

Issue 3 2021

# The Wild Lens

magazine for photographers

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Green

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Lori  
Lundin

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Ranjan  
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David  
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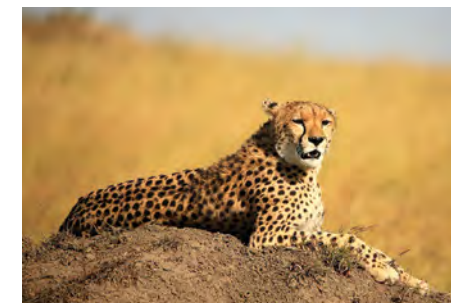
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## Publisher's Note



There are now just two northern white rhinoceros remaining in the world. Najin and Fatu (both female) live under constant protection from poachers in Kenya's Ol Pejeta Conservancy. Sudan (the last remaining male) died, effectively rendering the entire subspecies extinct. The northern white rhino was once abundant across central Africa but staggering rates of illegal hunting for its horn have already led to its extinction in the wild. That's why wildlife photos have become so crucial. They may be the last remaining remnants we have of vanishing species.

The documentary, "A Life on Our Planet", produced by David Attenborough (look for a feature about him next issue), opens with its title plot set in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, a place utterly destroyed and scarred by humans. Over time, the area has become bustling with wildlife. We have to hope that the species of the planet will be able to balance back to an equilibrium that allows humans and animals to both survive and prosper.

In this issue, look for the voting results of The New Big 5, Graeme Green's movement to change the famous five of hunting to the new five of wildlife conservation featuring stunning wildlife photos by renowned photographers. Regular contributor Ranjan Ramchandani presents an informative article about IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and David Roberts presents a beautiful story and portfolio about the legendary cheetah, Malaika. Lori Lundin gives a fun look at ethical eating and dating during modern times. As our globe continues to open up, consider wildlife photography trips that help support conservation and awareness on our planet.

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# IUCN

## *International Union for Conservation of Nature*

BY RANJAN RANCHAMDANI

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is an organization comprised of over 1,400 members in over 170 countries. They are widely recognized as the authority on the position and forecast of nature and wildlife internationally. The IUCN produces and periodically updates a Red List of Threatened Species, which informs citizens globally on the status of endangerment of over 130,000 species of animals and plants. They are each evaluated and placed on a scale of “least concern” to “extinct”, with categories such as “near threatened” and “critically endangered” littering the path between the extremes, and some species lacking enough data to place them effectively.

As photographers, we have the unique ability to transport viewers, through our art, to places they might have never been before. An image can take someone to the peak of a mountain or the depths of a cave without them physically moving an inch. With such a powerful tool in our hands, the IUCN Red List is an extremely pertinent resource.

Northern Right Whale | WILDEST ANIMALS, INC.



*Snow leopard* | MORUP NAMGAIL

The IUCN began in 1964 and has remained an imperative tool for all those who are connected to wildlife – from conservationists to photographers around the globe. In addition to serving as a status indicator, the list provides invaluable insight into the range, ecology, population size, threats and many other species statistics. The list further informs conservation decisions with the five groups

it assesses: birds, mammals, amphibians, corals and cypads. The IUCN is thorough in their research, often reassessing the statuses of various species to provide the most up-to-date and accurate information possible. These creatures may move down or up the list due to conservation efforts or a lack thereof, however one trend is blatantly clear: biodiversity as a whole, on Earth, is declining.

Over 35,000 species are currently threatened with extinction. Amongst these are the African forest elephant, the North Atlantic right whale, and Madame Berthe's mouse lemur. Though not every species categorized as critically endangered is a household name, each flora or fauna presents a unique facet of our planet that we would be infinitely less rich without. Experts estimate that the loss of species we currently experience is thousands of times the natural extinction rate (the rate of species extinction that would exist without human interference or existence).

The crisis sounds daunting, and while systematic, large-scale change will be necessary to halt the detrimental effect humans are having on our planet, small-scale change can be extremely effective.

The IUCN Red List is the foremost authority on the landscape of biodiversity internationally.

It is used by researchers, policymakers, students, teachers and artists alike. And this is what matters and what ultimately makes the difference: how we



*Madame Berthe's mouse lemur* | DENNIS VAN DE WATER

use the information they so thoroughly gather and compile. The list is accessible and revealing. Our muse, the wild, is in danger – if we don't act now, we might NEVER have the opportunity to act again.



*African forest elephant* | COSTAS ANTON DUMITRESCU



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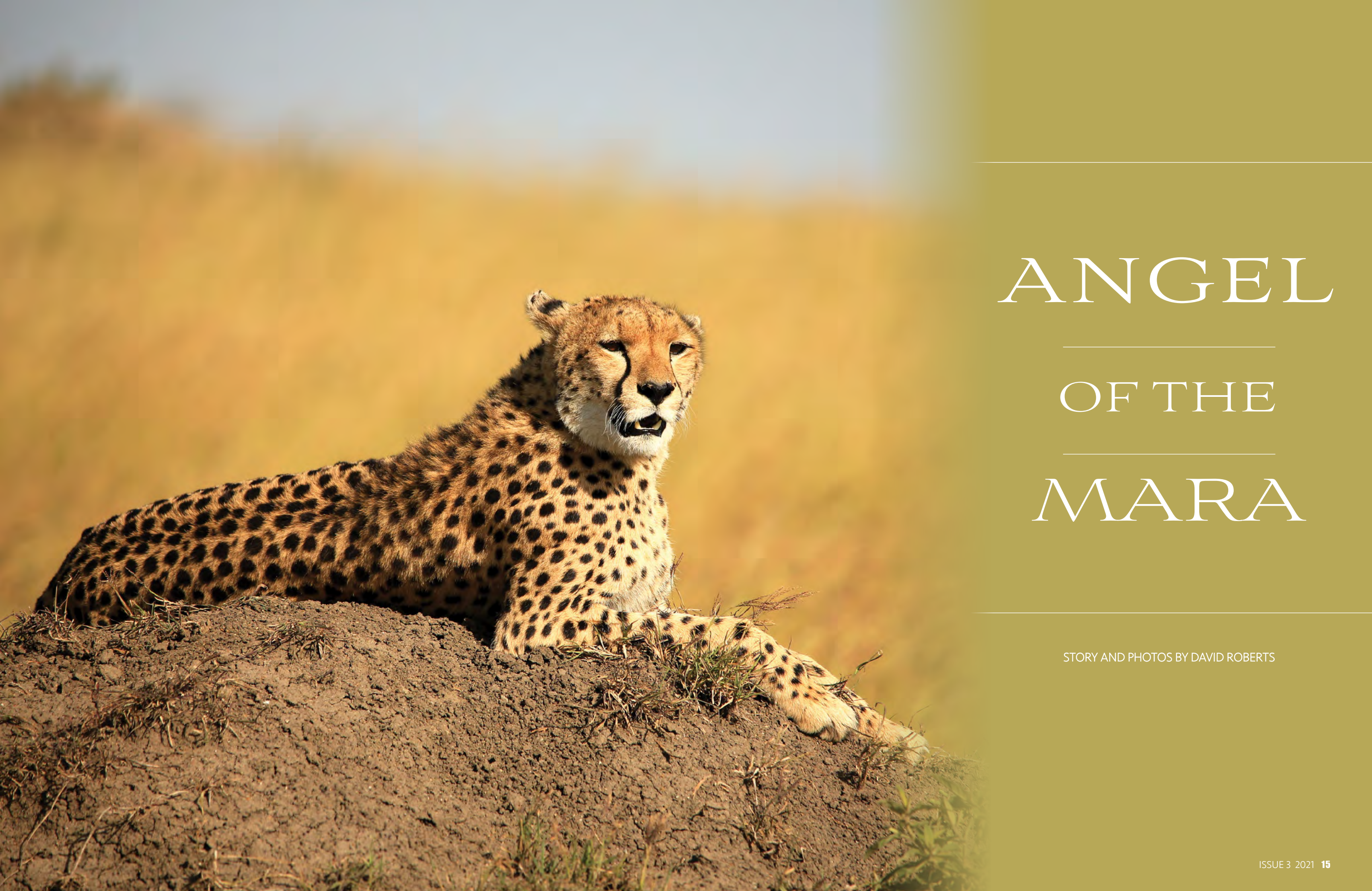


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ANGEL  
OF THE  
MARA

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVID ROBERTS

*For several years, I have followed and documented the life of one of the Masai Mara's most famous cheetahs, she was named Malaika, or "Angel" in Swahili.*

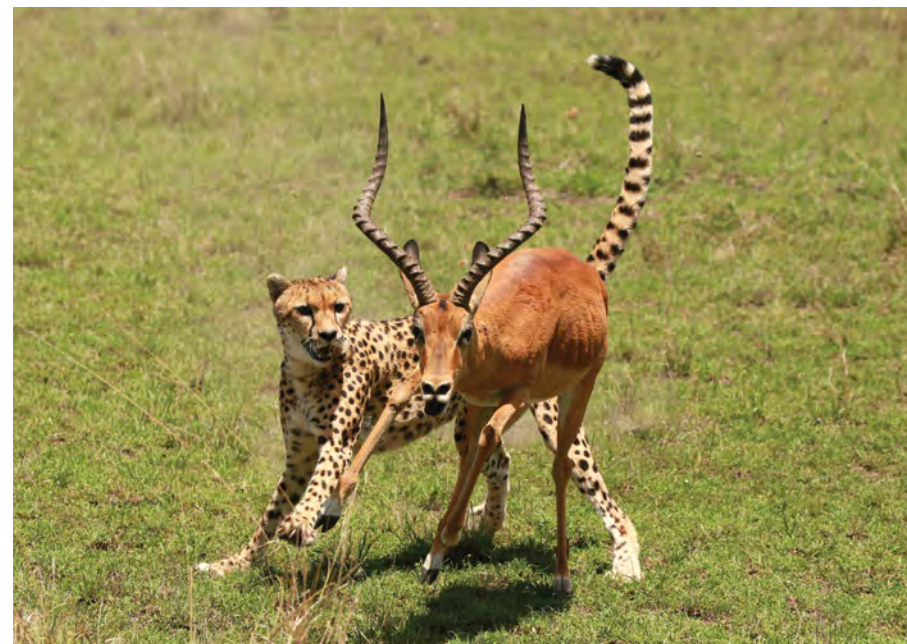
Though natural attrition claims the lives of lots of young cheetahs, Malaika had been successful in rearing many offspring. My first sighting of her was late in the afternoon of one of my first game drives. My driver, Simon, had spotted her lying on a termite mound. As we approached her, I noticed that she was looking rather bedraggled and old. Such



was my naivety during those early days of safari. She was less than two years old. Simon explained that her current condition was because she had been involved in a big chase. Even at this early age, she was earning a reputation for possessing terrific stamina and tenacity, often running on for several hundreds of metres. On this day, she had failed and was recouping her energy. Approximately 30% of cheetah chases are successful and of those, the hard-earned carcass will often be stolen by other predators such as lions or hyenas. Even before I experienced a

kill, this particular cheetah was becoming an obsession to me.

Every time I visited the Mara, I would ask Simon about Malaika. He knew that my main objective was to see her and hopefully see her hunt successfully. Many times I had observed, from a safe distance, her techniques and strategies leading up to a chase, but every time she failed at the last moment. I was beginning to think I was a



jinx to her. This was not the case as she was now

in prime health and looking fantastic. After three years, my dream came true. Malaika took down a Thompson's gazelle fawn. In true expert fashion, she released the fawn in front of her three cubs to let them finish off the chase. This is a common practice amongst cheetahs and though the result was a foregone conclusion to the detriment of the fawn, it was a great learning experience for the cubs. From that day on, I witnessed several kills by Malaika. Maybe my ever-increasing knowledge of her habits and thought processes was paying off.

This story is about one of her very last chases. We had followed her for several days without her making a kill so we were expecting her to hunt very soon. At the time, she had two sub-adult cubs who constantly impeded her chances of success with their playful antics. Simon noticed a change in Malaika's demeanor. She was walking slowly through the tall red oat grass, her head bowed down low beneath the line of her shoulders and the cubs were nowhere to be seen; this time she was serious. Malaika had ordered the cubs to stay and was stalking on her own, a sure sign that a hunt was imminent.

A large herd of impala grazed approximately one kilometre

totally oblivious of her presence. By the time he realised she was there, Malaika was airborne, achieving her top speed of around 70 kph within three strides and the chase was on. After what seemed like several heart-stopping minutes, a long time in a cheetah chase, Malaika tripped her target but this was not the end. The strong impala was not going to give up easily. Both animals were tiring rapidly and it seemed almost certain that the ungulate would escape this encounter, as Malaika began to weaken further and lose her control. It was then that the two cubs arrived, the backup that Malaika so desperately needed to finish this monumental battle. Between them, this amazing cheetah family had performed one of the



away. Simon was certain that Malaika had seen them and that they were her target. Within the herd was a huge male, just the sort of animal that our "angel" loved to hunt. It was time for us to make a move. Simon drove our vehicle to a place on the other side of the impalas. By this time, I had lost track of the cat completely but Simon knew exactly where she would show. My excitement was becoming uncontrollable as Simon uttered the words "camera.....ready". This meant she was ready to make her move. Through steamy binoculars, I caught a glimpse of grass moving some 100 metres away. It was her. Miraculously, she had closed the gap between her and the male impala down to around 30 meters, he was still

most spectacular events of nature that anyone could wish to witness. This was a chase like I had never seen before. Both animals were hurtling straight towards me, or in cinematographic terms, "straight down the barrel". It was a photographic opportunity that, in the past, I had only dreamed of and now it was there. Luckily, my composure held and my equipment did its job.

It was soon after my arrival back in England that I received a heart-wrenching email from my camp in the Mara. It was to inform me that Malaika had lost her life taking her cubs across a fast-flowing section of the Talek River. Her cubs survived and are regularly seen on the Mara to this day.



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# THE NEW BIG 5

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GURCHARAN ROOPRA

DAISY GILARDINI

NELIS WOLMARANS

STEVE WINTER

TOM SVENSSON

GRAEME GREEN

VLADIMIR CECH

DAVID LLOYD

MARCUS WESTBERG

MARSEL VAN OOSTEN

RAMAKRISHNAN AIYASWAMY

ANETTE MOSSBACHER

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STORY

GRAEME GREEN

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# ELEPHANTS *polar bears* GORILLAS *tigers* LIONS

The “Big 5” is an old hunting term for the five most prized and dangerous animals in Africa for colonial-era hunters to shoot and kill: elephant, rhino, leopard, Cape buffalo, and lion. There’s a better idea: to celebrate the remarkable animals we share the planet with via photography. That’s why I launched an international initiative in April 2020 to create a new ‘Big 5’ of wildlife photography, rather than hunting. Shooting with a camera, not a gun.

People around the world were invited to vote at the New Big 5 website (<https://www.newbig5.com/>) for their five favourite animals to photograph or see in photos. A diverse group of more than 200 international photographers, conservationists, and global wildlife charities came together to support the project, including Jane Goodall, Marsel van Oosten, Ami Vitale, Art Wolfe, Steve Winter, Marina Cano, Pavan Sukhdev (WWF), Nick Brandt, Daisy Gilardini, Gurcharan Roopra, Xi Zhinong, Thomas Mangelsen, Kaddu Sebunya (AWF), Clement Kiragu, Shaaz Jung, Brent Stirton, Joel Sartore, Suzi Eszterhas, Usha Harish, Save The Elephants, Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, Conservation International, Ewaso Lions, Polar Bears International, IFAW, Orangutan Foundation, Conservation Through Public Health and Save The Rhino International.

“I love the idea of a New Big 5 of wildlife photography,” says Dr. Paula Kahumbu, CEO of Wildlife Direct. “The original Big 5 were the most prized trophies of the big game hunters in Africa. Now, we have the opportunity to respect wildlife for reasons other than as targets of our cruel games and atone for our violence by pouring love, admiration, and respect into a new understanding of a Big 5.”

The project aims to use the New Big 5 concept to get people thinking and talking about wildlife and the threats they

face. The world’s wildlife is in crisis. As a photographer and journalist, I’ve seen many of the problems that are causing declines in wildlife populations. I wanted to use this project and the website we created to raise awareness about issues



DAISY GILARDIN

like habitat loss, the illegal wildlife trade and climate change.

It’s been incredible during the last long, dark, difficult year of the Covid pandemic to see wildlife lovers around

the world being so enthusiastic about the New Big 5 idea. The results of the year-long global vote have just been announced. The winners are elephants, polar bears, gorillas, tigers, and lions.

The five animals also offer a new bucket list for travelers, wildlife lovers, and photographers to see and photograph during their lifetimes. Tourism funds many of the world’s

conservation projects. The five animals in the New Big 5 can be found in a wide range of countries across Africa, as well as Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Photographic tourism is booming, and it’s a much better way to celebrate wildlife than posing

next to a carcass. The New Big 5 encourages travellers to visit the countries where the five species reside, to support conservation efforts, and to learn about all of the wildlife in those regions and the threats they face.

During the struggles of a pandemic year, we’ve worked to shine a light on conservation success stories and solutions, from new technologies to community projects to re-wilding. As Jon Paul Rodríguez, Chair of the IUCN’s Species Survival Commission (SSC), says: “Conservation works. We just need to do more of it.” Although voting is now over, the New Big 5 website will continue to produce articles and interviews on wildlife, photography and conservation.

With the five species now in place, the ultimate message of the New Big 5 project is to protect the existence of all wildlife. Urgent action is needed and change is ultimately possible. “If we frame the narrative that we’re on the path to the end of the world and there’s no turning back, that doesn’t motivate people, and it isn’t true,” says photographer Ami Vitale. “That’s not to pretend things aren’t bad. We’re at a critical point. But, we have to recognise that nature is incredibly resilient. If we work hard, nature can come back. So we all need to use our voices and get actively involved. We all have a role – every single one of us.”

For more on the New Big 5, or podcasts, interviews, articles, photo galleries and a free educational Fun Pack for young people, visit [www.newbig5.com](http://www.newbig5.com). Follow the New Big 5 project on Instagram @newbig5project.



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## MAKING THE CONNECTION

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thoughts on  
dating,  
meat-eating  
and species  
extinction

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BY LORI LUNDIN

It's hard enough being single these days, but it can be even more challenging when you're a vegan with deep convictions. This has been an ongoing dilemma as to whether to reveal this big part of who I am on dating app profiles. Do I eliminate a huge swath of the single male dating pool because they're meat-eaters? Is that even reasonable or realistic as a deal-breaker? If I expected all my friends to be vegan or vegetarian, I'd be very lonely.

I've had to do a lot of reflection on this lately, as these internal questions came front and center regarding a nice guy I met online. He was attractive, a good communicator, and shared my love for traveling to faraway places. I hadn't given much thought, initially, to the food thing. Throughout the weekend, he

sent texts and photos about an eventful wildlife weekend. He shared that a potentially abandoned fawn had shown up on his doorstep and a newborn baby bird had fallen from its nest. He was contemplating whether to leave the fawn alone or get supplies and bottle feed. He had gently placed the baby chick back in the nest. The young fawn, unfortunately, did not make it, which broke his heart. His compassion for these little ones melted mine.

The next weekend, this same prospective partner went camping with a bunch of other guys. He again texted photos. This time, he had captured shots of wildflowers, a scenic lake, and meat. He didn't yet know that I'm vegan when he sent a picture of steaks on the grill.



Bowerbird mating ritual | Graeme Guy

In my 20-plus years of eating a plant-based diet, I have never been a missionary. Yet I couldn't help but see a disconnect that I'm sure was not apparent to him. Still, it was glaring to me.

My friends pointed out that he was just doing what people do: sharing highlights of his weekend. I knew if I said something that I would appear to be some radical granola-eating hippie chick. Granola-eating hippie chick, yes. Radical, not so much. The facts can't be ignored. Species are disappearing. Humanity's desire for meat is playing a starring role in this true-life tragedy.

A 2019 UN report, "*Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented'; Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating'*", notes that up to a million species are at risk of disappearing. Unsustainable animal farming practices are a driving force. The animal agriculture industry is gobbling up forests and landmass and destroying the world's most species-rich habitats and ecosystems. It is also a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, while agricultural runoff is creating ocean dead zones.

Life on planet earth has been a miraculous creation of interconnectivity. But things are dangerously off-kilter. Factory farms and clear cutting rainforests were never in mother nature's plan. Some researchers say the Amazon could be destroyed in our lifetime.

In a February 2021 report from international think tank Chatham House, "*Food System Impacts on Biodiversity*" explains that its research, supported by the UN, "...explores the role of the global food system as the principal driver of accelerating biodiversity loss."

Ten years ago, not many of us could have imagined that major world powers would be making serious plans to transition to electric vehicles. Twenty years ago, it was hard to find soy milk in the grocery store. Now, there are endless meat and dairy substitutes that are not just tolerable, but tasty alternatives.

The meat industry is only as big as demand. We can make a difference in protecting the irreplaceable miracles of nature. Here's to making the connection. To our planet and to each other.



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