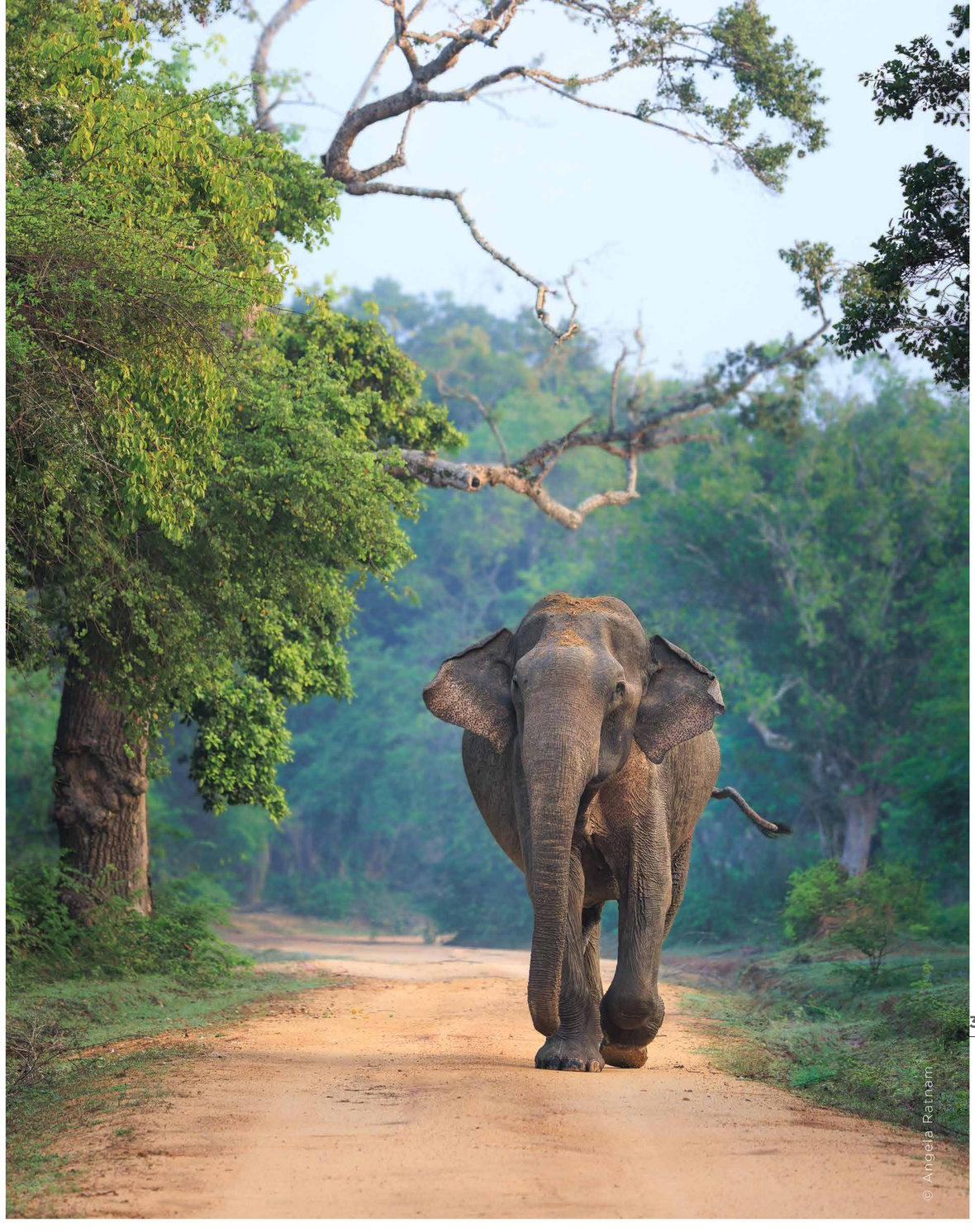
Her Views and Visuals





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How did your interest in wildlife arise?

Looking back, wildlife has always been woven into my life. Growing up in Sri Lanka, nature wasn't something I visited; it was simply there. Birds, insects, and lizards lived alongside us in my everyday surroundings.

Knowing that leopards, sloth bears, elephants, and monkeys lived not far away gave me a deep sense of connection to the wild. Raised so close to these animals, I felt wildlife was not separate from people, but something we shared space with.

For more than twenty years, I have lived in Arizona with my family. It is the opposite of Sri Lanka's tropical climate as Arizona is dry and arid. Still, the landscape presents great opportunities and inspiration for a wildlife photographer.

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

My journey really began after my first trip to the Maasai Mara in 2023. I was traveling with incredibly talented photographers, and I was the only one carrying an iPhone. Watching how they worked - their patience, their eye for detail, and the stories they told through their images - was deeply inspiring. On this trip I found myself wondering why they spent so long looking at one bird, but now I understand them better. I want to wait to capture every detail.

The experience inspired me to buy my first camera and start learning



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seriously. Since then, photography has become part of my personal journey too: learning to slow down, observe more carefully, and see the world with greater intention. I find that there's a connection between the finer details in the photos I take and my career as a dentist. In both, I appreciate the details – whether that be in the moving target of a bird, or in keeping a child calm during a pediatric dental procedure.

I'm still at the beginning, but every step of my photography journey feels meaningful.

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

I believe wildlife conservation begins with awareness, respect, and responsibility. Photographers have the privilege of witnessing moments that many people will never experience, and with that comes a responsibility to represent nature honestly and ethically.

Our images can create emotional connections and inspire people to care about species and ecosystems they may never see in person. For example, I feel a connection to the family values that I see in elephants, who are matriarchal in nature and mothers raise their young alongside their grandmothers and other family members. As photographers, our photos can spark curiosity in others and foster that same feeling of empathy.

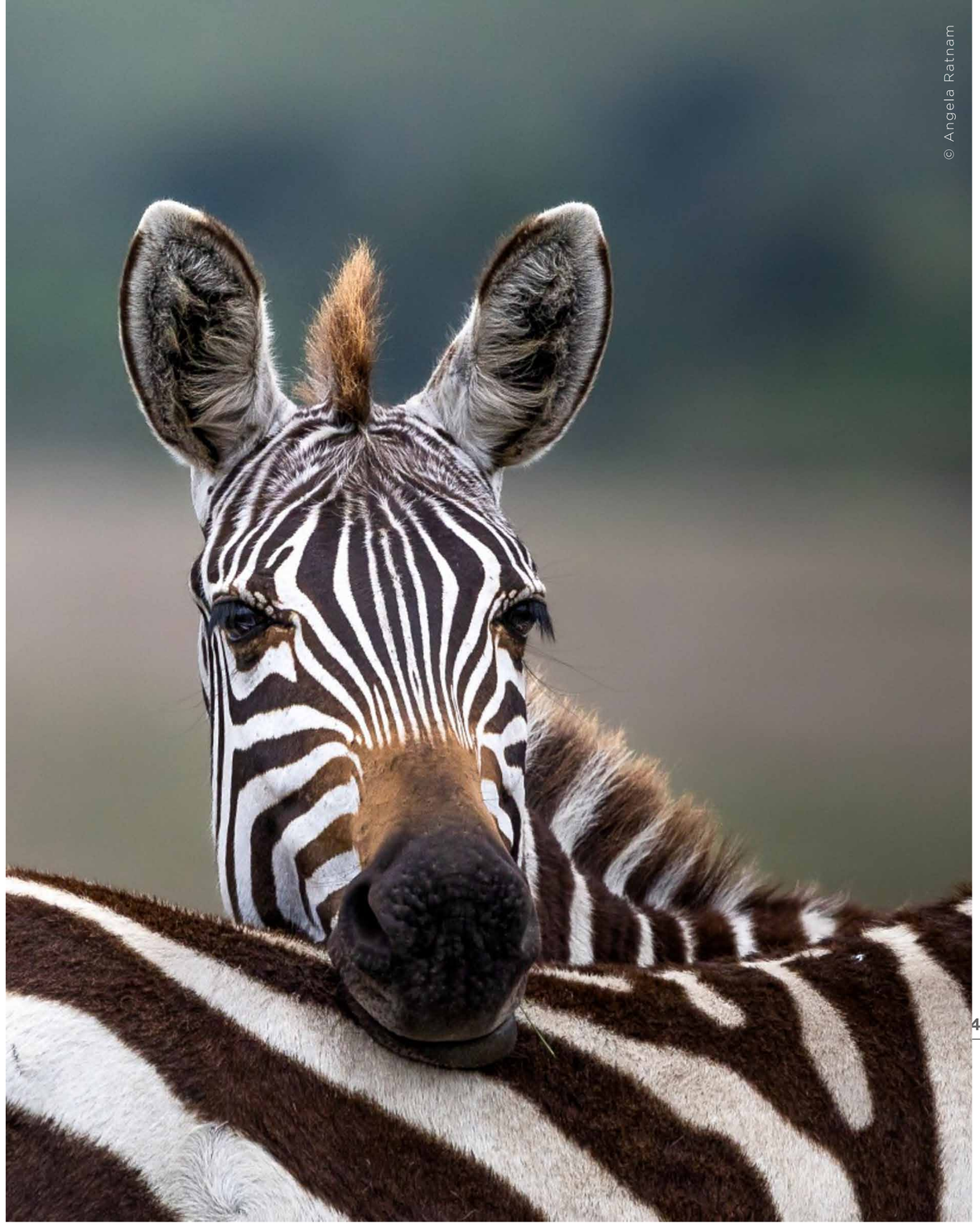
Beyond creating beautiful images, we can help by keeping a respectful distance, avoiding disturbance, and prioritizing the



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well-being of wildlife over the photograph. We can also use our platforms, no matter how small, to share stories that highlight conservation issues and celebrate coexistence among people and nature.

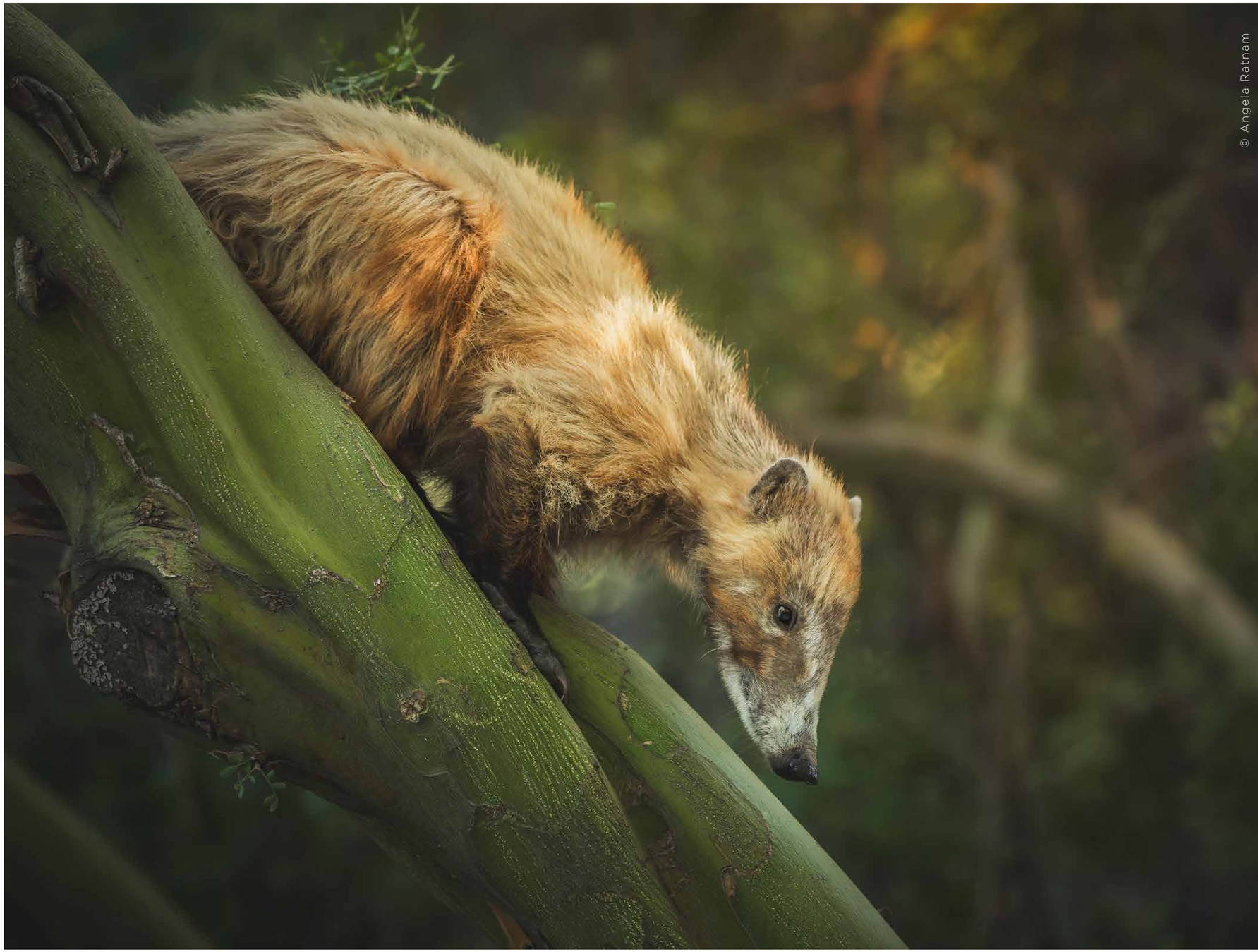
For me, photography is not just about capturing wildlife, but also about fostering respect, care, and protection for the world we share. Without protecting wildlife, the world would lose more than just species - it would lose balance, beauty, and meaning. Ecosystems would begin to collapse. Forests would fall silent. Landscapes would feel emptier. Most hauntingly, future generations would grow up in a world where wild animals exist only in stories and photographs.

Wildlife reminds us that we are part of something much larger than ourselves. If we fail to protect it, we risk losing that connection to nature and part of who we are.

Can you give our readers the best wildlife photography tips?

Always put the animal's well-being first. Learn to observe behavior, be patient, and work with the light you are given. Focus on learning and developing your own perspective first. Your mind's eye should always come before the lens. I would tell curious photographers not to get hung up on the gear that they have or don't have.

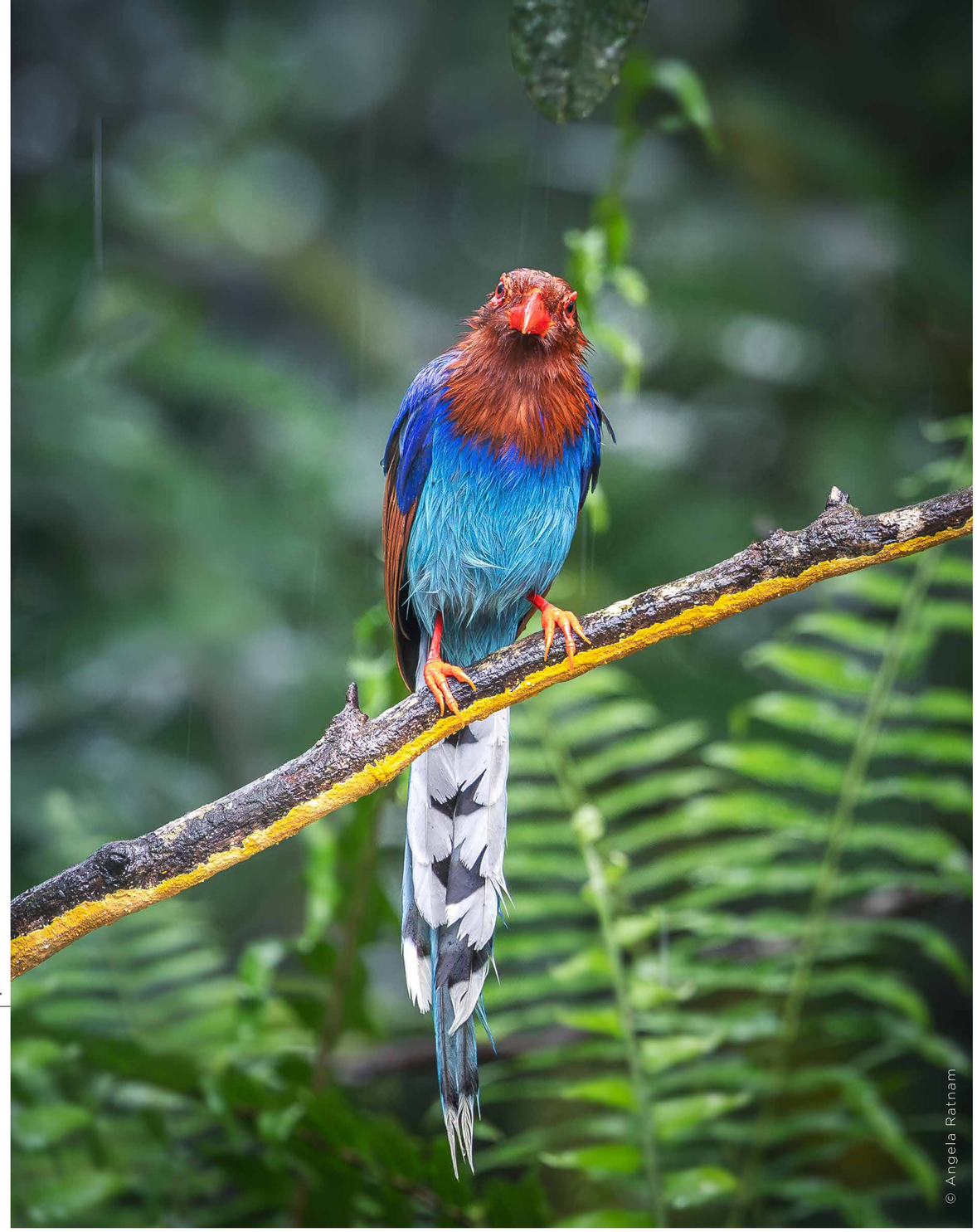
In a world driven by likes and instant validation, it's easy to get caught up in chasing images rather than experiences. Wildlife photography can quickly become about collecting moments for social media instead of truly witnessing them. I have found the most gratification from taking the photo for myself first and not creating a social media



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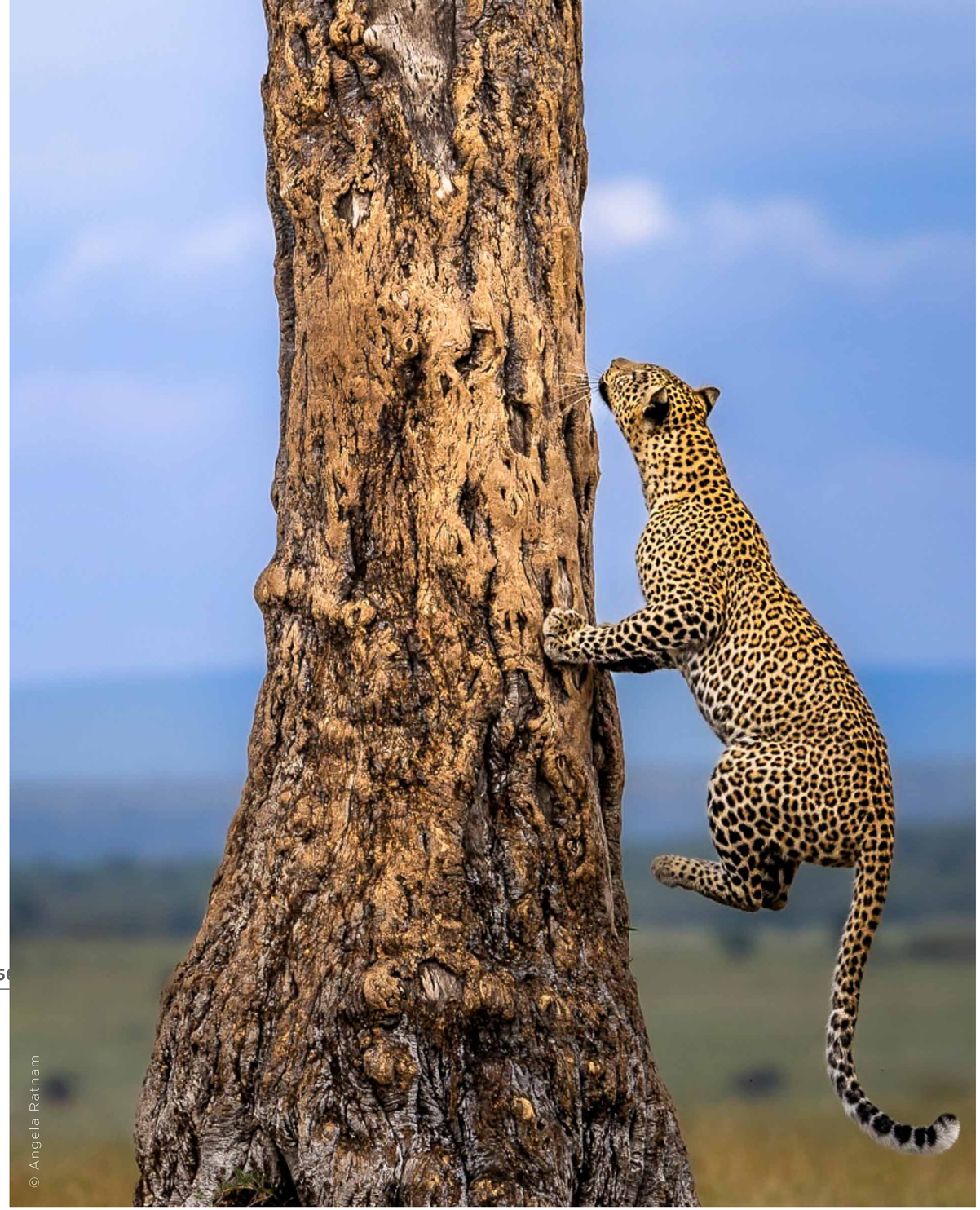
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feed. Social media creates pressure for making the next best post. When that happens, we risk missing the deeper connection that being in nature offers.

Stepping back from the pressure to constantly capture and share allows us to be more present, patient, and respectful. Not every powerful moment needs to be photographed, and not every image needs to be posted. When we focus less on algorithms and more on authenticity, our work becomes more meaningful to ourselves and to others— and our relationship with wildlife more honest.

Remember that the experience of being in the wild is just as important as the image you take. It is important to respect the environment and photograph with your sense of conscience and ethics at the forefront.

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

I hope to continue learning and growing as a wildlife photographer, exploring new habitats and species, and improving my skills with each trip. I want to tell stories that go beyond beautiful images — stories that highlight the importance of conservation and the delicate balance of nature.

In July, I am traveling to Laikipia in Kenya to photograph an ultra-rare and captivating black leopard named Giza. She is such a deep shade of black that only certain angles and light reveal her spots. I am excited to share some space with Giza and to take a moment to appreciate her beauty. As much as I hope to capture an amazing image of her, I am more excited about the feeling of being in her company.

Ultimately, I hope my work inspires others to care about the natural world and see themselves as part of, not separate from, the wild.

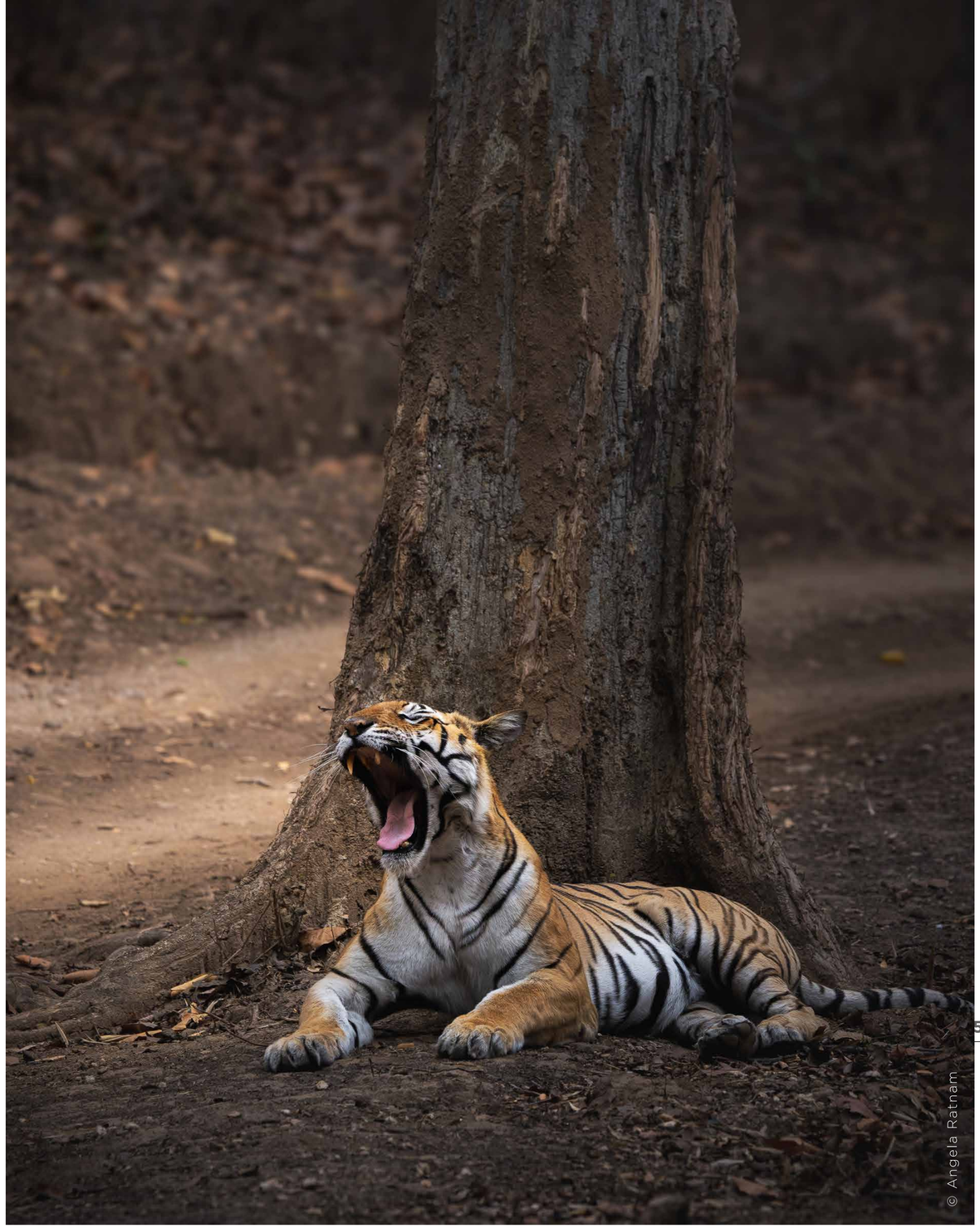
Tell us something about the gear you use and how it helped in your photographic journey.

I currently use a Canon EOS R5 Mark II and a Canon EOS R6 Mark II, paired mainly with the 100–500mm and 24–105mm lenses. For me, this has been an ideal setup as a beginner — versatile, reliable, and flexible enough to handle everything from wide environmental shots to distant wildlife encounters.
Using this gear has allowed me to focus on learning composition, light, and animal behavior without feeling limited. For certain trips, I have rented the 600mm f/4 and the 400mm f/2.8 lenses for distance and low light conditions. These lenses gave me valuable experience working with professional-level glass and understanding what's possible, even in less than ideal circumstances.

My next step in this journey is to invest in the 400mm f/2.8 lens, as it aligns with how I see my photography evolving. Wildlife presents itself at dawn and at dusk, and this lens will assist me in capturing images in lower light settings. I am excited about using the gear I'm acquiring and my accumulated knowledge to grow by learning to take more challenging photographs of wildlife in its varied forms.



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Wings of Curiosity!

By Ram Madhav

© Ram Madhav

CUB'S CORNER



Ram Madhav, a Class 5 student from Kollam, discovered his love for birds through early morning walks with his father. With curiosity, patience, and a camera in hand, he has already documented nearly 150 species proving that age is no barrier to becoming a young naturalist.



Budding Birder from Kollam, Young Ram Madhav's Fascinating Journey into Bird Watching

In the quiet early mornings of Kollam, when the world is still stretching awake and the first light gently washes over the trees, a young boy walks beside his father with curious eyes and an eager heart. That boy is Ram Madhav - a Class 5 student of Stratford Public School - and his journey into the world of birds began not in a classroom, but under open skies.

Ram's introduction to birdwatching was simple and organic. It started with watching his father head out for early morning bird walks. At first, Ram was just a curious observer. He noticed how his father would pause at the sound of a distant call, lift his binoculars, and smile quietly at a bird perched on a branch.



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He saw the excitement in identifying a species, the patience in waiting for the perfect moment, and the joy in documenting what they saw.

Slowly, curiosity turned into fascination. Ram began waking up early to join these walks. The chirping of bulbuls, the flashes of kingfishers near water bodies, and the silhouettes of egrets in the morning mist soon became part of his growing world. What fascinated him most was not just the colours of the birds, but their behaviour, how they fed, how they flew, how they called out to one another.

Recognising this growing spark, Ram's father decided to nurture it gently. Instead of overwhelming him, he introduced him step by step into the world of birding. Ram received his first camera, a simple point-and-shoot. Along with it came bird identification booklets from Early Bird, designed especially for young learners. These booklets helped him recognise common local species and understand their basic habits.

That small camera became Ram's first window into documentation. He started photographing whatever birds he could spot sometimes blurry, sometimes perfectly timed. Each image felt like a small achievement. With every click, he learned patience. With every missed shot, he learned resilience.

Gradually, Ram began identifying birds by sight and even by sound. He started recognising the repetitive call of the koel, the chatter of Mynas, and the sharp whistle of a Drongo. Birdwatching became more than a hobby it became a way of


© Ram Madhav

seeing the world more closely.

As months passed, Ram's curiosity deepened. His father noticed the consistency early wake-ups without complaints, long walks under the sun, careful handling of his camera. Then came a defining moment in his journey. One day, his father handed him something special, his Nikon D7500 camera paired with a Tamron 18–400mm lens. With a simple but powerful sentence, he said, "Ram, this is yours now."

For Ram, it was more than just a camera. It was trust. It was encouragement. It was belief. With this new setup, Ram's world expanded. Birds that once appeared as distant specks now filled his frame in sharp detail. Feathers, eye-rings, wing patterns, details he had only read about now came alive in his images. His confidence grew alongside his technical skills.

Ram began joining regular bird walks near his home. Paddy fields, wetlands, and coastal areas became his classrooms. Each habitat introduced him to new species and new behaviours. In the wetlands, he observed herons standing motionless for minutes before striking. Along the coast, he watched terns glide effortlessly above the waves. In open fields, he searched patiently for pipits and larks camouflaged against the earth. What makes Ram's journey remarkable is not just the equipment he uses, but his dedication to learning. He began maintaining an eBird account, a global platform where birders document their sightings. With careful documentation and regular observations, Ram has now



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recorded nearly 150 species. For a young birder in Class 5, this is an impressive milestone.

Mother Nature has always delighted little Ram with her surprises. Recently, during one of his bird-watching walks with his father and fellow members of the Kollam Birding Battalion along Vellanathuruth Beach in Kollam, he was fortunate enough to witness the mighty Laggar Falcon. The sighting was later confirmed as the first-ever authenticated record of the Laggar Falcon in Kerala, making the moment all the more extraordinary.

Each entry represents a memory - a sunrise, a walk, a discovery. Beyond photography, birdwatching has taught Ram valuable life lessons. He has learned patience - waiting quietly for a bird to land. He has learned observation, noticing subtle differences between similar species. He has learned responsibility, respecting habitats and maintaining ethical birding practices.

He understands that birdwatching is not just about taking pictures; it is about understanding and protecting the environment. Watching birds closely makes one aware of shrinking wetlands, disappearing trees, and changing seasons. Even at a young age, Ram has begun to understand that documentation can contribute to conservation.

Interestingly, forests still remain an unexplored territory for him. Most of his birding experiences have been around paddy fields, wetlands, and coastal landscapes near Kollam. But that only makes his journey more exciting. There

© Ram Madhav

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are still many habitats waiting for him - dense forests, hill regions, and perhaps even national parks someday. For now, Ram continues to walk the familiar paths near his home, each outing offering something new. Some days are filled with action and multiple sightings. Other days are quiet, with long stretches of waiting. But he has learned that every outing matters. Even a single sighting can make a day special.

What stands out most about Ram is his quiet determination. There is no rush, no competition - just genuine curiosity. His journey shows how encouragement at home, combined with access to simple tools and resources, can nurture a lifelong passion.

In an age where many children are absorbed in screens and indoor activities, Ram's story is refreshing. It reminds us that nature can still captivate young minds. All it takes is one early morning walk, one borrowed pair of binoculars, or one simple camera.

Ram Madhav's birdwatching journey is still in its early chapters. With nearly 150 species already documented and countless more waiting to be discovered, his path promises growth, learning, and deeper connection with the natural world.

As he continues exploring, documenting, and learning, one thing is certain - this young birder from Kollam is not just observing birds; he is quietly building a relationship with nature that may shape his future in meaningful ways. The skies above Kollam are vast, and Ram's journey has only just begun.



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Urban Bird Diversity at Urmia University

By Ata Hassanzadeh Dastforoush

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Ata Hassanzadeh Dastforoush is a close-up and macro photographer with a growing focus on wildlife and avian photography. His work centers on observing and documenting the subtle details of nature from intricate textures to dynamic bird behaviour in urban and semi-natural environments.

With a strong emphasis on patience, observation, and respect for his subjects, his approach has naturally evolved into wildlife documentation, where detail and behaviour intersect. He is passionate about sharing his insights and experiences with others who are drawn to exploring and photographing nature up close.

instagram.com/atahassanzadeh/

Higher education in Urmia (West Azerbaijan, Iran) has a distinguished historical background. The region's first modern higher education institution dates back to 1879 with the establishment of Westminster Medical College. In 1965, the foundation of modern Urmia University was laid through the creation of an agricultural higher education center, which gradually developed into one of the major academic institutions in northwestern Iran.

Within this historical setting, the City Campus, particularly its central garden, represents one of the oldest landscaped sections of the university. Historically characterized by orchard-like vegetation and mature tree cover, the area has maintained ecological continuity over decades. The presence of tall deciduous trees, layered shrubs, open lawns, and relatively low disturbance zones has allowed this green space to function as an urban biodiversity refuge.

During systematic field photography sessions conducted across the campus, more than 20 bird species were documented. This diversity demonstrates how structured green spaces within academic environments can sustain both resident and migratory bird populations.

Corvids: Intelligent and Ecologically Versatile

Several members of the crow family (Corvidae) were recorded, reflecting the ecological adaptability of this group.

Western Jackdaw *(Corvus monedula)*, often observed in small social groups, utilizes tree cavities and building structures.

The Western Jackdaw is a highly social member of the corvid family, often observed in small groups. It nests in tree cavities, building crevices, or elevated structures. Its omnivorous diet includes insects, seeds, and human food remnants. During the breeding season, strong pair bonds form and may last for several years. The species displays complex social behavior and notable intelligence. Vocal communication plays a central role in maintaining group cohesion.

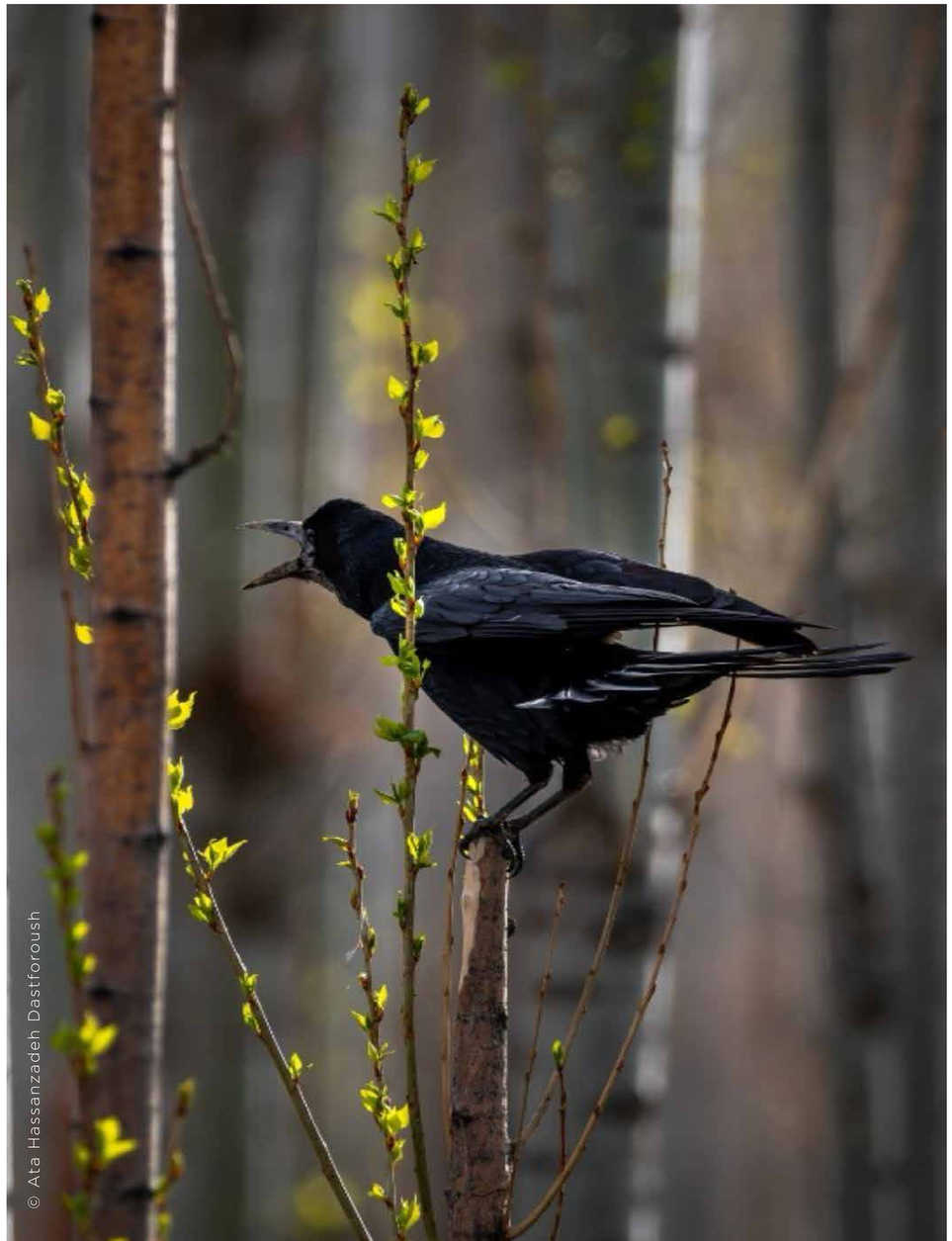



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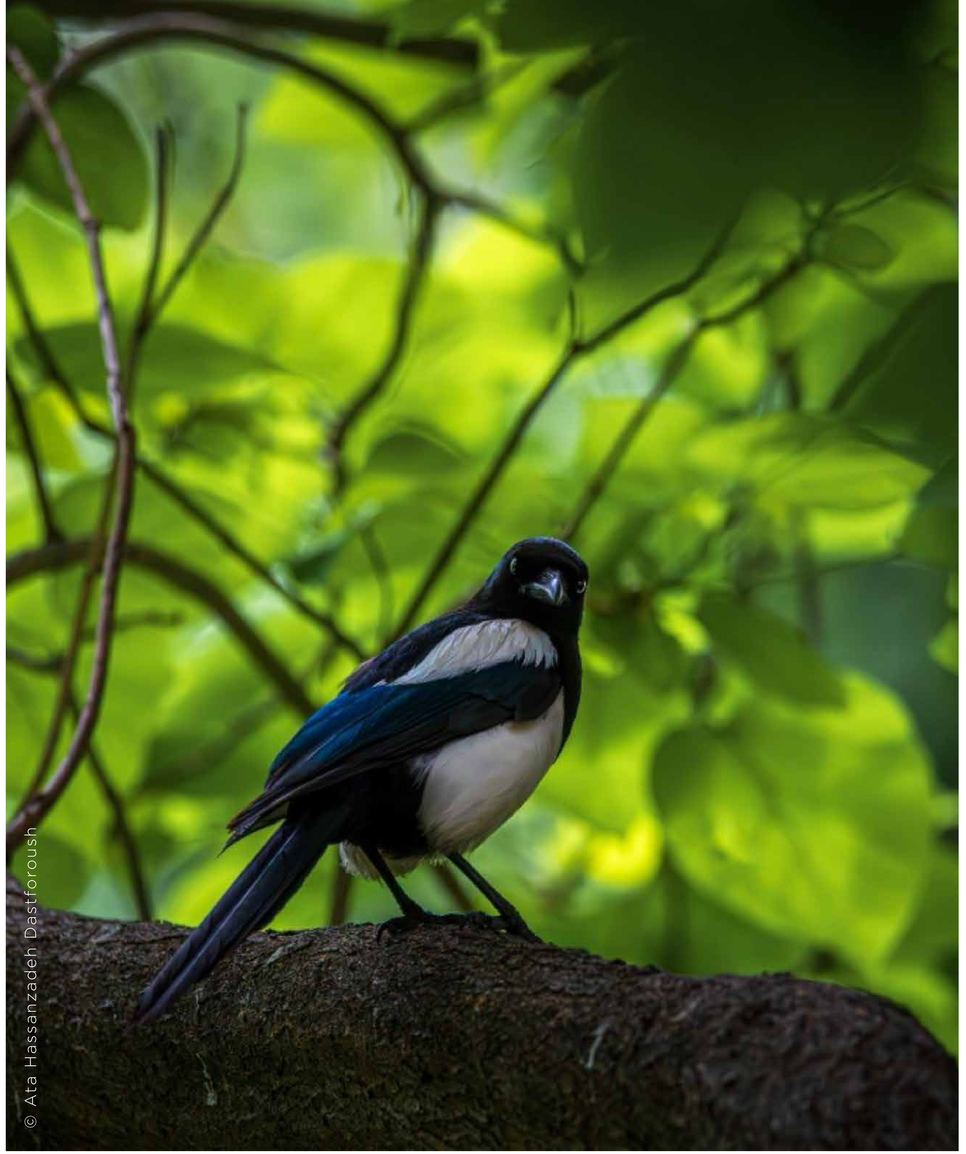
Rook *(Corvus frugilegus)* The Rook is a highly social crow species that nests in large colonies.

It commonly inhabits agricultural fields and open landscapes. Its diet includes grains, earthworms, and invertebrates.

Nests are built high in trees in communal groups. Pair bonds can be long-lasting. The species exhibits complex social organization.



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Eurasian Magpie *(Pica pica)*. The Eurasian Magpie is a highly intelligent and curious bird commonly found in open and semi-urban habitats.

It builds a dome-shaped nest made of twigs high in trees. Its diet is varied, including insects, eggs of other birds, seeds, and human-related food sources.

Courtship includes visual displays and specific vocalizations. Pair bonds may last for several years. Complex social structure and strong memory are characteristic traits of this species.

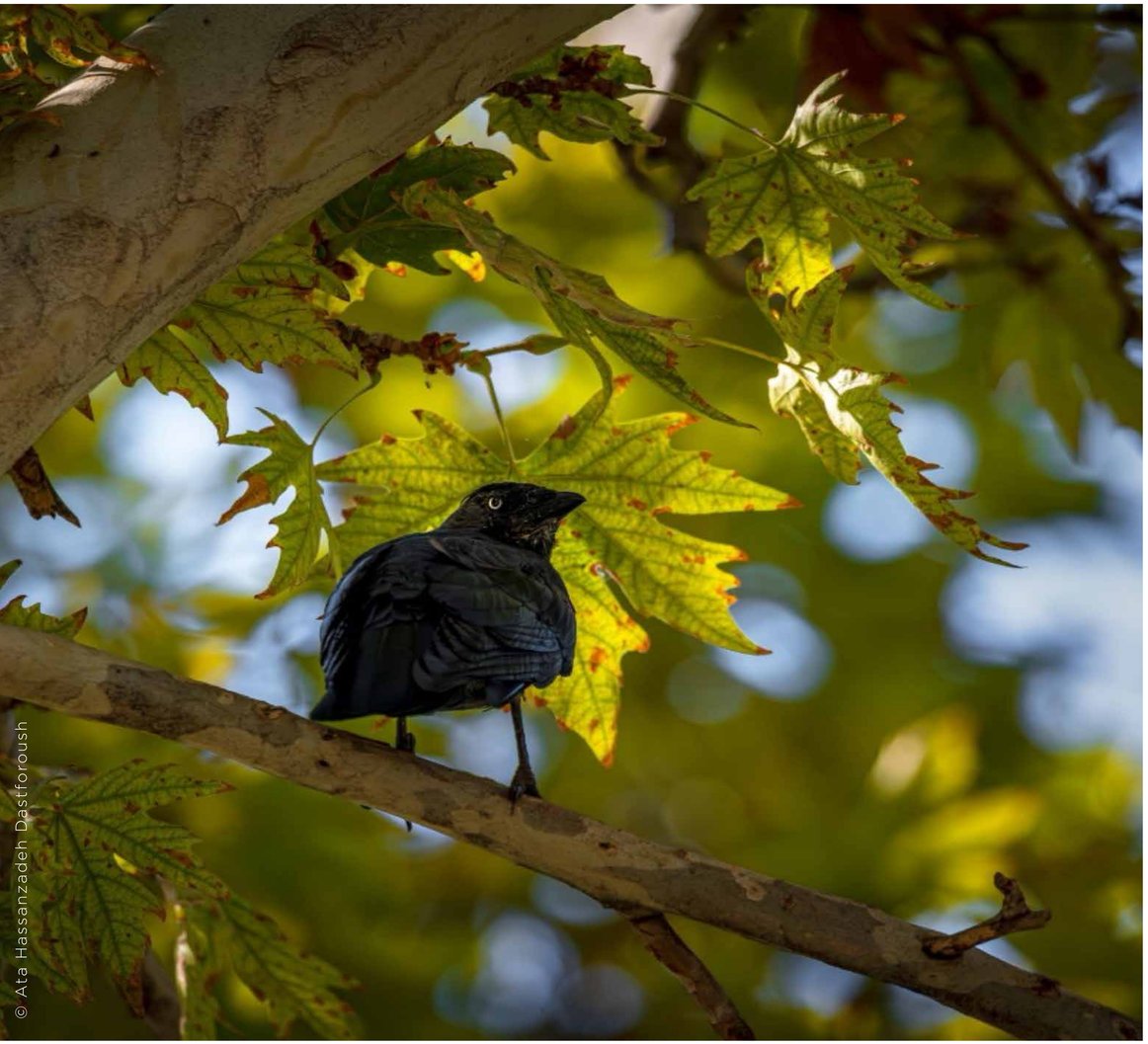


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Common Raven *(Corvus corax)* The Raven is a large and highly intelligent member of the crow family. It inhabits diverse environments from mountains to open plains.

Its omnivorous diet includes carrion, insects, seeds, and occasionally eggs of other birds. Complex social behavior and problem-solving ability are well documented.

Pairs often form long-term bonds and build nests on cliffs or tall trees. Both parents share chick-rearing duties.

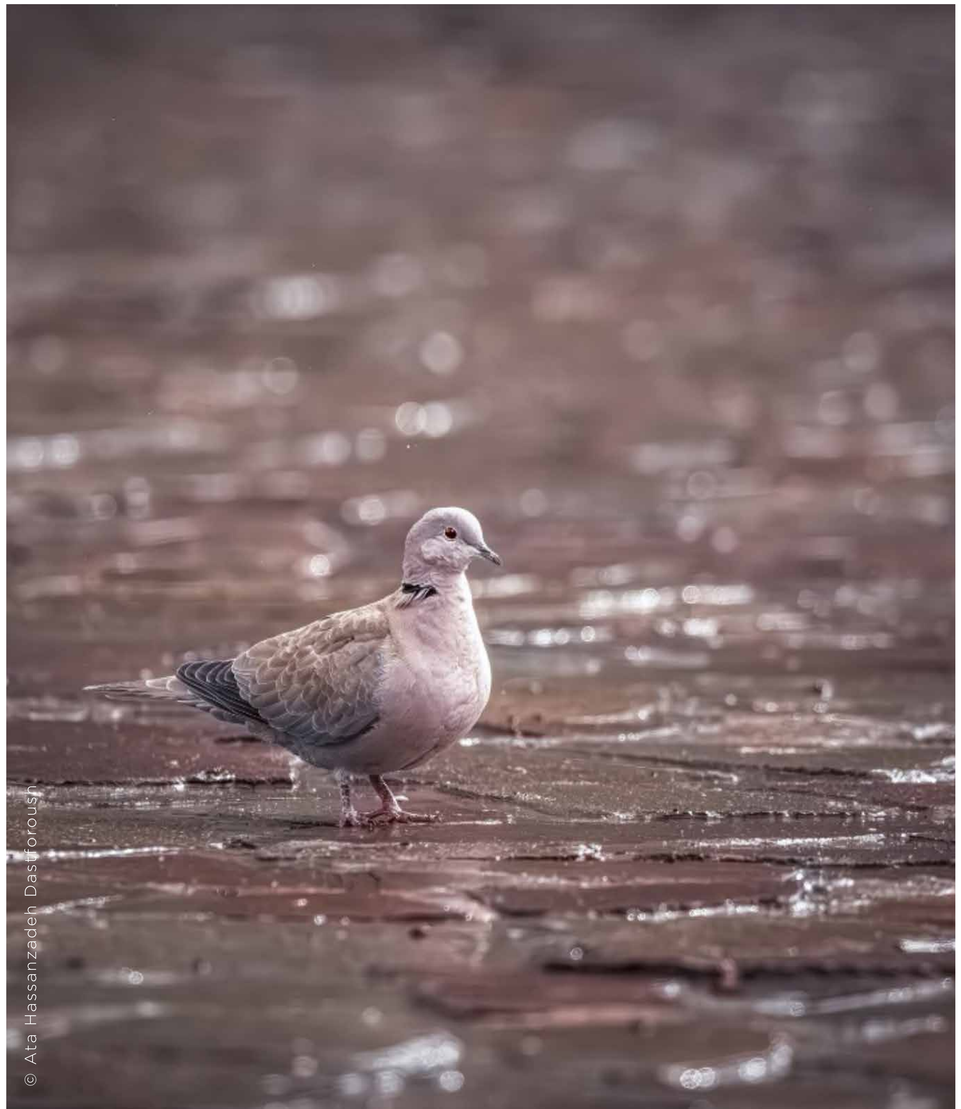


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Columbids and Urban Dwellers
Eurasian Collared Dove *(Streptopelia decaocto)* The Eurasian Collared Dove is a calm and highly adaptable species commonly found in urban and semi-urban environments.

It builds a simple nest made of thin twigs on trees or building ledges. Its diet mainly consists of seeds and grains, and it frequently forages on open ground.

Courtship behavior includes short display flights and repetitive, soft cooing calls. The species is generally monogamous during the breeding season and shows mild territorial defense. Its adaptability has allowed it to establish stable populations across many cities.



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Wood Pigeon *(Columba palumbus)* The Wood Pigeon is the largest native pigeon species in Europe and parts of western Asia, inhabiting woodlands, gardens, and urban parks.

It is distinguished by a prominent white patch on each side of the neck. Its diet primarily consists of seeds, shoots, tender leaves, and occasionally fruits. Unlike many small passerines, it is well adapted to digest substantial plant material.

The nest is a simple platform of twigs built in trees. During courtship, the male performs characteristic display flights, ascending and then gliding down with clapping wing sounds to attract the female.

Pair bonds usually remain stable throughout the breeding season, and both parents share incubation and chick feeding duties, producing nutrient-rich “crop milk” for their young.



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House Sparrow (Passer domesticus)
The House Sparrow is a highly adaptable bird closely associated with human settlements. It typically lives in small to medium-sized groups and exhibits strong social behavior.

Its diet mainly consists of seeds and grains, but insects are essential for feeding nestlings during the breeding season. Nests are built in building crevices, roofs, or urban structures.

Courtship includes repetitive male calls and brief display postures. Both parents actively participate in raising the chicks


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Common Myna *(Acridotheres tristis)* The Common Myna is an adaptable species commonly found in urban and subtropical areas.

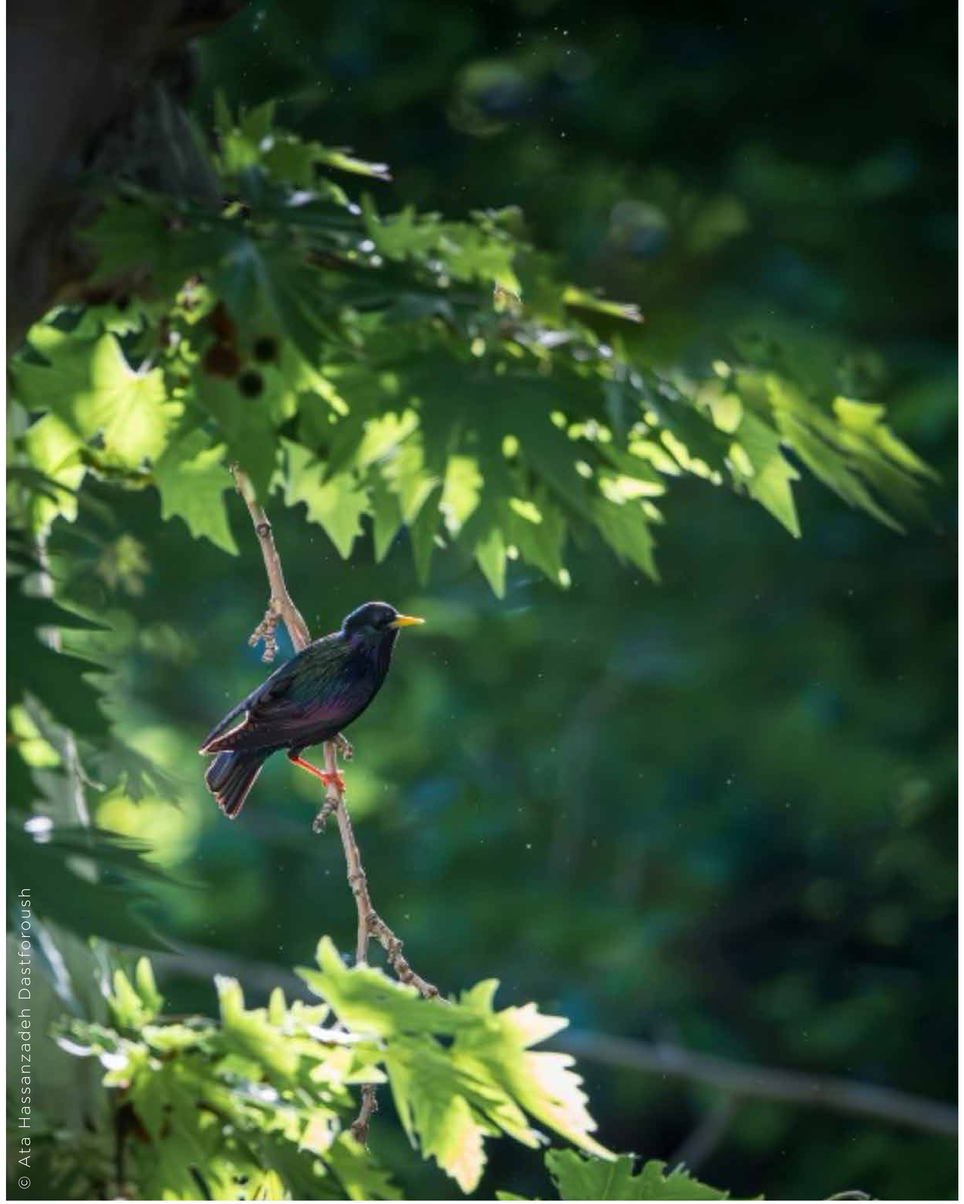
It displays active social behavior and is often seen in pairs or small groups.

Its diet includes insects, fruits, and human food scraps. Nesting occurs in tree cavities or building crevices.

Courtship involves varied vocalizations and brief displays. Both parents feed and care for the young



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European Starling *(Sturnus vulgaris)* The European Starling is a social bird often observed in large flocks.

Its diet is varied, including insects, fruits, and seeds. Nesting occurs in tree cavities or building crevices. During breeding season, males produce complex songs and displays to attract females.

Competition for suitable nesting cavities is common. The species plays an important role in regulating insect populations

Woodland and Tree-Dependent Species

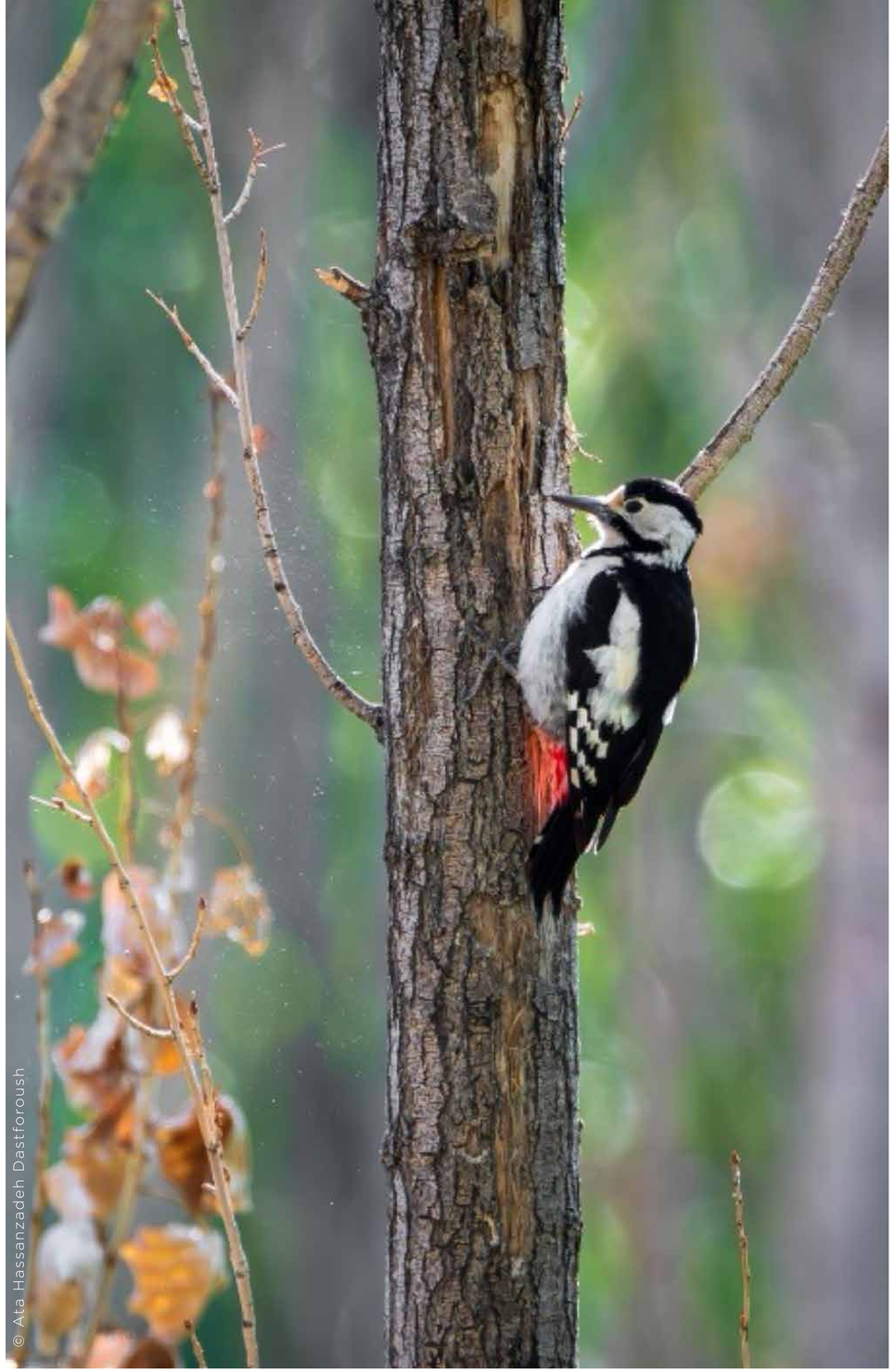
Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) The Great Spotted Woodpecker depends on mature trees and uses rhythmic drumming to locate insect larvae beneath bark.

Each breeding season, it excavates a new nesting cavity, which may later be used by other species. Its diet includes insects, larvae, seeds, and occasionally nuts.

Courtship involves drumming displays and chase flights between potential mates. Both parents share responsibilities in feeding the chicks. Its presence often indicates a structurally healthy tree habitat.



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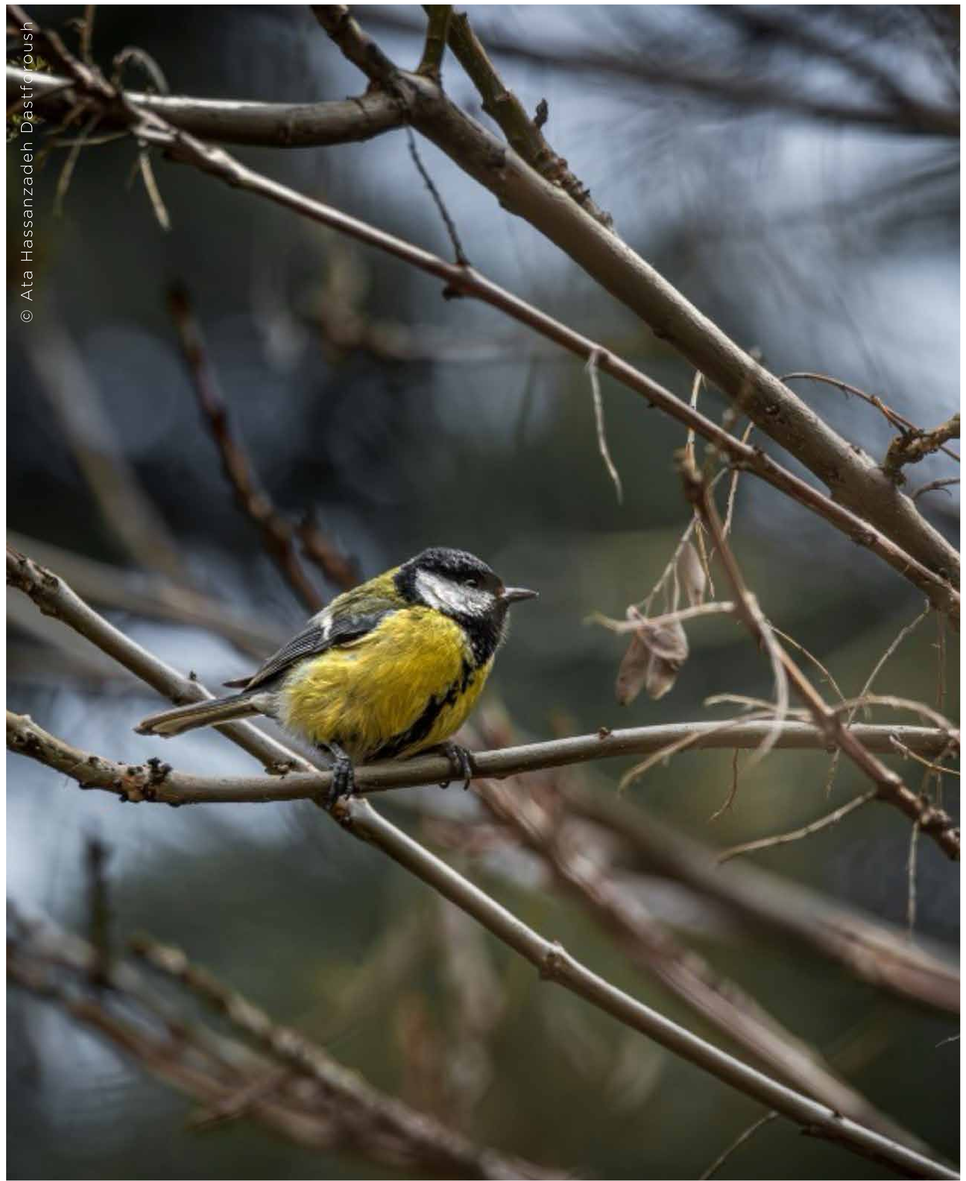


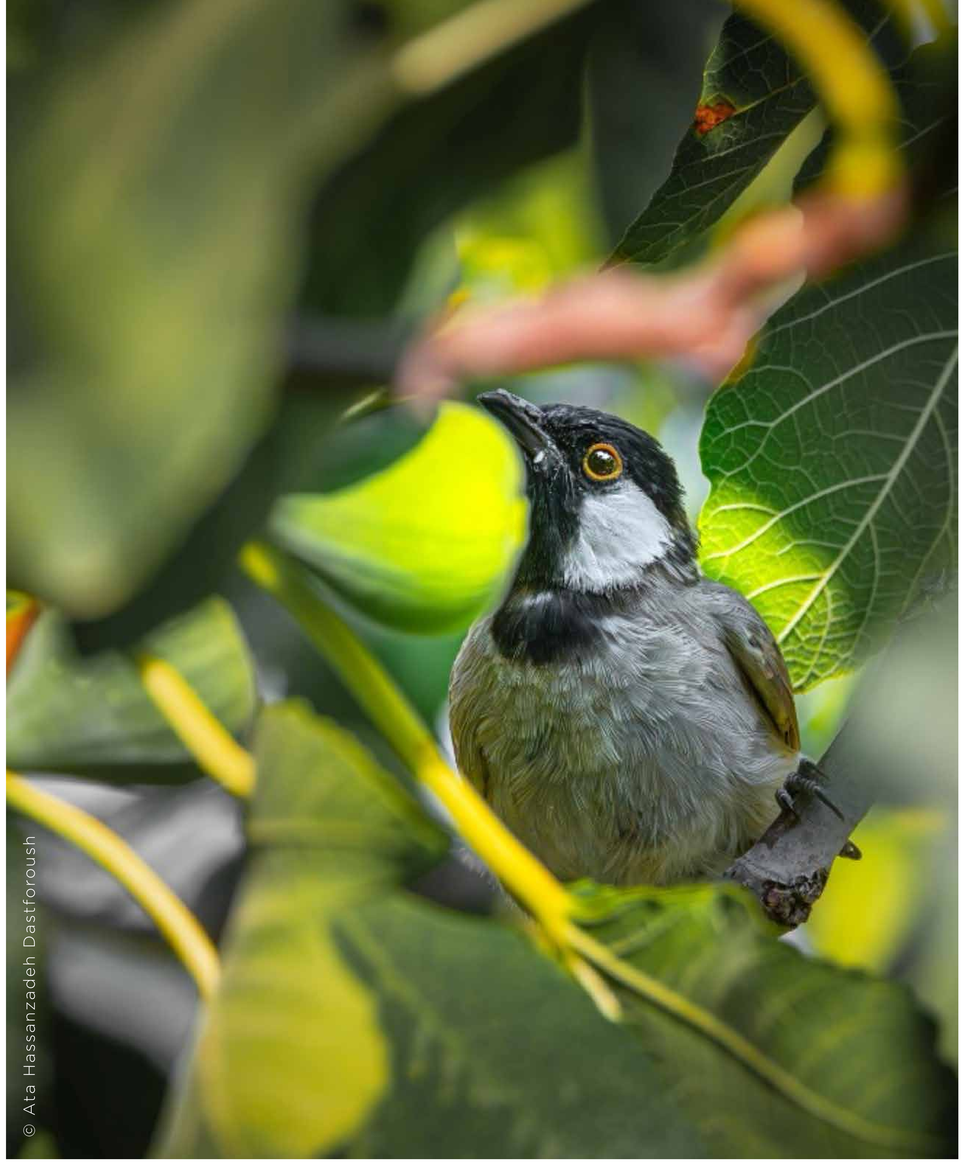
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Great Tit *(Parus major)* The Great Tit is an active and adaptable species inhabiting wooded and urban areas.

Primarily insectivorous, it supplements its diet with seeds during colder months. Nesting occurs in tree cavities or structural crevices.

Courtship involves varied and energetic songs used in territorial defense. Males attract females through song quality and territory selection. Both parents share chick-rearing responsibilities


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White-eared Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucotis*) The White-eared Bulbul is common in northwestern Iran and frequently observed in gardens and green spaces.

It feeds on fruits, nectar, and insects. Its cup-shaped nest is built within dense branches. Courtship includes soft vocalizations and subtle display movements.

The species is generally monogamous, with both parents involved in chick care. High adaptability to human environments characterizes this bird.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *(Psittacula krameri)* The Rose-ringed Parakeet is a social and active species often observed in flocks.

It is tree-dependent and nests in natural cavities within trunks. Its diet consists of fruits, seeds, buds, and occasionally agricultural crops. During courtship, males perform head movements and produce sharp, repetitive calls to attract females.

Pair bonds generally remain stable throughout the breeding season, and both parents participate in chick rearing. Its high adaptability has enabled successful colonization of urban environments.



Insectivorous Migrants and Seasonal Visitors

Several migratory passerines enrich the campus biodiversity seasonally.

Spotted Flycatcher *(Muscicapa striata)* The Spotted Flycatcher is a migratory species that breeds during warmer seasons in suitable habitats. It typically perches on exposed branches and captures insects through short aerial flights.

Nests are often built in tree crevices or sheltered structures. Courtship is relatively subtle and accompanied by soft vocalizations. Both parents contribute to feeding the chicks.

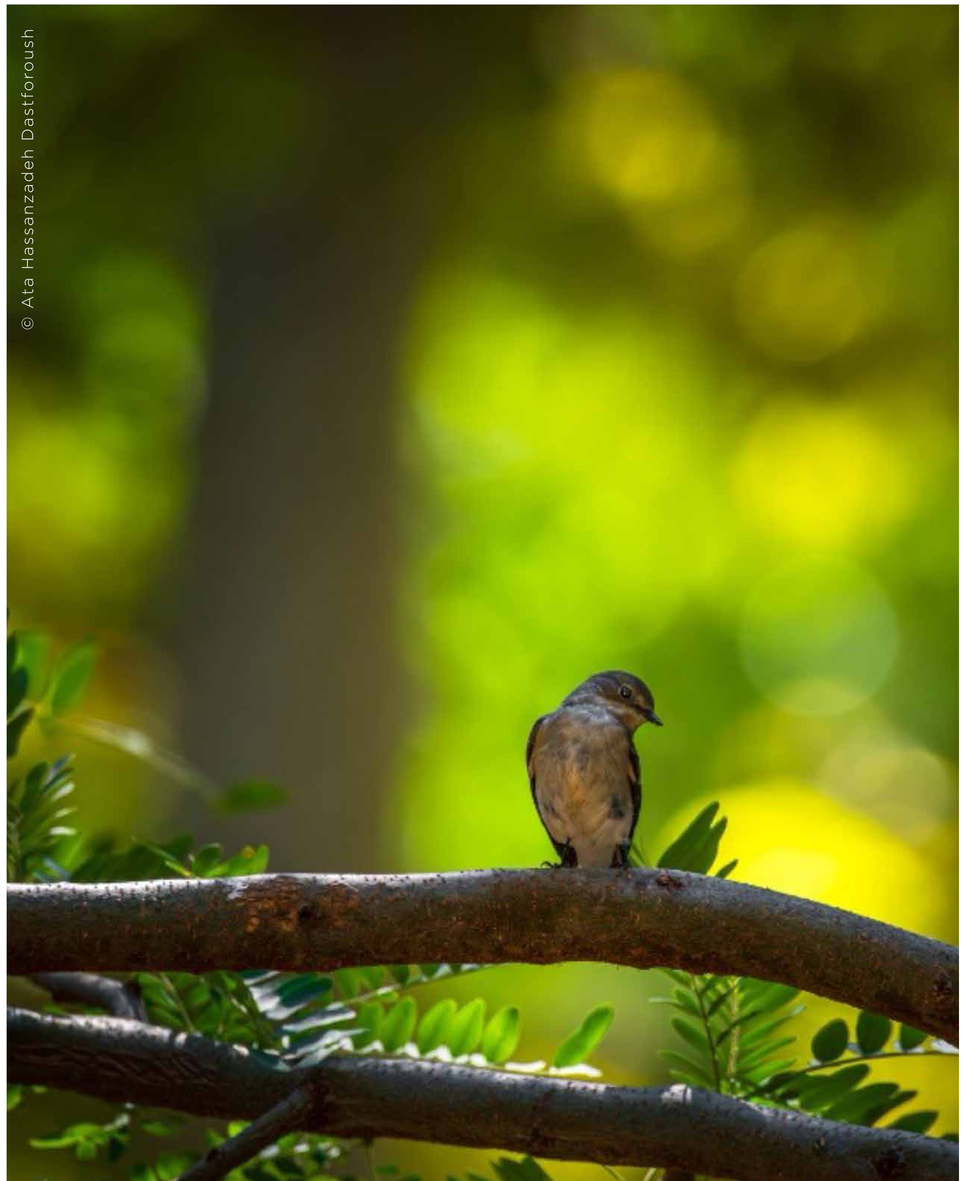
Its reliance on insect populations makes it an ecological indicator species



Brown-streaked Flycatcher *(Muscicapa dauurica)* The Brown-streaked Flycatcher is a migratory species inhabiting open wooded areas. It typically perches conspicuously and captures flying insects through short aerial sallies.

Its diet consists almost entirely of flying insects. The nest is cup-shaped and placed on tree branches.

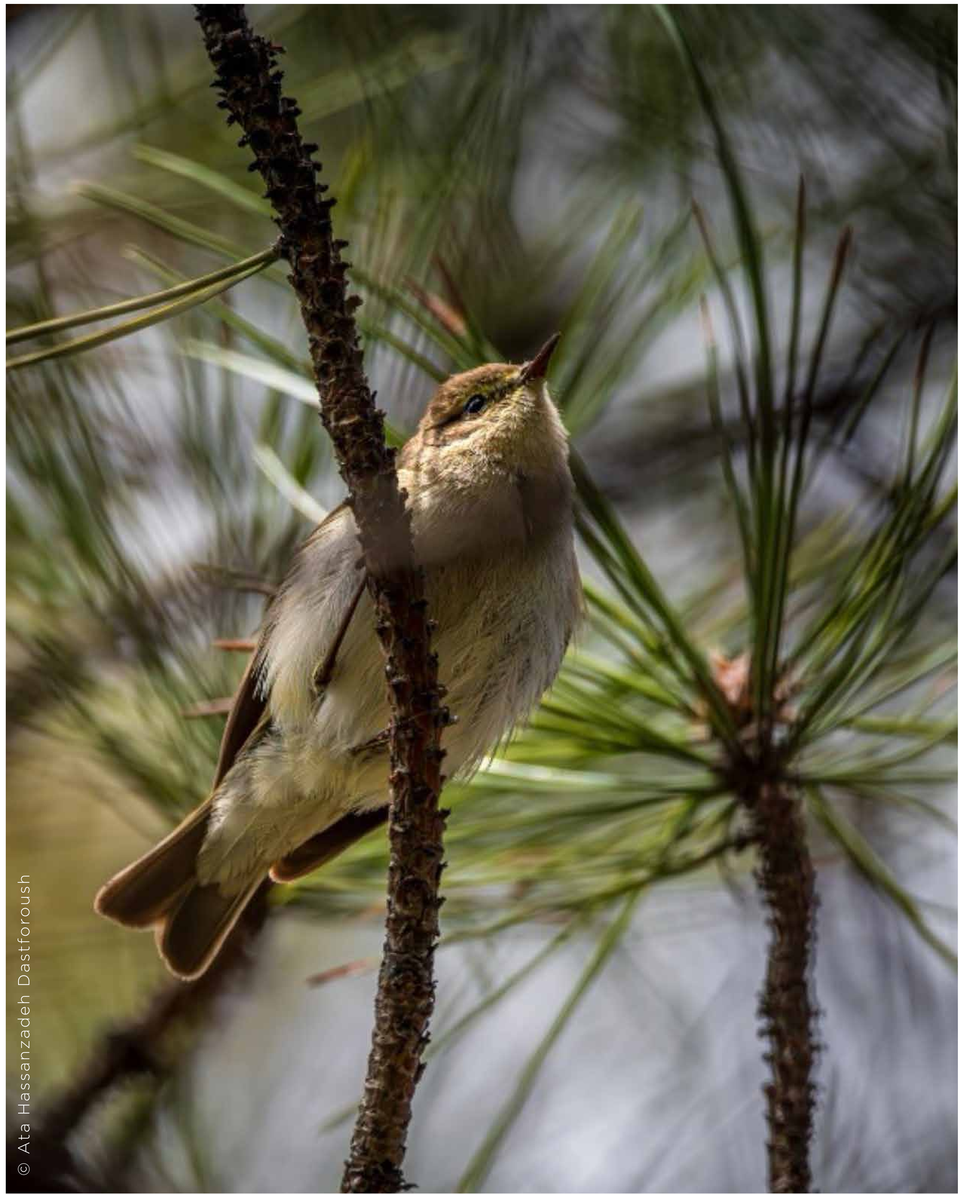
During breeding season, males use soft songs and territorial behavior to attract females. Both parents feed the nestlings.



Common Chiffchaff *(Phylloscopus collybita)* The Common Chiffchaff is a small, active warbler that forages among foliage for insects. It is often a seasonal migrant, observed during passage or breeding periods. Its nest is dome-shaped and typically built close to the ground.

Courtship behavior involves repetitive and characteristic songs.

Males defend territories primarily through vocal displays. Its diet mainly consists of small insects and larvae.



Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *(Iduna pallida)* The Eastern Olivaceous Warbler is a migratory species inhabiting shrublands and green edges. It primarily feeds on small insects.

Its cup-shaped nest is built within shrubs. The song is simple yet continuous and used for territorial defense.

During breeding season, males actively guard their territories. The species is typically present during summer breeding periods.



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Common Whitethroat *(Curruca communis)* The Common Whitethroat is a migratory bird inhabiting shrublands and semi-open areas. Its diet mainly consists of insects and larvae.

Nests are built low within dense vegetation. Courtship includes short display flights and song.

Males actively defend territories. Both parents participate in raising the chicks.



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Predatory Passerines

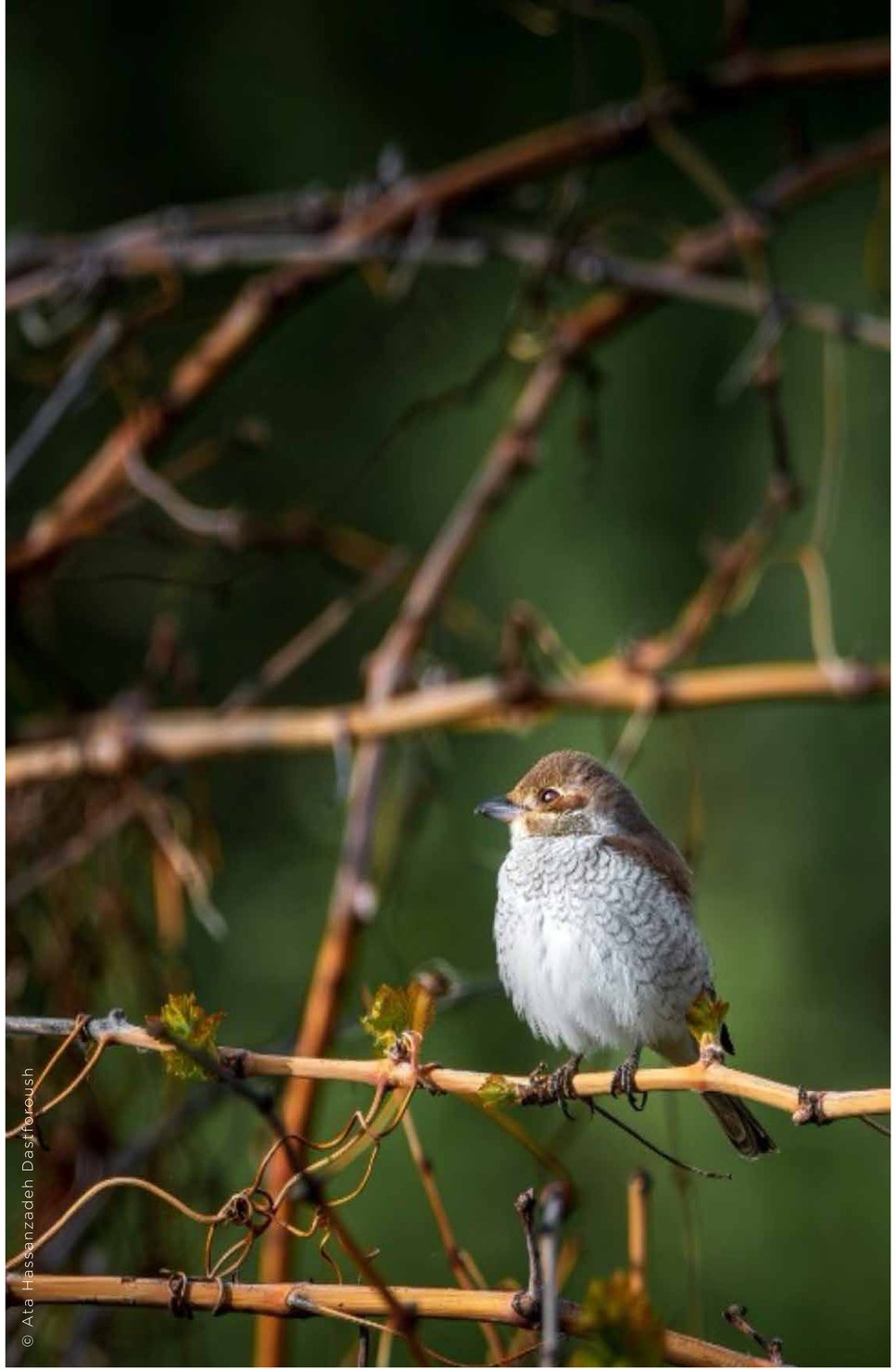
Red-backed Shrike *(Lanius collurio)*
The Red-backed Shrike is a migratory predatory passerine typically found in open habitats with scattered shrubs.

It often perches prominently while scanning for prey. Its diet includes large insects, small reptiles, and occasionally small rodents.

A distinctive behavior is impaling prey on thorns or sharp branches for storage. During the breeding season, males use soft song and display flights to defend territory.

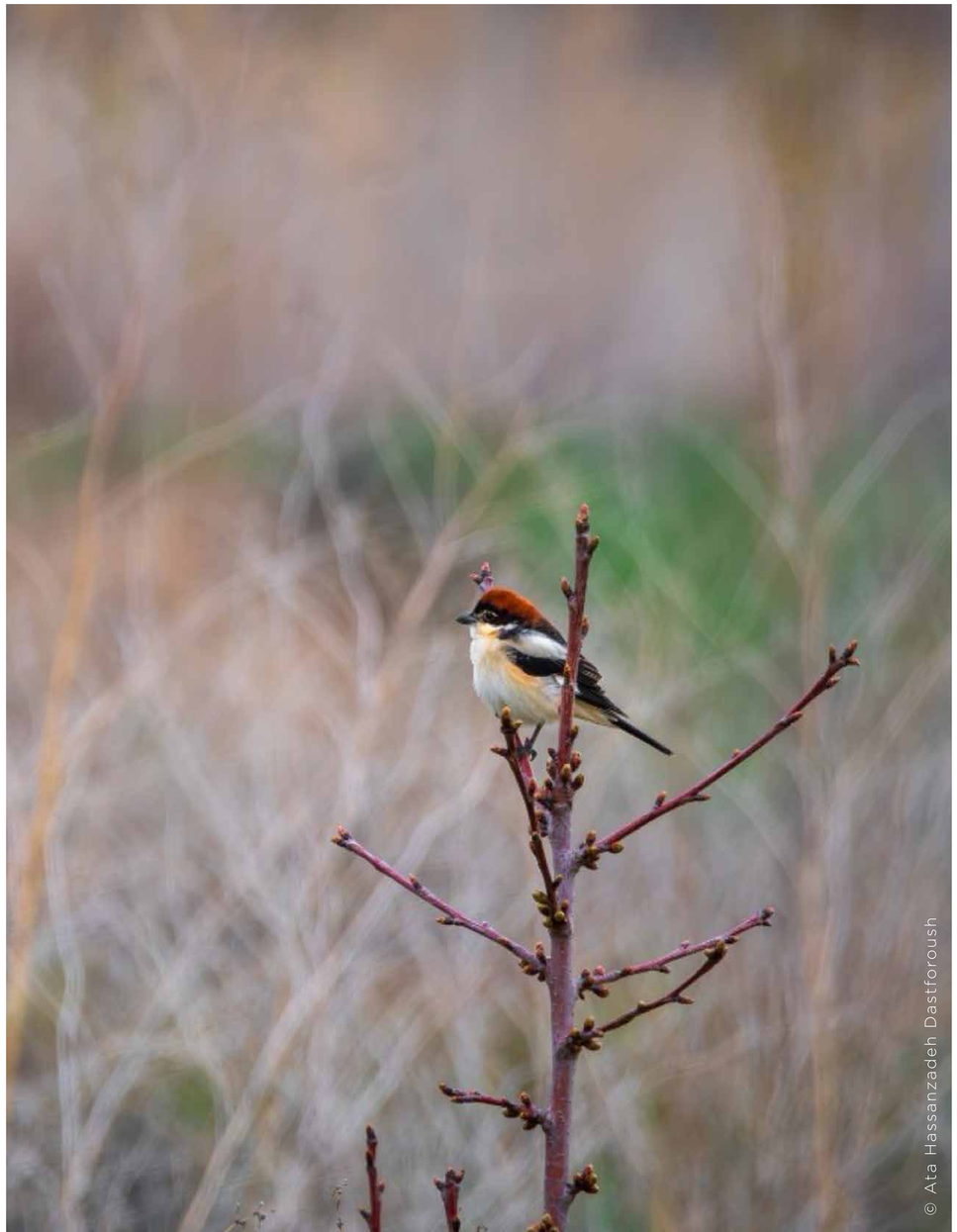
Both parents participate in feeding and protecting the young.


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Woodchat Shrike *(Lanius senator)* The Woodchat Shrike is a migratory predator inhabiting open areas with scattered trees. It scans for prey from elevated perches.

Its diet includes large insects and small vertebrates. Like other shrikes, it may impale prey on thorns for storage. Courtship involves song and display flights. Both parents feed the nestlings.


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Black-headed Bunting (*Emberiza melanocephala*) The Black-headed Bunting is a migratory bird breeding in open fields and shrublands. Males develop a glossy black head during breeding season and display strong territorial behavior.

The diet consists of seeds, with insects important during chick rearing. The nest is cup-shaped and built low in vegetation.

Male song plays a crucial role in attracting females and defending territory. The female primarily incubates the eggs.

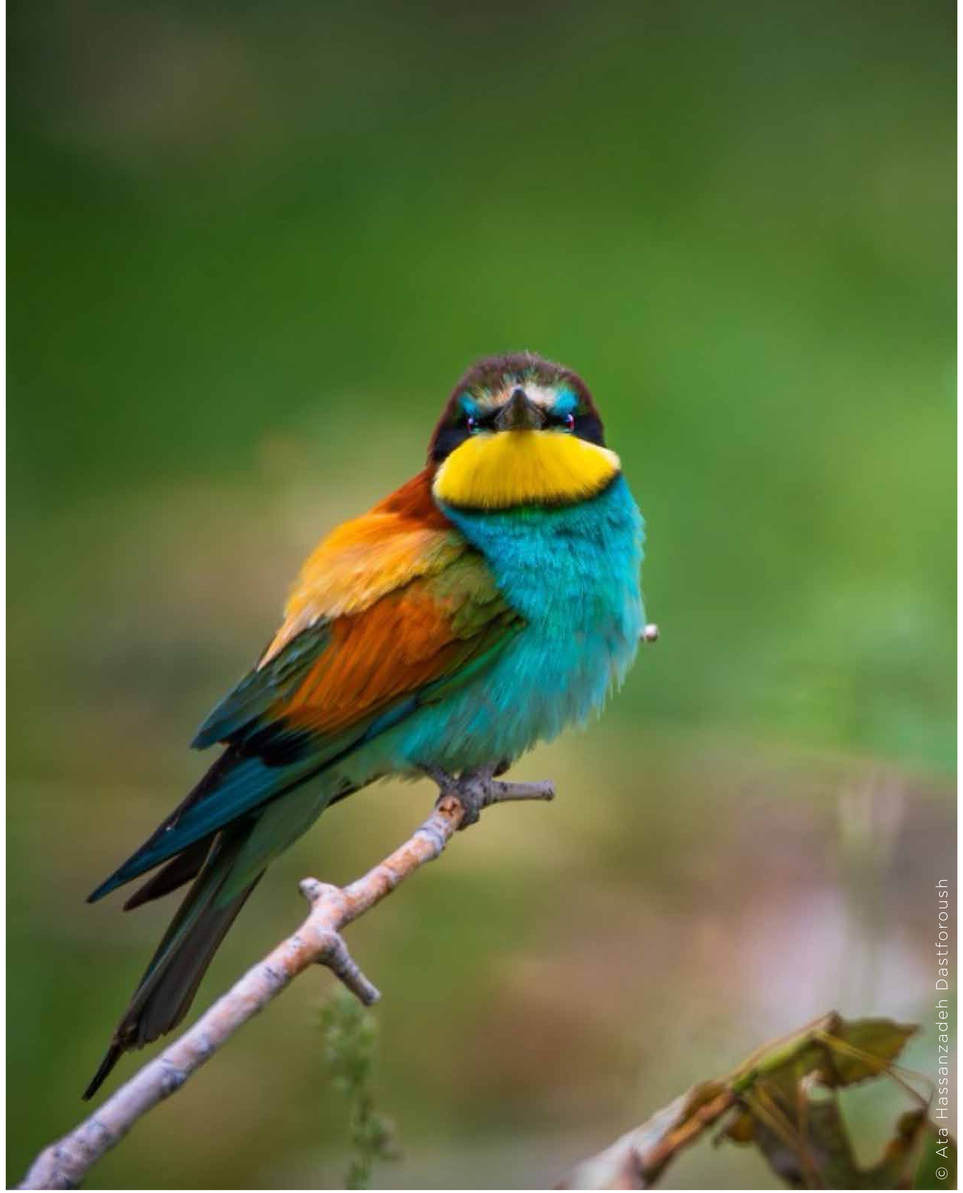
Open-Ground Specialists

Crested Lark *(Galerida cristata)*
The Crested Lark inhabits open, dry landscapes and barren fields. It spends much of its time on the ground feeding on seeds and insects.

The nest is built on the ground among low vegetation. During courtship, males perform extended song flights to defend territory.

Camouflage plumage aids in survival. Both parents participate in chick care.


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European Bee-eater *(Merops apiaster)*
The European Bee-eater is a vividly colored migratory bird typically found in open landscapes.

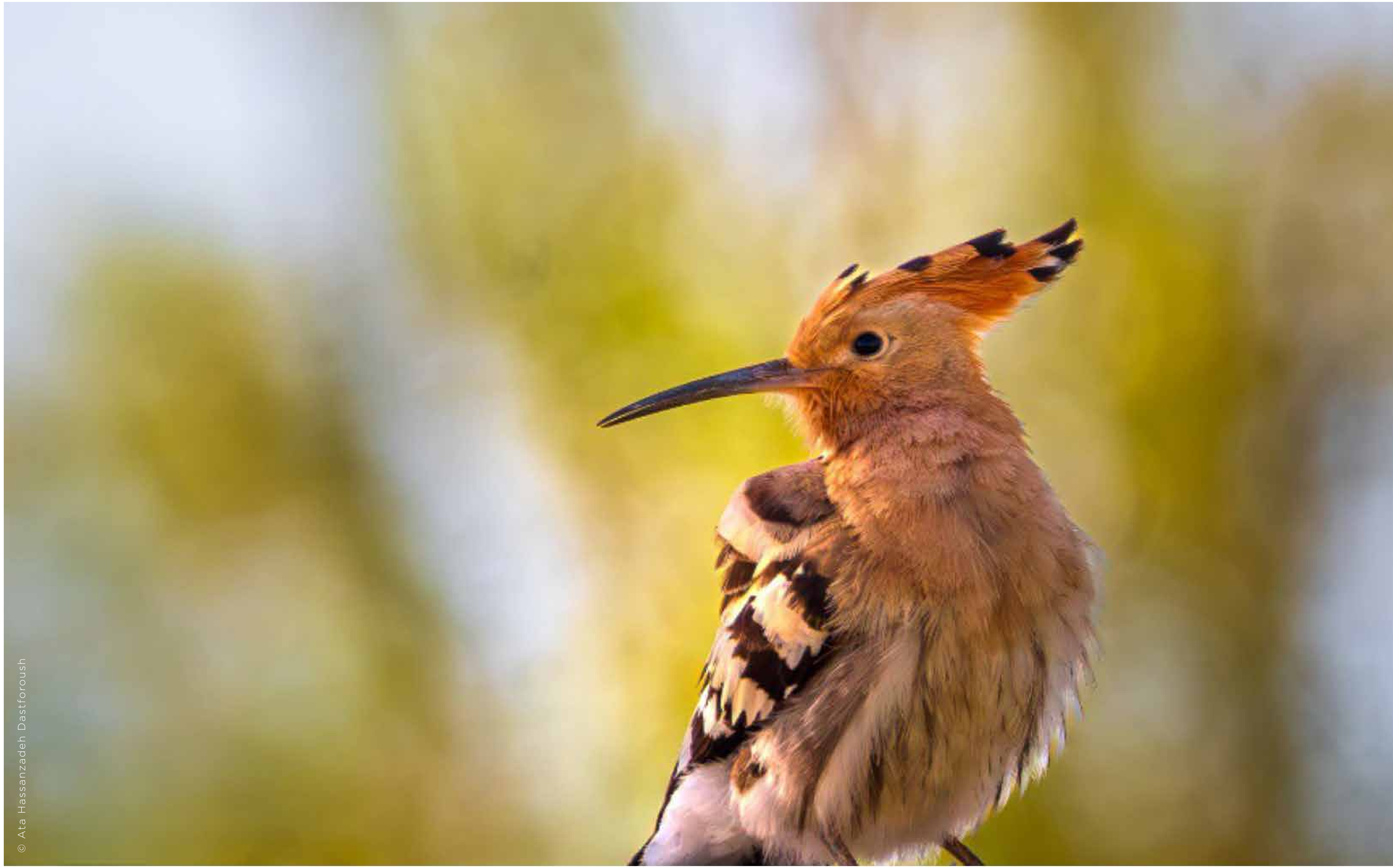
It captures flying insects, especially bees and dragonflies, in mid-air. Nesting involves digging tunnels into sandy or earthen banks. During courtship, display flights and food exchange between mates are common. The species often exhibits social behavior, nesting in loose colonies.

Its presence indicates healthy insect populations within the habitat.

Eurasian Hoopoe *(Upupa epops)*
The Eurasian Hoopoe is a distinctive bird recognized by its orange crest and probing feeding behavior. Using its long bill, it searches soil for insect larvae.

Nesting takes place in tree cavities or natural hollows. During courtship, males display their crest and produce characteristic calls.

Females spend extended time inside the nest while males provide food. Its presence indicates suitable soil conditions and abundant invertebrates.

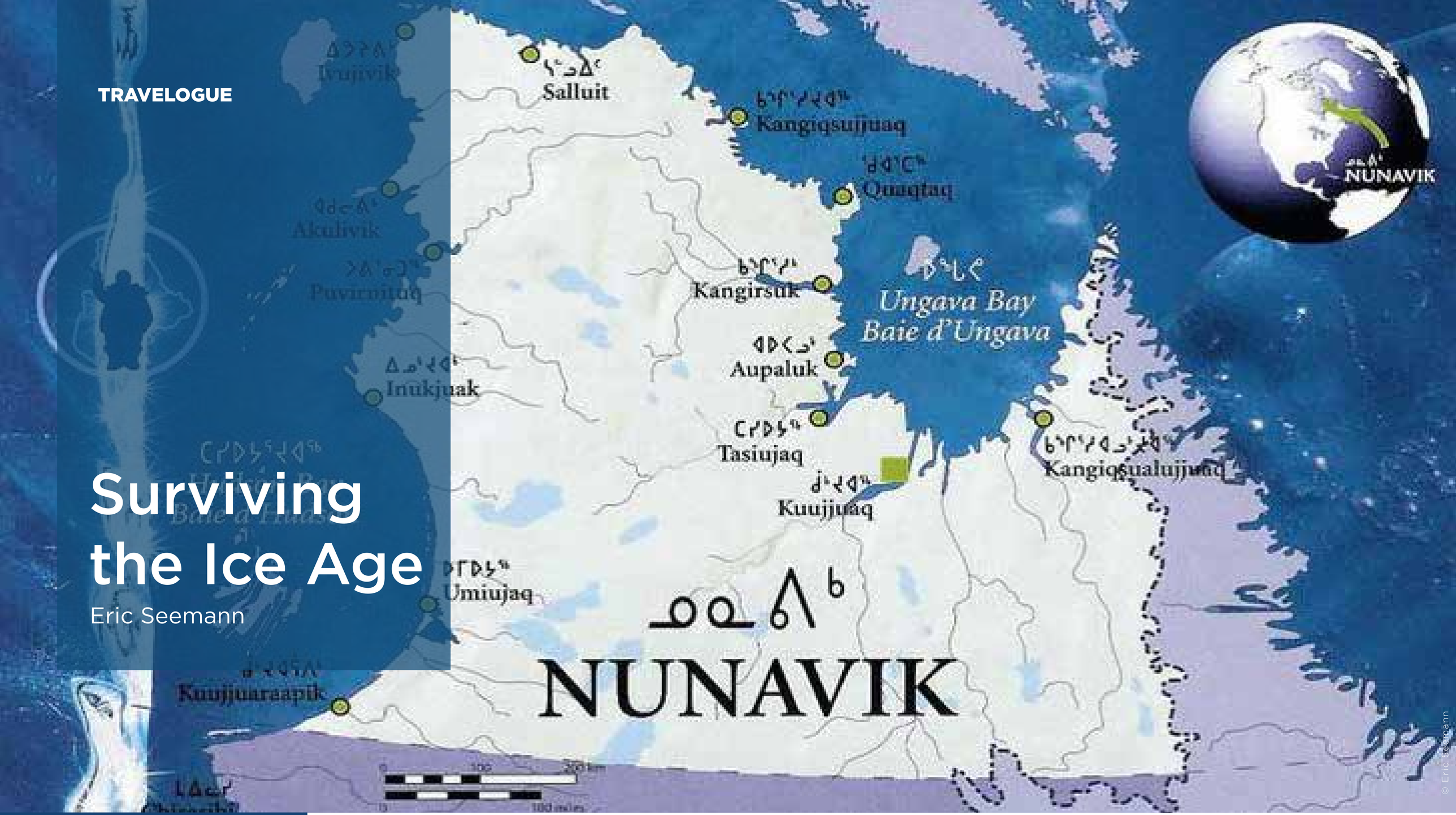


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TRAVELOGUE

Surviving the Ice Age

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/
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wildlifer.ca

Have you ever thought about exploring Canada’s Arctic? I used to dream of it when I was younger but did not expect the chance. Most of my wildlife photography related trips, being on my own or doing my tours and workshops are normally planned way in advance.

One morning, I received an email from a fellow nature and wildlife enthusiast who also enjoys photography. She reached out to share an exciting opportunity: an invitation to travel to Nunavik, the northernmost region of Quebec in Canada. The message



© Eric Seemann


ES Wildlife Photo



sparked my interest and set the stage for an intriguing journey into one of the most remote and captivating landscapes in North America. I am about to visit the remote Wolf Lake camp to assess the region, observe its wildlife, and initiate preparations for leading future groups to experience the area.

Before setting out on my journey, my priority was to gather information about Nunavik. I needed to research my destination, learn about its residents, and understand its unique wildlife and photography opportunities.

Nunavik spans over 507,000 square kilometers and is home to approximately 14,000 people, mostly Inuit. The territory of Nunavik is bordered by the Hudson Bay to the west, Hudson Strait to the North, Ungava Bay, and Labrador to the East.

Nunavik offers an incredible opportunity for wildlife enthusiasts to capture some of the world's most iconic animals in their natural habitats. One of the most iconic animals found in Nunavik is the muskoxen.

With its vast expanses of untouched wilderness, the region offers a rare opportunity to truly disconnect from the modern world and connect with nature in its purest form. Whether you are gazing up at the northern lights, hiking through the tundra, photographing the muskoxen, or simply marveling at the beauty of the Arctic landscape.

Not only is there Muskoxen, Nunavik is one of the world's best places to witness the aurora borealis, also known as the Northern Lights. This natural phenomenon produces a dazzling display of colorful lights that dance across the night sky.

Nunavik's Inuit culture is deeply rooted in traditions that have been passed down for


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generations. One way to engage in these traditions is by visiting the Tent ring and Eskers. The Tent ring provides insight into the lives and traditions of the Inuit people. Meanwhile, Eskers offer opportunities to explore the natural beauty of Nunavik, as well as the plants and animals that thrive in these formations.

Having learned a little about Nunavik as the gateway to the Arctic, I am now ready to learn about the Inuit people there. According to a 2021census, there is around 155,066 Inuit within the Arctic and Subarctic regions. 70,545 of them live in Canada, including my destination of Nunavik (Northern Quebec). They possess a unique culture, language (Inuktitut), and history of fishing, hunting, and thriving in harsh environments. Inuit means “the people” with “Inuk” being the singular term. Sixty percent of Inuit say that they conduct a conversation in Inuktitut. I was guided by Allen Gorden, a resident of Kuujjuaq and the owner of Wolf Lake Camp. Allen shared important insights about the local Inuit culture. He explained that many elders in the community are concerned about whether younger generations will continue practicing traditional ways. According to Allen, much of this concern is attributed to the influence of social media, which has changed how young people interact with their heritage. As I embark on this journey, I am deeply aware that there is much more to discover about the traditions and people of Nunavik.

It is now time to pack my gear and set out from my home in Prince George British Columbia Canada. What do I need to pack for such an adventure?

To begin, I prioritize packing the camera equipment. Next, I take into consideration the temperature conditions prior to arriving in the Arctic. During my journey to Nunavik, the climate





will undoubtedly be warmer. I went with Merino Wool because it is super warm and stylish enough to wear in places such as airports.... just like my Snickers pants, which I picked mostly because they are comfortable for traveling and working in the field. I will explain why I am sharing this information soon. Now, I need to pick good footwear, since it is going to be colder where I am headed. There is going to be a lot of hiking, hopping on and off a boat, and this is no place for running shoes. Gum boots would work, but they are extra weight and I cannot afford to have that weight. I picked warm rain gear from Helly Hanson for comfort and travel style. I am sharing this because weight matters; I avoid extra baggage, especially when flying on bush planes like the DHC-2 Beaver.

My first flight is from Prince George, BC Canada to Vancouver, BC, then on to Montreal, Quebec, where I will meet others joining the tour and workshop. After relaxing at the hotel for the day, meeting other guests for dinner, and getting a good night's sleep, we are ready to fly with a regional airline to Kuujjuaq qc.

Kuujjuaq, named after the Koksoak River by the Inuit, is a former Hudson's. Bay Company outpost located at the river's mouth on Ungava Bay. It is Nunavik, Quebec's largest northern village, and regional administrative capital, with a 2021 population of 2,668.

It was not more than 10 minutes after arriving in Kuujjuag, that I met guide and Wolf Lake camp owner Allen Gorden. There was no wasting time; we were off


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to the float plane business of the famous Johnny May. I knew we were well cared for with a bush pilot that has flown more than 45000 hours in the past 64 years. This is where my packing of gear and clothing comes in; weight restrictions are crucial at this point of the trip, and careful packing is essential. It is best that I skip the hard-shell luggage and bring my soft sided duffle bag.

My flight takes 45 minutes, and it is the most beautiful flight, as we fly low over the Arctic Tunda. Ahead of most North American regions, fall colors are already visible with reds, oranges, yellows, and greens covering the landscape, along with thousands of small lakes below.

These lakes are Thermokarst Lakes. As the permafrost melts, which it is doing at a rapid rate, the ice within the soil turns into water, causing the ground to sink, creating these large and small lakes. It some areas, the permafrost still exists so the water above cannot seep into the ground, causing surface pools.

Wolf Lake Camp has now come into view, inviting myself and the group to explore this wild, untouched land and witness Muskoxen, the remarkable IceAge survivors, up close in their natural habitat. This is a rare chance for an unforgettable encounter in one of the world's most remote regions! As we approach the camp on the plane's floats, I can already see a


© Eric Seemann

herd of Muskox on a nearby ridge and excitement rises one more notch.

The muskox is a survivor... they have survived for over six thousand years and roamed with the woolly Mammoth and the sabretooth tigers. It has an exceptionally long adaptive history in arctic conditions, which shows they are very adaptive to extreme cold. They have some pretty unique features, having a highly effective insulating wool called “Qiviut” under that exceedingly long and shaggy hair.

On top of all that, they have special reproductive traits. The muskox cow responds to her nutritional condition in autumn by not going into heat if she is not feeling healthy enough or has not stored enough fat. Only going into heat early in the rutting season when in excellent condition. This means that cows that are in poor condition can and will wait till the next year.

Calves born early have the best chance to gain enough fat to survive their first winter, since cows must be healthy enough to give birth and produce milk well before the snow melts and vegetation appears. DNA studies reveal muskoxen is more closely related to sheep and goats than to oxen.

Males can weigh up to 400 kg (880 lbs.), females up to 275 kg (600 lbs.). In the wild, males live 10–12 years and females 15–18 years. During the breeding season (mid-August to mid-September), males compete for dominance and mate with multiple females; calves are born in April or May.



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The following days included observing and photographing muskox, macro photography, and night sky photography. Accessible by boat, hiking, or just outside my accommodation. On some of the evenings, I was able to see the Northern lights right from the comfort of my cabin.

Daytime hikes, while searching for muskox herds often reveal fascinating Rock ptarmigans. The official bird of the territory of Nunavik

The rock ptarmigan is 34-36 cm long and has a wingspan of 54-60 cm. These birds are camouflaged to match the seasons; their feathers molt from white in the winter to grey and brown in spring and summer.

I have much more to share about Canada, my home country. Its diversity makes me proud to live here. From the rugged coastlines and towering mountains to the endless forests and quiet northern tundra, Canada's landscape is both wild and humbling. The vast Arctic, especially in places like Nunavut, feels like the last true frontier, raw, powerful, and beautifully untouched.

Our wildlife is just as inspiring. Whether it is an Ice-age surviving Muskoxen, a wolf's howl on the West Coast, or a grizzly bear roaming the Canadian Rockies, these moments remind me how fortunate we are to share this country with such incredible creatures.

Being Canadian means living in a place where wilderness still breathes freely and that is something I will never take for granted.

In addition to this workshop, I lead immersive photography tours and workshops in Africa, the Canadian Arctic, Northern British Columbia, Canada, and the Canadian Rockies; offering participants the opportunity to experience and capture the wild through expert guidance.



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Where Silence Finds a Voice

By Ranjisha Raghavan

© Ranjisha Raghavan



Ranjisha Raghavan is a contemporary mixed media artist whose work bridges art and conservation. Drawing from a deep emotional connection to nature, she creates layered, narrative-driven pieces that highlight endangered species and fragile ecosystems. Through her visual storytelling, she invites viewers to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the natural world, transforming art into a voice for awareness and empathy.

mysticartsbyranjisha.com/
facebook.com/ranjishaartncraftfactory/
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© Ranjisha Raghavan

A Canvas for the Wild

There are stories in the wild that are never spoken, only felt. They exist in the quiet disappearance of habitats, in the fading presence of species we once took for granted, and in the fragile balance that quietly holds ecosystems together. These are not loud stories. They do not demand attention. But they matter deeply.

For Ranjisha Raghavan, these are the stories that must be told.

Her canvas becomes that voice.

Based in Dubai, Ranjisha's journey into art did not begin in a traditional artistic space. It began in a world of structure, precision, and industry. An engineer by qualification, she spent over 17 years working in the oil and gas sector as a Quality, Health, Safety, and Environment (QHSE) Internal Controls Manager and Facilitator. Her role required her to understand systems, assess risks, and ensure compliance, but beyond the technicalities, it gave her something far more profound: a firsthand understanding of the delicate relationship between industry and the environment.

That awareness stayed with her.

Over time, it evolved into a quiet but persistent need to express, to question, and to connect. In 2014, she turned to painting, not as a profession at first, but as a personal exploration. What began as an




Culture of Bhavnagar
Tourism in Bhavnagar


© Ranjisha Raghavan


© Ranjisha Raghavan



© Ranjisha Raghavan

outlet soon grew into something deeper. With each stroke, she found herself returning to a central theme: nature. Not just its beauty, but its vulnerability. Not just what we admire, but what we risk losing.

Her work today reflects that journey.

Ranjisha's art focuses on endangered species and fragile ecosystems, using visual storytelling to explore themes of coexistence, resilience, and responsibility. Working primarily with acrylics, oils, and mixed media, she builds her compositions in layers, both visually and conceptually. These layers are not just artistic choices; they mirror the complexity of ecological narratives, where beauty and loss often exist side by side.

There is a quiet intensity in her work.

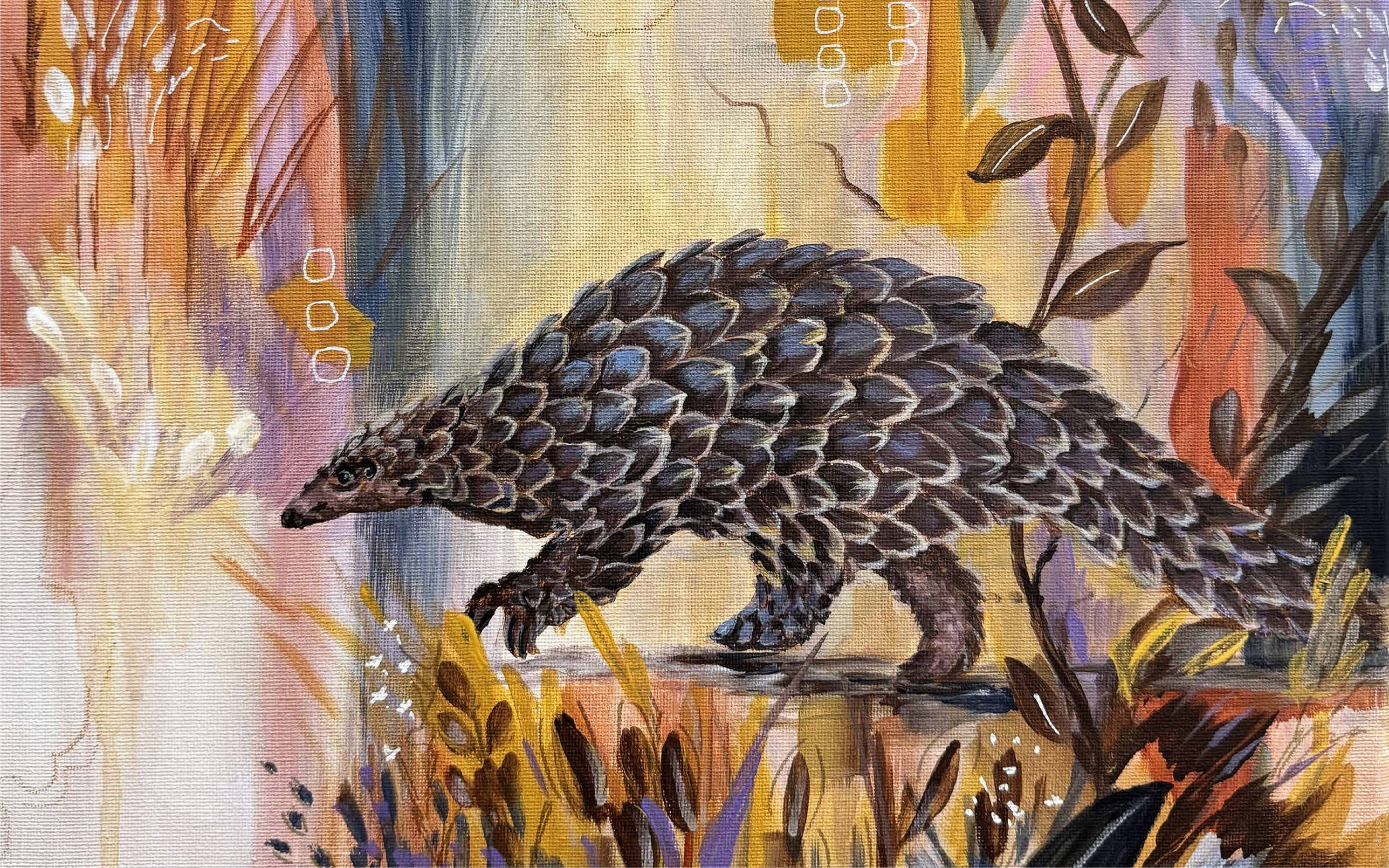
Her paintings do not overwhelm. Instead, they draw the viewer in slowly. A glance becomes a pause. A pause becomes reflection. Through a careful balance of realism and symbolism, her subjects, often animals are given presence, dignity, and voice. They are not just visual elements within a frame; they become storytellers in their own right.

What makes her work particularly powerful is the emotional depth behind it.

Ranjisha is not an observer standing at a distance. She is deeply connected to the subjects she



© Ranjisha Raghavan



paints. A devoted animal lover and caregiver, her everyday interactions with animals shape her perspective in subtle but meaningful ways. These experiences reinforce a simple belief that compassion begins with closeness, with understanding, and with the willingness to truly see another life.

That belief is visible in her art.

Each piece carries a sense of empathy. It invites viewers to not just look, but to feel. To imagine the world through the eyes of another species. To consider what it means to share this planet, and what responsibility that brings.

For Ranjisha, creating art is not just an act of expression, it is a form of advocacy.

This philosophy extends beyond her studio through The Giving Canvas, the philanthropic arm of Mystic Arts by Ranjisha. Through this initiative, her work becomes a bridge between awareness and action. Funds generated through her art support a range of conservation efforts, including bird rescue and rehabilitation, pangolin protection, raptor conservation, snakebite awareness, and broader biodiversity initiatives across India and Africa. But the impact goes beyond funding.

Through social media, exhibitions, and storytelling, The Giving Canvas seeks to engage people,



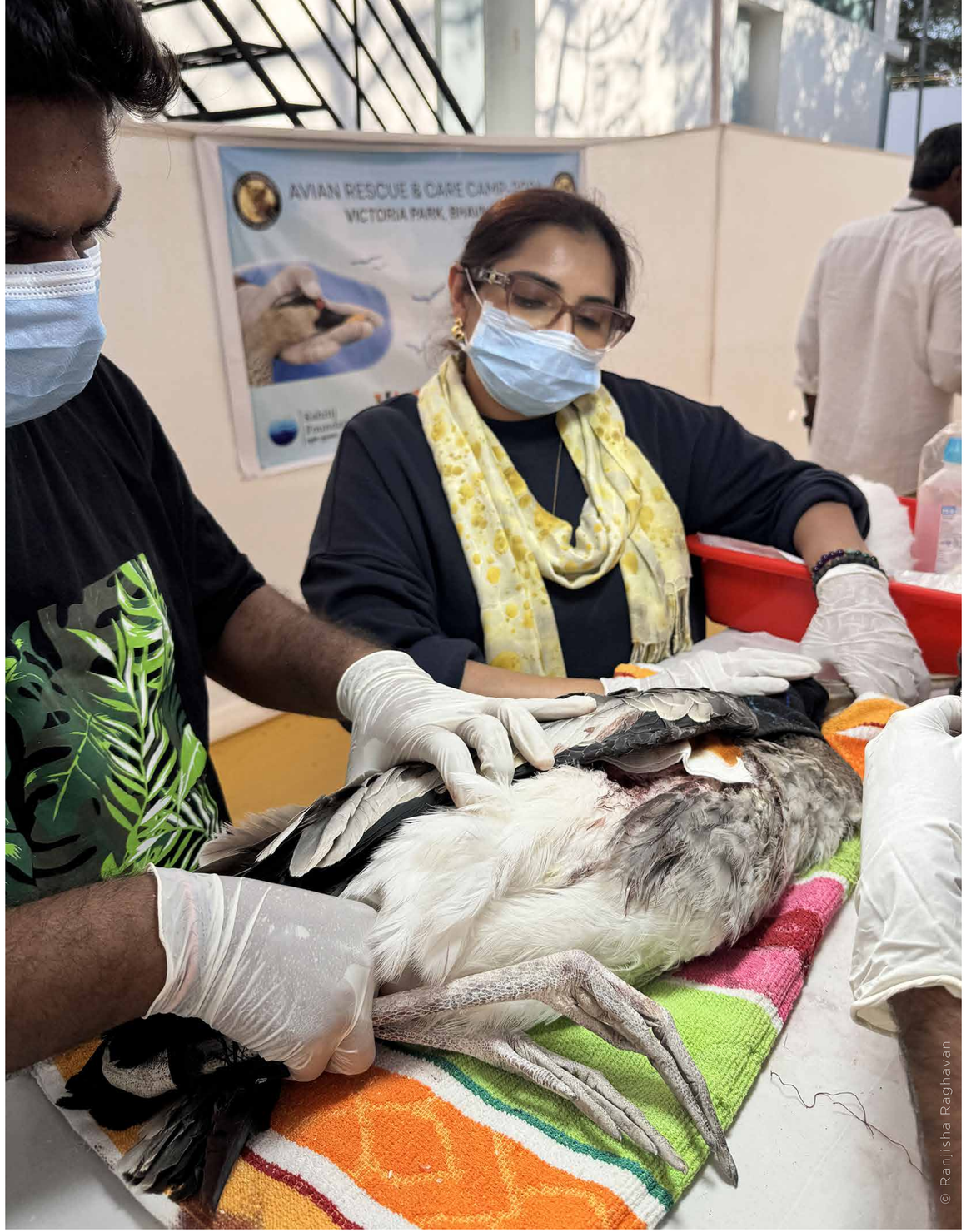
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© Ranjisha Raghavan



Ranjisha Raghavan

encouraging conversations, building awareness, and fostering a deeper connection to the natural world. It also supports community-based programs, including awareness-building in forest regions, human-animal conflict mitigation, and the exploration of alternative livelihoods for local communities.

In this way, her work continues long after the painting is complete.

It travels. It speaks. It connects.

Ranjisha's artistic journey is also a reminder that paths do not always follow a straight line. Coming from a non-traditional background, largely self-taught, she has shaped her own voice through experience, observation, and persistence. Her work is not confined by formal boundaries, it is guided by purpose.

And that purpose is clear. Her mission is to create art that builds awareness, sparks empathy, and transforms endangered species into stories people choose to protect. Her vision goes even further, towards a world where collecting art becomes an act of responsibility, where beauty and impact coexist on the same canvas.

In a time when images are consumed quickly and forgotten even faster, her work asks for something different. It asks for time. For attention. For thought.

It asks us to slow down.

To look beyond the surface.



© Ramisha Raghavan



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YOUR GALLERY

WHERE EVERY FRAME TELLS A WILD STORY

EDITION 51

WITNESS.
INSPIRE.
CONSERVE.



YOUR GALLERY

Shivajyoti
Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*)
Lake Nakuru, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

Tom Bretschneider

Blotcheye Soldierfish *(Myripristis berndti)*

Safaga, Egypt



YOUR GALLERY

Peter Hudson
Erimine *(Mustela erminea)*
Finland



YOUR GALLERY

P1 EXPLORERS

Amit Krish

Arabian Oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*)

Al Qudra, United Arab Emirates



YOUR GALLERY

Dr KM Anand
Lynx Spider (*Oxyopidae*)
Agumbe, India



YOUR GALLERY

Cynthia Bandurek
Rufous-eyed Stream Frog (*Duellmanohyla rufioculis*)
Costa Rica



YOUR GALLERY

Deepa Girish
Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

Gustavo Costa
Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)
Pantanal, Brazil



YOUR GALLERY

Hermis Haridas

Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) and Bharal (*Pseudois nayaur*)

Spiti valley, India



YOUR GALLERY

Dr KM Anand
Chital (*Axis axis*)
Bharatpur, India



YOUR GALLERY

Tom Bretschneider
Common Ghost Goby (*Pleurosicya mossambica*)
Safaga, Egypt



YOUR GALLERY

Munib Chaudry
Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

Prasanth Tatineni

Giraffe (*Giraffa*)

Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

Senaka S. Kotagama
African Savanna Elephants (*Loxodonta africana*)
Tsavo National Park, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

Amit Krish
Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

EXPLORERS

Cynthia Bandurek
Jumping Spider (*Salticidae*)
Costa Rica



YOUR GALLERY

PT EXPLORERS

Gustavo Costa

Manatees (*Trichechus*)

Crystal River, Florida, USA



YOUR GALLERY

Hermis Haridas
Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*)
Kurile Lake, Russia



YOUR GALLERY

Munib Chaudry
Secretarybird (*Sagittarius serpentarius*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

Peter Hudson
Tiger *(Panthera tigris)*
India



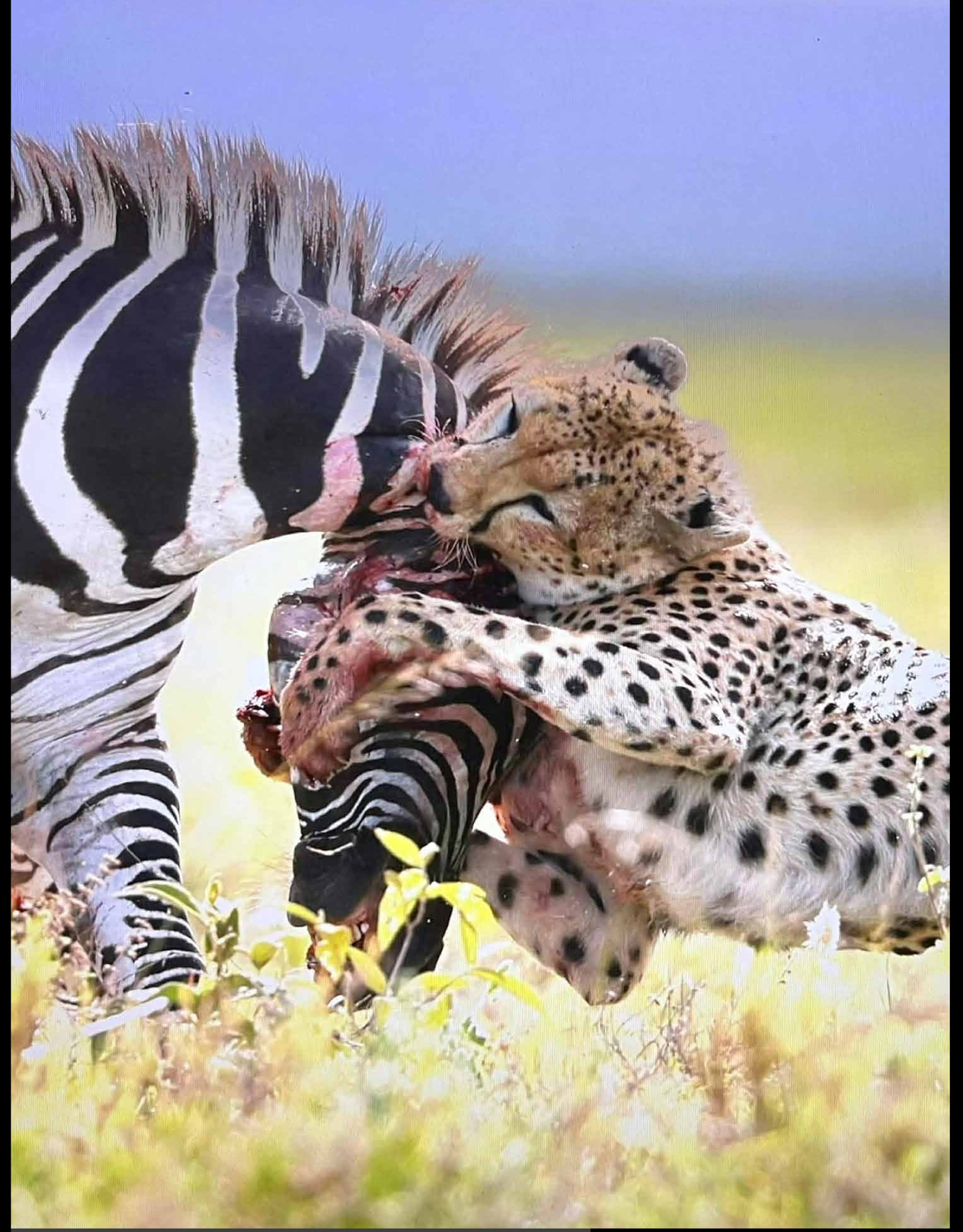
YOUR GALLERY

Deepa Girish
Western Reef Heron (*Egretta gularis*)
Salalah, Oman



YOUR GALLERY

Prasanth Tatineni
Lion (*Panthera leo*)
Masai Mara, Kenya



YOUR GALLERY

Senaka S. Kotagama
Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
Serengeti National Park, Tanzania



YOUR GALLERY

Shivajyoti
Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)
Mangalajodi Bird Sanctuary, India

EXPLORERS

UPCOMING FEATURES



INTO TO THE WILD

WITH **THOMAS BRETSCHNEIDER**



HER VIEWS & VISUALS

By Alicia Luna



THE BLACK MAGIC OF GOLDEN EYES

By Nisha Purushothaman