

Issue 1 2019

# The wild lens

magazine for photographers

Wild Tigers  
in INDIA

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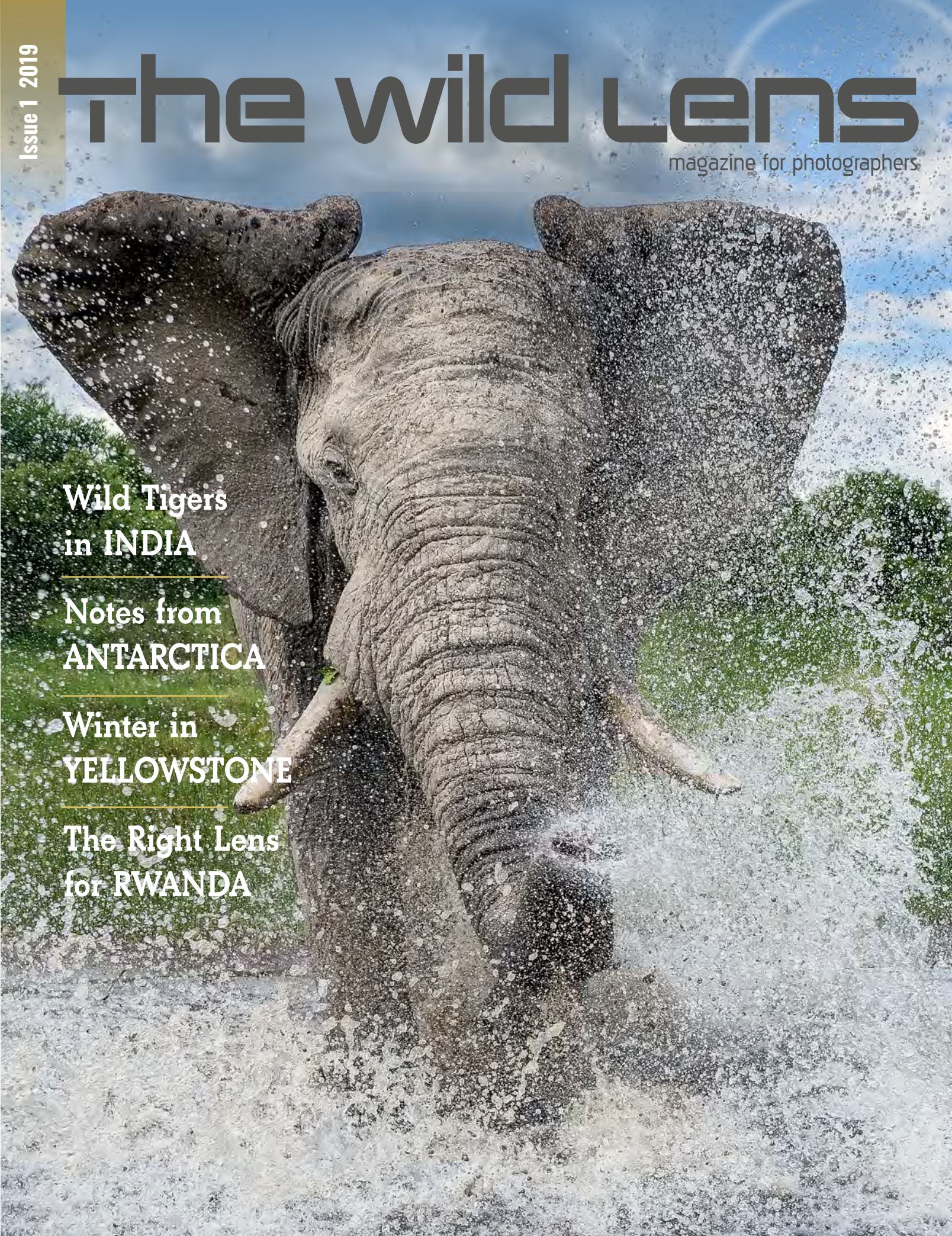
Notes from  
ANTARCTICA

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Winter in  
YELLOWSTONE

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The Right Lens  
for RWANDA



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## **Publisher's Note**



The beauty and grace of animals in their environment is a privilege to observe and photograph. After my first wildlife journey to East Africa in 2005, with a borrowed camera and lens, an interest in wildlife began to grow into a life-choice; to see and photograph as many species as possible while they still remain on our precious planet.

During my travels, I have had the fortune of meeting other wildlife and photography “nuts” who have modified their lives in order to pursue their passion of witnessing and photographing wildlife in wild environments, with the added pursuit of perfecting their photographic art. Many have changed their schedules to work less and photograph more; sometimes at great expense and lifestyle modification. But, I am sure all would agree that the sacrifices made on this journey were well worth it.

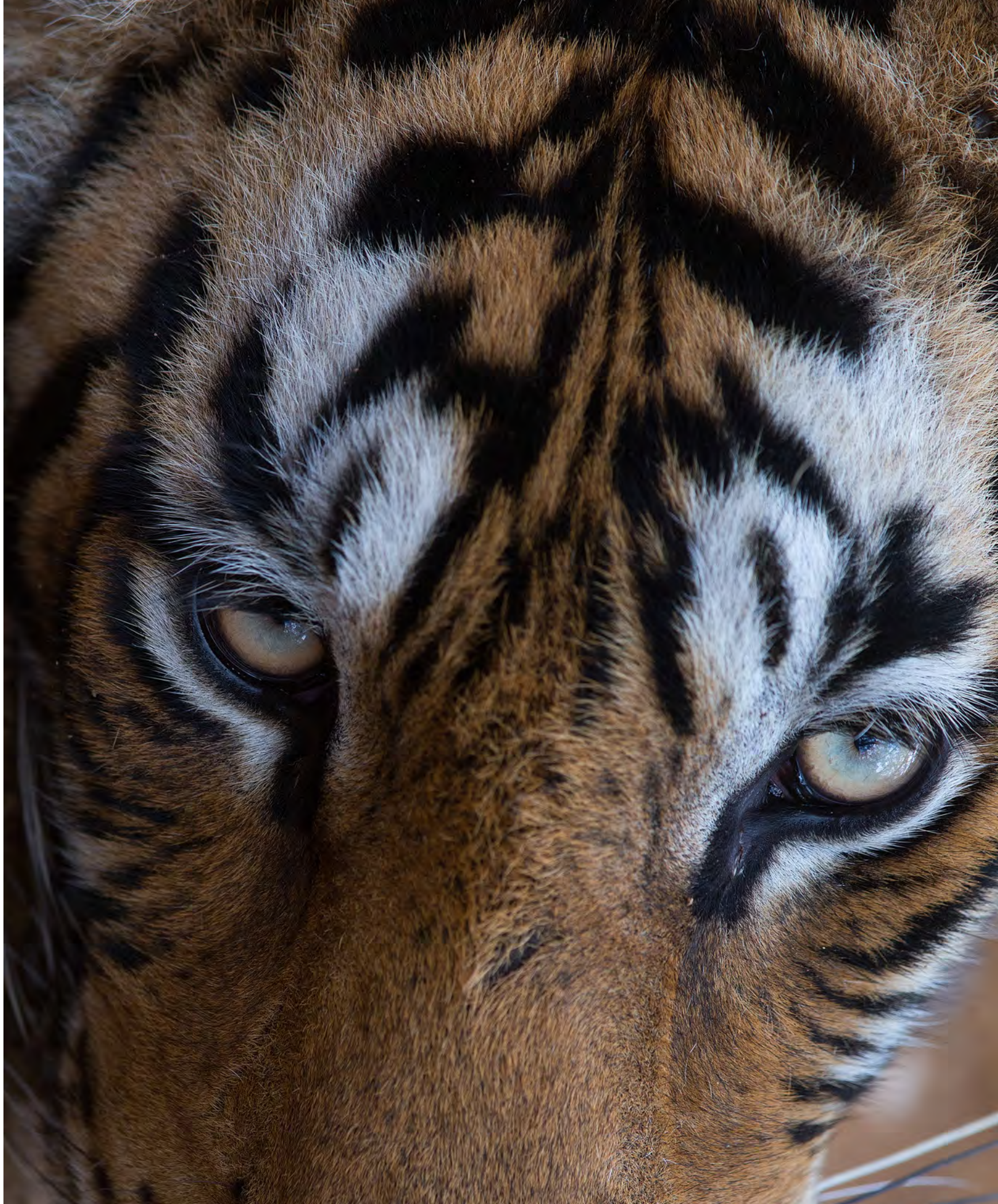
Please enjoy the premier issue of *The Wild Lens*, filled with stunning photos of wildlife taken by talented photographers from all over the planet. It's amazing how the beauty of animals in their environment can unify people from very different cultures, all sharing a common bond of capturing a moment in natural history.

Michelle Liles  
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**Wild  
Tigers  
In  
India**

Photo by Ben Cranke



# Photographing Wild Tigers in India's National Parks

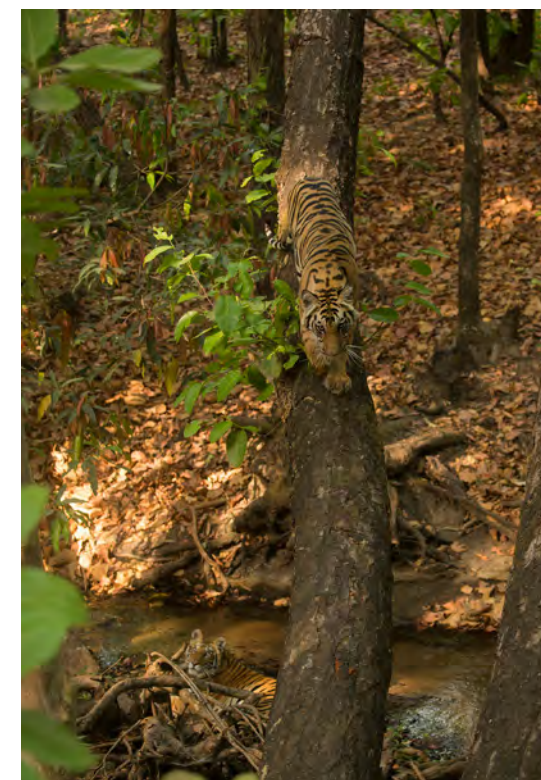
by Shivang Mehta

India is a land of 16 of the global cat species and tigers are which are the brand ambassadors of Indian wildlife. For decades, Indian national parks like Bandhavgarh and Ranthambore have been “hotspots” for tiger photography. Geographically, tigers are fairly well spread across Indian forests and every forest has a unique habitat of its own. This diversity is what makes tiger photography so interesting. India includes grasslands, dense woods, rainforests, mangroves and both dry and deciduous forests. With so many tiger parks available, how does one nail down a particular forest for photographing the striped wonders of India? Is going to globally popular places like Ranthambore and Bandhavgarh a safe bet?

Most Indian national parks are open from October to June with a three-month monsoon break. Tiger dynamics in Indian national parks change year-after-year. There are phases when a national park has multiple breeding females and, at times, cubs separate from mothers, territories are unsettled and all you get is singular tigers for a majority of the season. From a photographic standpoint, the choice of a national park should depend on the presence of cubs and bold mothers in that location. Cubs give you plenty of action to photograph. Females are active and busy hunting frequently in order to feed their young ones. If a location is has got multiple set of cubs, planning your safari becomes easier and productivity is even higher. Hence, it is highly recommended to work with a good ground operator in India who understands the tiger dynamics of various parks and can give you the correct advice on the choice of a national park for photographing wild tigers.

If one looks beyond Ranthambore and Bandhavgarh, there are locations in central India like Tado-

ba and Pench which have seen an exponential growth in tiger sightings over the years. Tadoba is primarily a bamboo forest and the park hit the tiger limelight during the 2010–2013 period, when there were as many as three to four females raising cubs, giving the opportunity for photographers and tiger lovers to witness some superlative natural history moments. Pench, also known as the Mowgli Land (as the forest was an inspiration for Rudyard Kipling for his *Jungle Book*) “hogged the limelight” post the BBC film, *Spy in the Jungle*. Currently, Pench is home to one of India's most successful female, Collarwali, who has a Guinness Record of raising the maximum cubs as a wild tiger. Up north, India's oldest national park, Corbett National Park, offers a unique landscape at the foothills of the Himalayas.



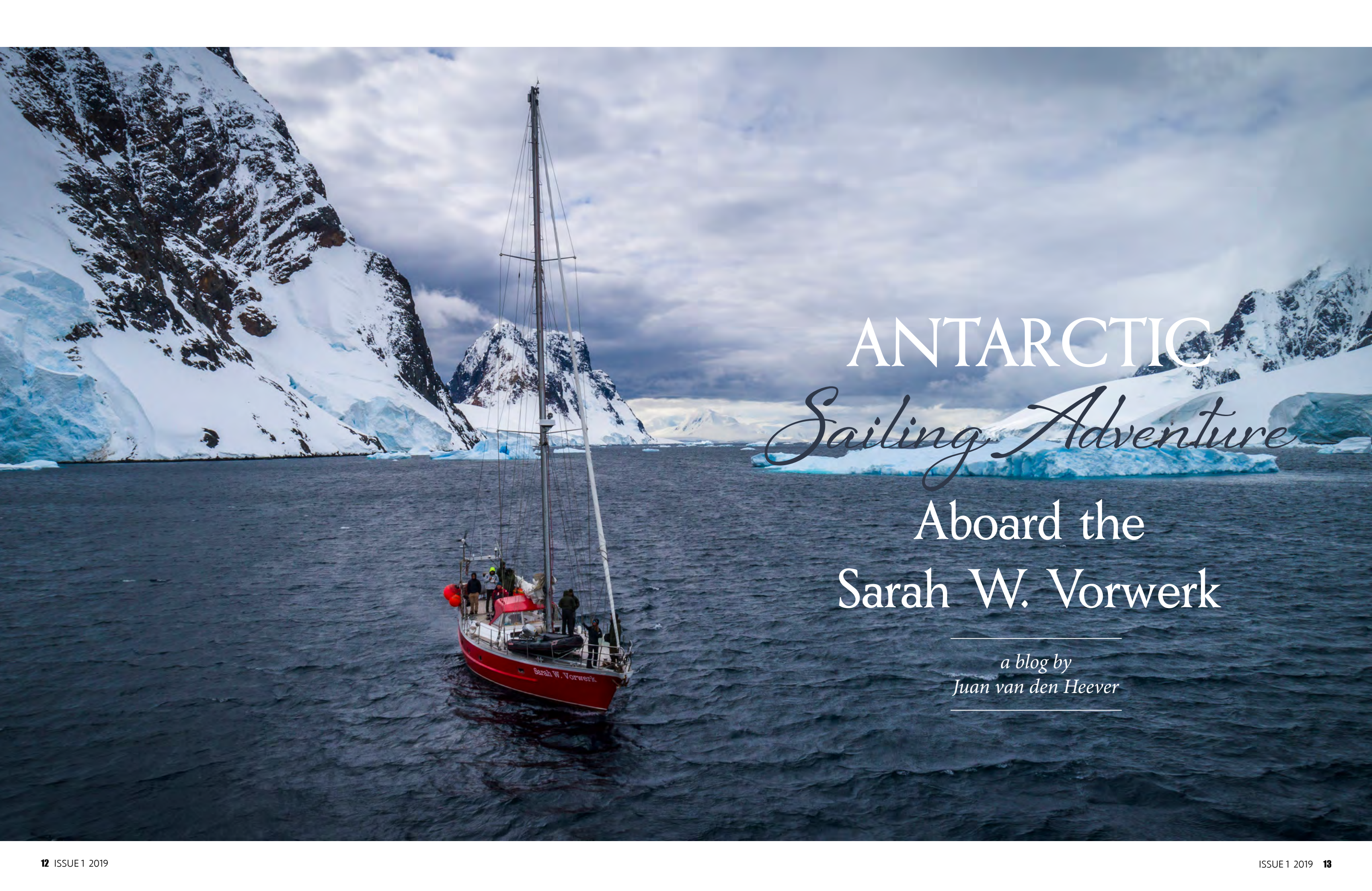
PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHIVANG MEHTA



It is one of the few places in the world where you can dream to photograph a wild tiger crossing a mountain river, Himalayan foothills in the backdrop.

So, the next time you plan a trip to India for photographing wild tigers, do your research on the changing dynamics in the world of tigers and choose a destination which will give you maximum returns and a punch to your tiger portfolio.





ANTARCTIC  
*Sailing Adventure*  
Aboard the  
Sarah W. Vorwerk

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*a blog by*  
*Juan van den Heever*

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**Juan van den Heever**, a South Africa native, is studying Biological Sciences at the University of Pretoria and plans to be a veterinarian. Juan was a cook and deckhand aboard the 54-foot sailboat Sarah Vooerk bound for Antarctica with eight other passengers, a solo-sailing Dutch skipper and a dead sheep. During the three-week journey Juan, an ardent birder, experienced once-in-a-lifetime wildlife encounters and celebrated his 18th birthday. Following is his journal of the long sailing days and nights aboard the Sarah.

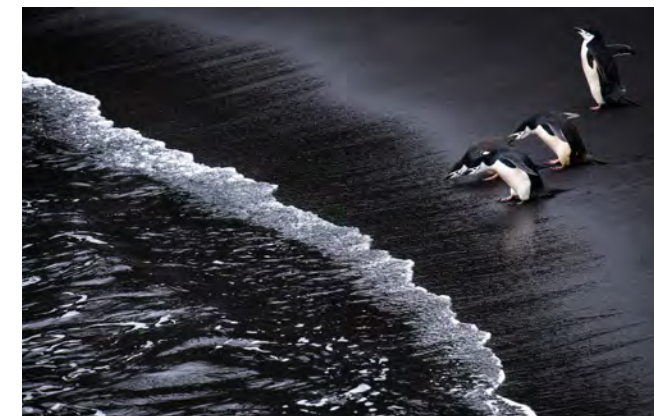
PHOTOS COURTESY OF:  
NELLIE TROMP, DEWALD TROMP AND SEAN VILJOEN



### Antarctica..wow, where to begin?

The day I've been counting down for over 200 days! The day we board our little 54 ft (16m) sailing yacht, the Sarah W. Vorwerk, to sail to the biggest desert in the world, Antarctica.

After a mad scramble to pack a tiny cabin and cook lunch, we entered the Beagle Channel. Penguins, kelp geese, skuas, thousands of shags and (a personal highlight) a little Magellanic diving petrel escorted us to the...gulp... Drake Passage. This little 1000-kilometer stretch of rollercoaster ocean wasn't really something we looked forward to, but thank goodness for sea sickness meds.



Excitement rose faster than the temperature was dropping! After launching the dingy, dressed for our first landing, we set off for Baily Head, a breathtaking sheer cliff-face forming a weather barrier for a stunning black sand beach dotted with thousands of little chinstraps. Whoohoo!!

**Like a kid in a candy store** armed with a camera, I ran around photographing these super cute penguins for hours. Slow shutter, fast shutter, flash, no flash, wide angle, long lens, camera trap, swimming, displaying, running, fighting, mating, entering water, exiting water, everything. And then something amazing happened...

### Drugged up, we entered the Drake

where, just after midnight, I awoke face-down looking out of my porthole which was submerged. Yes, life at 30-40° angle is interesting. And so is the birding! Albatrosses, wanderers, hundreds of prions (mostly slender-billed and Antarctic) and petrels made up the highlights of days one and two on the Drake. Day three became a lot more interesting...icebergs.

Introducing "ice-watch", an activity which forces you to rapidly identify chunks of ice bigger than your average house in between seemingly identical whitecaps that are formed by a constant 70-100 km/hour wind in pouring rain, snow and mist and freezing temperatures... or you and eight other people die... No pressure :-). The birding kept producing, however, and on our last morning on the Drake, whilst ice-watching with my dad, a mini-miracle happened when a personal top-five bird gracefully flew past... a snow petrel.

LAND!!! Our first signs of something other than sea and, well, more sea. We were approaching Deception Island, a famous whaling station/caldera/volcano, and home to the largest chinstrap penguin colony in the world.

A leopard seal appeared and started hunting chinstraps. Watching this rather huge animal moving with such agility that it can successfully hunt penguins underwater was an experience I'll never forget. A huge storm rolled in and the ocean became angry. Seeing our little dingy barely afloat as it came to collect us was rather nerve-wracking, as was the growing swell, torrential downpour, 135 km wind and the leopard seal following us. After nearly dying (no exaggeration), we haunched back to a more sheltered subcaldera inside Deception Island and waited for the storm to pass.



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## The following morning

we set out to explore Hannah Point on neighboring Livingston Island. It is home to a large gentoo penguin and southern giant petrel nesting colony, as well as a group of elephant seals and one of very few macaroni penguin nests in Antarctica.

We spent hours photographing the amazing scenery. Almost being bitten by an elephant seal, successfully being bitten by giant petrels (impressively strong, even through a 2cm thick boot), chasing thieving sheathbills away from my memory cards and nearly falling off a 60 meter cliff made memories to last a lifetime!

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## We spent the next four days

on this beautiful island photographing gentoo, chinstrap and Adélie penguins in every way imaginable. And just taking in the breathtaking place that is Antarctica.

The next day we disembarked to head further south to a place I fell in love with instantly, Paradise Bay. Gigantic mountains surrounding you, a few icebergs floating around from the glacier running down a valley between two peaks. After hundreds of photos and memories to last forever, we hunkered down for the night.

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the channel. After scrambling to get the drone in the air we filmed them until we suddenly saw them dive. Then, a whole sheet of impenetrable ice started appearing on the screen. Half of the channel was blocked up by ice. We ended up having to backtrack and go around the channel's surrounding islands, dodging some of the biggest icebergs I've ever seen, over 100 meters high and kilometers wide, with me having to play captain for a while—fun but stressful.

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## We threw anchor in Charcot Bay and decided to prepare the sheep

we brought along. Yes, we “brought” a sheep, tied to the back of the boat. Baaaaaasil, as he was named whilst semi-intoxicated, has been flavored by sea spray, snow and rain all the way from Ushuaia. Turns out he is also very good at luring in seabirds. Best sheep ever!

The next few days we landed on shore and started photographing a rather extensive gentoo colony (dotted here and there with chinstraps and Adélies) as they went about fishing, playing, bathing and just chilling in the water. Setting up camera traps next to their entrance and exit points offered some great close up opportunities of the inquisitive birds.

On our second-to-last morning we woke up to a huge impact on the side of the boat. I looked out of my window and saw a large iceberg towering next to the boat. On closer inspection it became apparent that we were completely (360 degrees) surrounded by ice. Oops. This did, however, bring in another STUNNING snow petrel. Which made everything better. After a few hours we inched our way out and hopped across to the other side of the island without the ice.

It was our last day so we decided to do what all normal people would: build snowmen, make snow angels...and have a polar plunge.



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## Watching a nearby glacier calve

was followed by another successful photographic stint on Bailey Head. A welcome night's rest brought us a new day. We left the South Shetland Islands and headed to the Antarctic Peninsula.

About halfway through the crossing we had a small patch of ice with penguins on it, one of which was a species I've been super excited to see for some time: Adélie. Super small, super cute, super sexy... with a super ugly voice... kind of reminds me of the lilac breasted rollers back home in Africa.

A few hours of “beloved” ice-watch later, we finally reached our destination for the night, Enterprise Bay. Surrounded by towering cliffs, a gigantic glacier and an 1800's shipwreck being used as a roost for Antarctic and Arctic terns made for some unforgettable vistas. We then decided to have gin and tonics... and what better way to chill your drink than with multiple-thousands-years-old glacial ice? Amazing!

The next morning we pulled anchor and set sail for Cuverville Island. Cuverville is a fantastic little island with multiple colonies of gentoo penguins, each a few thousand strong. We had free reign on the island, meaning that we could photograph penguins doing everything from bathing to fighting to climbing mountains and even making more penguins.

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## Next morning, it's my birthday!

Happy days! After champagne, coffee, bacon and eggs and once again taking in the supreme beauty of our location, we took the dingy to a nearby military base called Base Brown. What made this place so special is that this was one of the only places we could set foot on mainland Antarctica. After phoning home, a bit of droning, photographing super tame sheathbills and an intense snowball fight, we departed back to the boat to head south to the Lemaire Channel; a narrow, deep channel between two high mountain ranges, well known for its striking beauty.

Halfway through the channel, we suddenly heard some strange, soft, distant but repetitive sounds... Orcas!! We found Orcas! And what a fantastic birthday present they were! A small pod of seven individuals were heading down



*Whilst lowering the anchor, I heard someone scream* out a bird's name I've wanted

to see for years: CONDOR! Whoohoo! A stunning, gigantic Andean condor hovered in the pumping wind for a few minutes, granting me enough time to grab my camera and take a few record shots. Time to celebrate!

We hopped onto the island for some beers and to explore the beautiful countryside. Bird highlights on the island included Austral parakeets, dark bellied cinclodes, rufous collared sparrows, great grebe (huge!), turkey vultures, neotropic cormorants, chimango caracaras and some blue-and-white swallows. The next morning we woke up in Ushuaia and disembarked, said our (sad) goodbyes and went for our first showers in three weeks—BEST shower of my life!

Antarctica may not be the most accessible, or the cheapest destination to go to. But if you ever find yourself in a position to go, GO! It is a continent like no other. Words fail to explain the sheer beauty and the uncanny ability to take your breath away every single time you open your eyes. What a place! What an amazing, unforgettable place!

*Stripped down to our undies in*

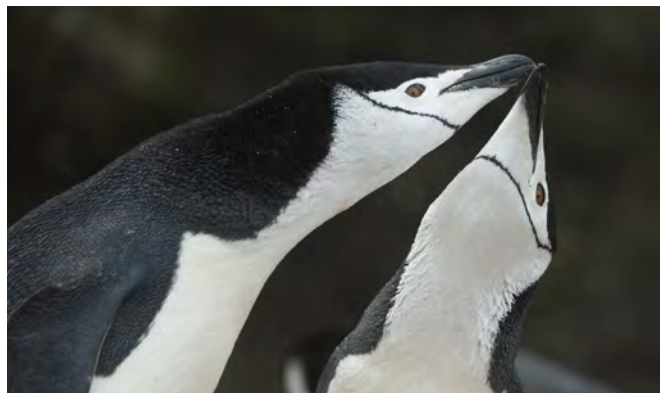
*-50°C weather* with a light breeze to make things worse, into 0.2°C water we went. Eish... Well, we probably scared the hell out of a few gentoos and scarred ourselves for life, but hey, we did it. Bucket-list...tick!

After saying goodbye to terra firma, and the AMAZING, breathtaking, unforgettable place that is Antarctica, we boarded the dingy for the last time. Back on board and after standing in front of the tiny heater outlet for almost an hour, we followed the last mountain range out to open seas. The sun setting through some stunning, wispy clouds, towering cliffs and one of the most beautiful mountain ranges made for some incredible landscape opportunities.

*Off we went then, back into the*

*Drake...* The next four days were spent having 10-15 hour sleeps, binge watching Game Of Thrones, in worse seas than

before (at a constant angle of about 30 to 40°) but still getting bird sightings like prions, albatross and petrels and even some mammals in the forms of hour-glass, dusky and Peale's dolphins and a possible Burmeister's porpoise as we passed Cape Horn and made our way to Estancia Haberton, a small village in the Beagle Channel.



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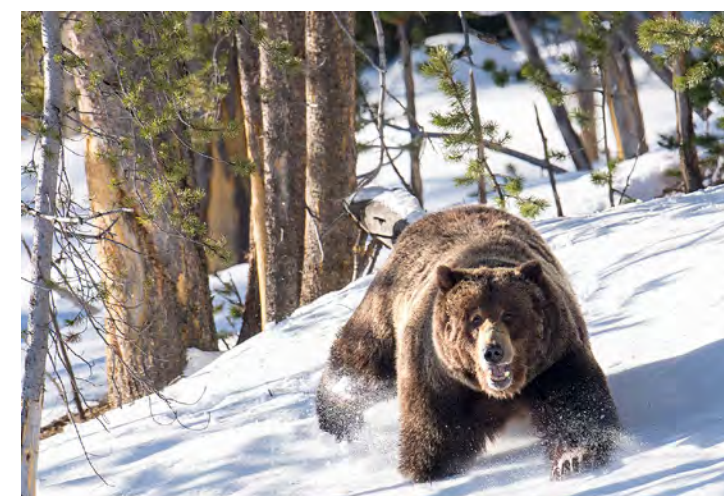
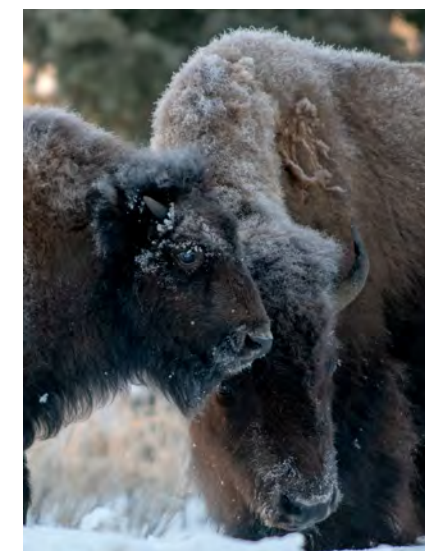
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Deby Dixon photographs

# *Winter* in Yellowstone National Park



# Field Notes

## from a Yellowstone Fox Portfolio

by Vicki Santello



The red fox is one of my favorite animals to photograph in snow. Their orange-red coats contrast against the white canvas and emphasize not only the cold weather environment but also the textures of the fur. They always appear to be on a mission as they move because they seem to be moving purposely to their next destination. This fox was traversing a large field surrounded by snow covered trees. I fell in love with his resplendent tail and delicate markings as he trotted through the snow.

I consider all wildlife viewings privileged moments where the animal needs to be respected and given space as the first priority regardless of a photographer's desire for the perfect shot. This image is a perfect example of how important it is to observe the invisible tolerance zone each animal has.

For many years, this fox dened in a crevice of boulders located in full view from the road at Yellowstone National Park. The fox was tolerant of being viewed from a safe distance and a 400+mm focal length was perfect for capturing his behavior. His territorial habit of returning to the den was so predictable I nicknamed the den site Fox Rock. I enjoyed numerous sightings of this beautiful fox in 2017 when I took this image. I particularly wanted to capture him on the rock face itself before he slipped into the crevice hidden from view. However, in 2018, an overzealous photographer got too close to the den site. According to local sources, the fox has not used the area since. Let this be a strong message to all of us who love wildlife and are passionate about photography: respect the animal first and be a responsible observer so as to not change the behaviour of the animal.



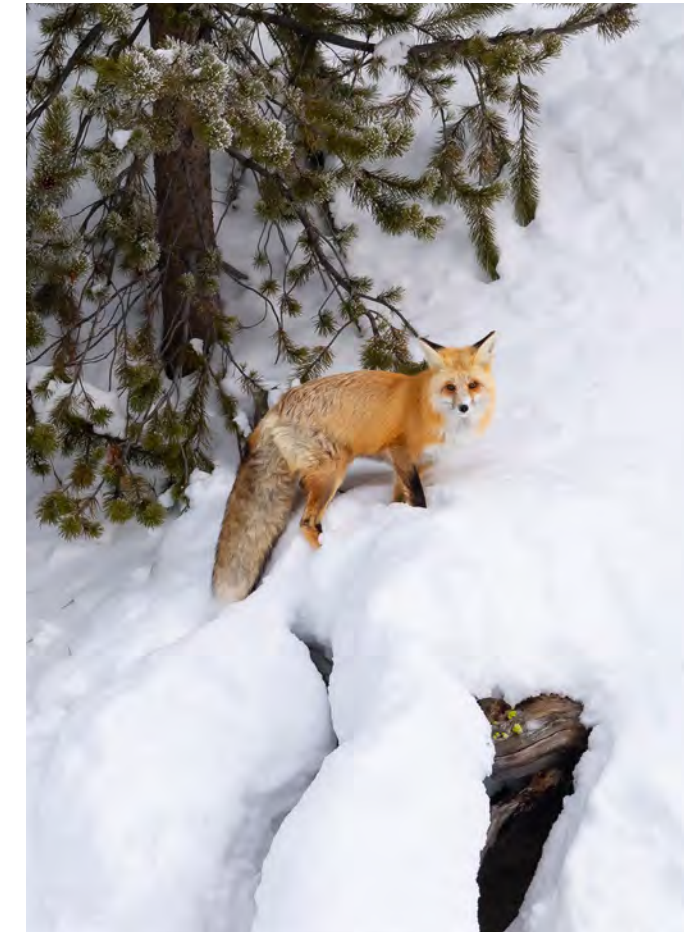
PHOTOS COURTESY OF VICKI SANTELLO



Survival in Yellowstone winters challenges all animals, predators and grazers alike. Finding enough food is the primary challenge but so is navigating in deep snow. The extra effort of walking through snow drifts burns precious calories that animals must replace just at a time when food sources are most scarce. This fox was on the move up and over a steep embankment. I had a real appreciation for how challenging the snow conditions were when he sank midway into the snow and half his body disappeared from view. He slipped on the incline initially but then found his footing and tackled the climb. He really had to pick up his paws to move up and over the snow drifts. His fur made a striking contrast against the white snow and the green pine needles of the tree above him.



Safely over the top! The same fox that struggled up the steep embankment took a moment to pause at the top. It was a fleeting moment that I treasure because his beauty is on full display. He is now on solid ground with his legs and belly well above the snow line in contrast to the prior image. Within seconds he had turned his head away and continued his upward climb to secret places where only fox go.



One of my photography dreams is to capture a red fox mousing and successfully catching its prey. This fox was actively mousing and my hopes to capture my dream images rose as I watched him. He was far in the distance so I knew any images would be environmental even with my 600mm extended to 1200 mm by using a teleconverter. I applauded him when he successfully captured his prey even though his back was turned away. I'll try again on my next visit to Yellowstone!

# Trekking Mountain Gorillas in Rwanda

Which lens is the right lens?



Story and photos by Kurt Jay Bertels

The most frequently asked question from photographers and wildlife enthusiasts alike on my wildlife safaris is: "What equipment should I bring?"

It is often said that the best camera is the one you have in your hand, and when the action is "hot" and you can't reach your other lenses in time, the best camera is the one you actually have in your hand. But, it is so much better when you are properly prepared, and having the gear you need, when you need it.

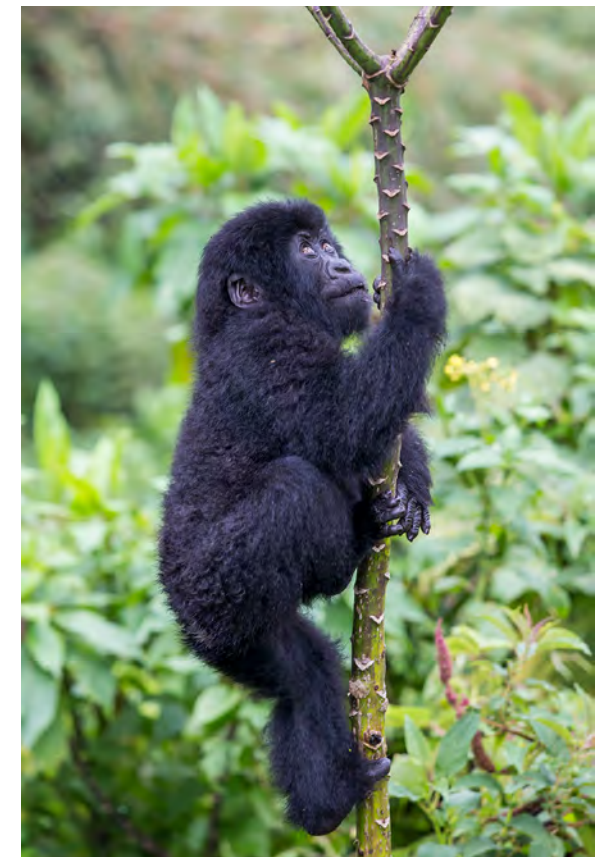
There is no preparation that can quite get you ready for the feeling of standing face-to-face with a majestic silverback mountain gorilla male or his family members. When you find yourself in the presence of these gentle giants, and after taking a moment to get over the sheer awe of your first meeting, it's time to reach for a camera to begin creating your magic. But, your 'vision of greatness' doesn't always match the lens you have with you. You think, "I Should have brought the 500mm?"



It doesn't necessarily help to bring to every piece of equipment 'known to man', because when you are halfway up a steep volcano trying to reach a family of gorillas, you don't want to be lugging several bags of gear on your back. Sure, you can use the local porters to help you carry your equipment up the volcano (a trick I highly recommend, which also helps provide jobs to the local community), but the local porters cannot accompany you in the actual gorilla sighting. You still have to manage (and hold) all of your gear once you are with the gorillas. So, which lenses and cameras should you bring?



Over several years of photographing gorillas in Virunga National Park, Rwanda, this is what I have found helps most of our clients. Regardless of your physical abilities and determination, you can have too much gear. While the gorillas are relaxed and move slowly when feeding, they can advance more than you expect, and you can find yourself getting tangled up in camera neck straps, black rapid straps, and tripod legs quite quickly. I was once watching two or three babies playing and rolling on the floor, when the big silverback appeared from nowhere and walked right next to me - on that occasion I was unencumbered by



equipment and able to move quickly enough to get the wide angle lens out and fire off a few shots. This is a positive scenario!

On the flip side, I have also found that you can find yourself short of lenses, when, despite being allowed to a mere seven meters (23 feet) away from the gorillas, you could always zoom in a bit more for some lovely detail of the eyes, hands, feet, toes and teeth. So, carrying some longer mm lenses can help. Given just how big a silverback is, it makes far more sense to shoot with a bigger lens from further away, than to try get too close!



What I recommend is splitting your gear up over the treks (doing at least two treks will give you a better chance of seeing the gorillas out in the open, and also give you a better chance to anticipate more images after your experience on the first day) and going for different shots on different days. You could take a 16-35mm and a 70-200mm, on the first day for instance, and then a 24-105mm and a 500mm on the second day, which will give you the full spread and keep you covered. This does mean you might miss out on having the right lens at the right time, but you do end up with more keepers than if you flail about, lost in your equipment.

Just remember, when you have the 16-35mm lens in your hand and the big silverback gives a look that would have filled a 500mm with love, keep shooting and make it a scenic moment just like those we have photographed over the years at Virunga National Park.



# Nature vs.

# THE WALL



Story by Lori Lundin  
Photos courtesy of The National Butterfly Center

AS POET  
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH  
PUT IT, "NATURE NEVER  
DID BETRAY THE HEART  
THAT LOVED HER."

Butterflies. They are a source of symbolism around the world. Native American cultures consider them a sign of rebirth, change and growth. The Aztecs believed that when people died, their soul would turn into a butterfly. Sectors of Christianity view these delicate, fluttering creatures as a sign of resurrection. For many, butterflies are

simply a hopeful reminder of spring's awakening. "People have this connection with butterflies. It's the beauty, it's the {grace} of butterflies, it's their ephemeral nature and it's this magical transformation from caterpillars", says Jeffrey Glassberg, founder of the National Butterfly Center and President of the North American Butterfly Association.





**PHOTOGRAPHER FEATURE**

# Meet Al Craig

The National Butterfly Center is host to about 240 species of wild butterflies, including the migrating monarch. The region, situated in the lower Rio Grande Valley on the southernmost tip of south Texas, is known for U-shaped meandering lakes and is considered one of the most biologically diverse on the continent. The Center is the largest native botanical garden in the United States and is ripe with wildlife including reptiles, mammals, large numbers of dragonflies and hundreds of species of birds. But here, butterflies are the main attraction. Glassberg says there are butterflies on site year-round but, October through early November, the phenomenon is considered something of a storybook. "On a good day you can see as many as two hundred thousand butterflies, I mean literally clouds that obscure your vision through the air".

The Center relies on the thousands of visitors from the United States and around the world who visit annually. "Ecotourism provides more than five hundred million dollars for the economy of the lower Rio Grande Valley, which is the most economically disadvantaged region of the United States".

But sadly, butterflies are no match for bulldozers. The Center is in the crosshairs of a section of border wall that has already been federally funded. Glassberg says 70 percent of the Center's land will be impacted as construction eradicates native habitats, host plants for butterflies, and breeding and feeding grounds for wildlife. He doesn't expect it to survive. Crews with large pieces of equipment are now just outside of the property clearing vegetation and gobbling up trees on lands previously set aside to protect endangered species and migrating birds. "This is the last area in the United States for ocelots. U.S. Fish and Wildlife has spent millions of dollars trying to create a Lower Rio Grande Valley wildlife corridor and this is

going to destroy that", he says. Experts from the American Museum of Natural History were recently on the property surveying wild bee populations. "They think it's probably the most diverse area in the United States for wild bees. They found a number of species never before seen in the U.S. It's all going to be destroyed". The United States Supreme Court rejected a challenge from environmental groups trying to stop the Trump administration from bypassing federal laws, including the Endangered Species Act. U.S. and Mexican scientists noted in the July 2018 issue of the Journal Bioscience, that the entire 2000 mile stretch of land proposed for a border wall threatens the survival of more than 1500 species, including at least 111 endangered species.

Most butterflies and their caterpillars will only eat one kind of plant. "So for these 240 kinds of wild butterflies, each one eats a different {food source}. There's a butterfly called a Mexican blue wing. Its caterpillars {exclusively} eat a plant called *Vasey adelia*, which is only found in the lower Rio Grande Valley. So we planted lots of this native plant and, sure enough, the butterflies found it. We now have this thriving population of Mexican blue wing. But, if you remove the *Vasey adelia*, you'll have no more of those butterflies", notes Glassberg. In late fall, millions of monarch butterflies pass through on their long migration journey to warmer climates. Monarchs will only feed on various types of milkweeds, so when the milkweeds are gone "there won't be any monarchs", he adds.

"People have this concept that if you have this beautiful meadow and someone builds a housing development that destroys the entire meadow that somehow the butterflies just move somewhere else. No, you've decreased the world's population of butterflies."

For over 33 years I was a teacher in the South of England, ending up as a high school Principal (Secondary Head for the Brits out there). I loved teaching and love that about 300 former students (aged from about 20 to 50-something) keep in touch on social media. I had always loved taking photographs and after an early flirtation with more artistic efforts, fell into the fairly typical parent-trap of photographing almost exclusively family for many years.

I grew up in Portsmouth, England, in the 1960's and spent most of my spare time fishing and sailing. My first camera was a Kodak Instamatic – for the youngsters, that was a little black plastic box with a plastic lens and the capacity to take films in little cassettes with tiny negatives and 12, 24 or 36 pictures in a cassette. I still have a few of these pics, though they are now heavily degraded. By the time I was at university, in the late 70's, studying English and French, I had developed an interest in more artistic photography and bought my first more serious camera, an all manual Praktica, though I can't remember which model. I only had the one 50mm lens, but I used it as extensively as my student budget would allow – shooting flowers and boats, then waiting for the prints or slides to come back and throwing half of them away. I also toyed with black and white and was a huge admirer of Ansel Adams, but lacked the facilities to play around with dodging and burning to get the specific effects I wanted.

A few years after I started I started teaching, probably around 1984, I exchanged my all-manual Praktica for a much more modern Chinon CE-5. This was the camera that introduced me to a wider range of lenses and I moved into the realms of the

2-lens photographer! This was all I needed for several years as my teaching gave me quite long holidays but only allowed me to take them in peak season when they were too expensive to go far – and how many photos of a campsite in the south of France can you really keep? As a result, my interest waned for a while and only really took off again when my children arrived, at which point, I traded in my Chinon for my first Nikon, an F100, and moved from slides to colour prints.

In 2004, I succumbed to the digital revolution – possibly more of a spending revolution! I stayed with Nikon because the lenses still worked – at least for a while – and over the next 13 years worked my way through the D70, D200, D300, D700, D800, D800E and D810, throwing in a D4 on the way. Each change was in advance of a major holiday or photo trip. Eventually I stopped with my dream combination of the D850 and D5. Where other bodies had things which irritated me one way or another, especially when swapping between bodies, these two work together beautifully and I have never once missed a shot because I hit the wrong button, unlike when I was using other combinations. These are coupled with the Nikon Holy Trinity of 14-24, 24-70 and 70-200 and my beloved sports/wildlife lens, the Sigma Sport 150-600.

I realise that some people feel that as an enthusiast you only need one camera, but if you are spending a major part of your limited funds on a trip a long way from home, you want a back-up option in case of mechanical failure or accident. I have witnessed several occasions on trips when someone suffered a mechanical breakdown or dropped their only camera body and was left unable to take any more photos, with much





of the trip remaining. Generally, I use the D5 primarily for sports, moving wildlife and some astro/auroral work, and the D850 mainly for landscape, static or slow moving wildlife and portraiture, though each has the capability of covering for the other if needed.

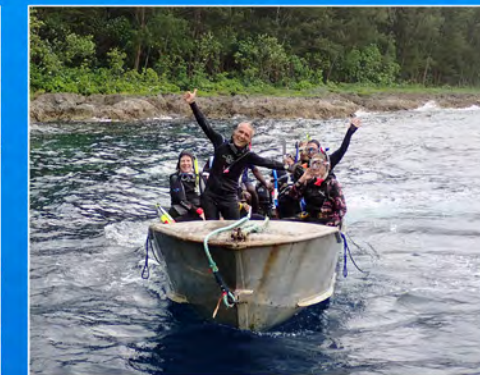
Part of my drive for change was always to get a system that actually worked for me, which is what I currently have. To be fair, the only camera that actually endangered me was the D800 with the motordrive attached. If you look at the shot of the male bull elephant demolishing a tree – that irritation was caused by the shutter slap from the camera and had my driver poised with a gun pointing skyward in one hand and the starter key in the other to get us the heck out of there!

Because I grew up in a family with limited money in post war 50's/60's England, inter-continental travel was beyond reach. There were no economy airfares and little money to buy anything but the essentials. We did travel further than most of our peers, by camping throughout France and other bits of Europe, but places like Africa were reserved for those of our friends who were missionaries or in the diplomatic service. Later, as my children grew, we did factor in several trips to the US, but I was always shooting conscious of keeping everyone else waiting. As a result, I had developed a passionate desire to visit Africa and to commit to some serious photography, so when I quit teaching in 2013, I took my first trip to Africa at the age of 55. I spent 2 weeks in Kenya, with time at Elsa's Kopje, Meru National Park and the Masai Mara. I photographed for 10 hours a day for 10 days straight in the back of a Toyota with just my driver and the African savannah as company – and I fell in love with photography

for the second and most powerful time in my life. That trip was organised for me by the great nephew of the character played by Robert Redford in *Out of Africa*, a close friend of a truly wonderful friend.

Since then, I have made two further trips to Africa photographing wildlife, people, landscape and culture; four trips to Iceland, photographing landscape and the northern lights, a trip to the Himalayas chasing snow leopards (not completely successfully or unsuccessfully) and numerous trips around the coast of the UK photographing landscapes. I also photographed my daughter's rugby team when she played at the University of Sussex, and now regularly shoot the ladies of Southampton's Women's Rugby Football Team. What a change from the 24-36 shot films I used to use! I now shoot up to 2,500 pics at a rugby match and cut and crop those down to about 100 or so that I post on FB for the ladies to share – mostly the gruesome faces as they tackle or get tackled. The Sigma 150-600 makes a hefty lump when it's on the D5 at full stretch and you're moving up and down the rugby sideline in pouring rain, but it has never failed to get the shot, even when I was using 1/800s, F6.5 and ISO 32,000.

Of the trips I have taken, a few stay in my memory most fondly and most powerfully. My first trip to Africa is something I will never forget. To see lions, leopards, cheetahs, elephants, black and white rhinos, wildebeest, crocodiles, hippos and all sorts of birds was amazing. A trip to Namibia with Tusk Photo was probably the most productive of all my journeys and gave me the chance to explore landscape, wildlife, nighttime and flash photography. The other country that stole my heart was Iceland. I adore the landscape, the stark and functional beauty and the stunning skies. At the time of writing, I'm due to leave for three to four weeks shooting the northern Scottish coast, so I may soon be adding another favourite location.



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