

Issue 2 2020

The Wild Lens

magazine for photographers

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Arindam Saha



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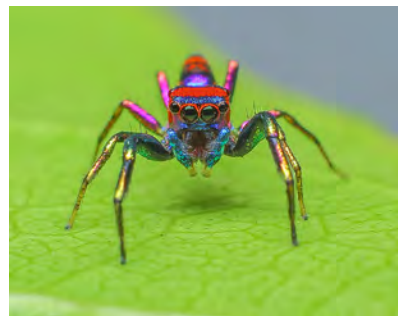


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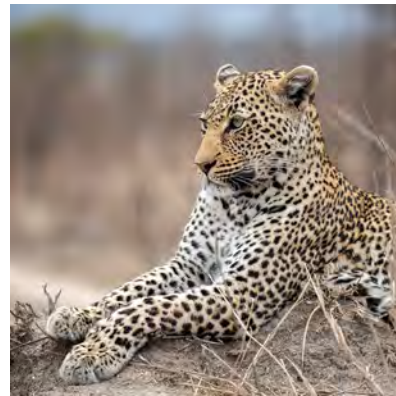
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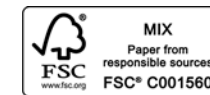
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phers and enthusiasts.

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Publisher's Note

When photo-
graphing in the
wild or on safari,
it's always such
a thrill to see
young animals
in the field.
The attractive-
ness of cubs,
pups, calves,
hatchlings, pig-
lets and all of the



Canon EOS Ambassador Shivang Mehta
gives his own "next-generation", Sheryovi
Mehta, a first introduction to low level
shooting in Little Rann Of Kutch in
Gujarat. Image by Allen Jacob.


smaller versions of any species is always fun to capture.
For many species, the continued success of their young is
crucial to their near-future survival. The IUCN (Internation-
al Union for the Conservation of Nature) has a list of
species and their status. I urge you to take a look at their
red list of threatened species. The species listed as vul-
nerable, endangered and critically endangered should be
protected before they become extinct. We want our young
to be able to see them for future generations to come.

In this issue, look for the beautiful "next-generation"
images from photographers hailing from three conti-
nents: Michael Beder, Gary Cusins, Anuradha Marwah,
Ranjan Ramchandani, and Zita Quentin. In many cases
the babies can be much harder to capture as their parents
work hard to protect them from danger. Also, see the in-
credible macro images of Arindam Saha and his beautiful
backyard spiders. How wonderful to make these photos
without traveling far and wide for the perfect capture.
Ranjan Ramchandani thrills us with his account of Ranth-
ambore National Park and his tales of Machali, who many
consider to be the most beautiful and successful tiger to
ever reside in the park.

Now is an important time for us politically. *The Wild
Lens* urges you to consider the candidates who would offer
the most protection to our planet and wildlife. We are on
the precipice of losing many species forever. Let's change
our destiny.

And to all of our readers, in this time of pandemic,
please be safe!

Michelle Liles
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The
Animal Young
Next
Are the Key
Generation
To Species Survival

STORY BY MICHELLE LILES | COVER PHOTO BY ANURADHA MARWAH

The birth of young is what perpetuates the future populations of our planet's precious wildlife. Wildlife photographers from Africa, Asia and Europe have contributed the following images of 11 species currently in danger of extinction. We have listed the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) value of each animal species represented. You can see all species and their status on the IUCN website: www.iucnredlist.org.

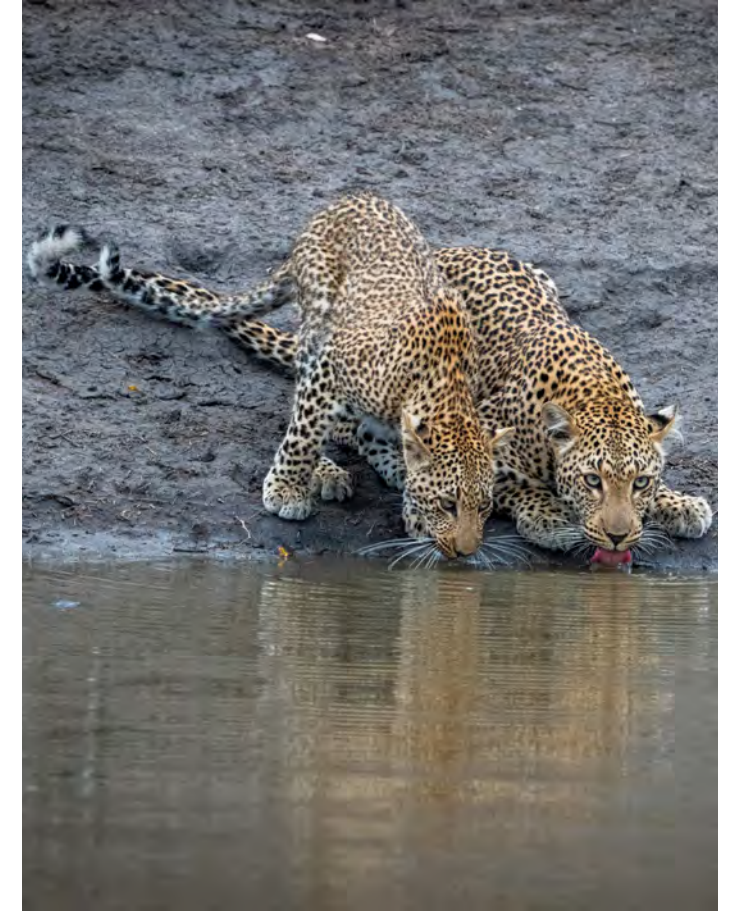


Giraffe: IUCN-VU (Vulnerable) Population is decreasing.

Giraffes give birth after 14 months of gestation. When a baby giraffe is born, it drops up to six feet to the ground, landing on its head. The fall helps the calf take its first breath. Calves are born about six feet tall and can weigh anywhere from 100 to 150 pounds. It will take four years for a baby giraffe to reach its full height of 14 to 18 feet. When they are fully grown, females can weigh 1,500 pounds and males as much as 3,000 pounds. The bulk of the young giraffe's growth is achieved in their first three years.

African Elephant: IUCN-VU (Vulnerable) Population is increasing.

An elephant's gestation period is 18 to 22 months. Calves are born weighing about 250 pounds. They are born covered in hair, which keeps them cool. Calves average three feet tall at birth and drink about three gallons of milk per day. Elephant calves may suck their trunks the way human babies suck their thumbs. By six to eight months of age they can begin to use their trunks for grasping, eating and drinking. They will, however, keep drinking their mother's milk for up to ten years.



Lion: IUCN-VU (Vulnerable) Population is decreasing.

Lion cubs are born after 110 days, with one to six individuals in a litter. They are helpless and blind from birth. The mother and cubs stay in isolation for four to eight weeks. The cubs will continue to nurse for six to seven months. Young cubs are vulnerable to various predators and the mother protects them by finding the safest hiding places she can, picking up each cub in her mouth one by one to move them. Because the lion must hunt to feed herself while the cubs are young they are left alone at times, putting them in jeopardy.

Zebra: IUCN-NT (Near Threatened) Population is decreasing.

Zebra gestation lasts about one year and each female gives birth to a single offspring, known as a foal. The foal's stripes appear to be white and brown in color at birth. Each baby zebra is well developed at the time that it is born, weighing around 70 pounds. Zebra young start to graze on grass at one week but will not be fully weaned from their mother's milk until at least seven months old. Zebra foals stay close to their mothers for about a year.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE: TWIN LEOPARDS (above) by MICHAEL BEDER. All other photos by RANJAN RAMCHANDANI



Mountain Goat: IUCN-LC (Least Concern) Population is stable.

One mountain goat baby, or kid, is born per season, after a gestation of six months. The young are about seven pounds at birth and are able to move and climb very well within a couple of hours. Kids are weaned in a month but stay with their mothers for a year. Mountain goats enjoy interacting with each other. The females often communicate encouragement and direction to their young.

Tiger: IUCN-EN (Endangered) Population is decreasing.

Gestation for tigers is about three and a half months. There are two to seven cubs in a litter but rarely more than two survive. Cubs weigh approximately two pounds at birth and are small, blind and dependent on their mother for food and protection. The cubs nurse with their mother until they are six months old, after which she brings food to them. By about 18 months of age, the cubs are usually equipped to hunt for themselves. Still, both males and females will stay with their mothers until they are about two-and-a-half years old.



Leopard: IUCN-VU (Vulnerable) Population is decreasing.

A female leopard gives birth to one to two tiny (under a pound and a half) cubs after a three month pregnancy. Cubs are born blind and almost hairless. They start to see in 10 days. Around three months of age, the young begin to follow the mother on hunts. At one year of age, leopard young can potentially fend for themselves, but remain with the mother for 18-24 months.

Japanese Macaque: IUCN-LC (Least Concern) Population is stable.

The macaque gestation period is six months and females bear a single offspring which will weigh about a pound at birth. Macaques live in troops of 20 to 30, but a mother and her infant tend to avoid other troop members, and the mother may socialize again very slowly. Young macaques play with stones, fight and swing in the trees. Alloparenting (care by another troop member besides the mother) has been observed, usually by females who have not had infants of their own. Male care of infants occurs in some groups, but not in others; usually older males protect, groom and carry an infant as a female would.

PHOTOS (clockwise, from top left): ZITA QUENTIN, RANJAN RAMCHANDANI, RANJAN RAMCHANDANI, GARY CUSINS



Polar Bear: IUCN-VU (Vulnerable) Population trend is unknown.

After a six month gestation, one to two blind, toothless cubs are born weighing about one-and-a-half pounds, without the fat needed to keep them warm. The rich milk the mother provides helps them increase their body weight rapidly. The cubs stay in the den for a few months, then remain close to their mother for protection for the first two years.

Hyena: IUCN-LC (Least Concern) Population is decreasing.

A baby hyena is called a cub, and is born in an underground den dug by the mother. Born in litters of two or three, the baby hyenas are so aggressive that they may force a weaker sibling to starve by pushing it away from the mother. They need this toughness to survive in the hyena pack and thrive in the African savannah.



Warthog: IUCN-VU (Vulnerable) Population trend is unknown.

Female warthogs can have up to eight young at a time, though they usually only have two or three, after a gestation period of around six months. Baby warthogs are called piglets and will weigh one to two pounds at birth. Warthogs mature at 20 months.



PHOTOS (from top): ZITA QUENTIN, RANJAN RAMCHANDANI, ZITA QUENTIN

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Beauty IN THE Backyard

PATIENCE AND PRACTICE

Photos and story by Arindam Saha



I love jumping spiders and I am very passionate about clicking them. These cute little creatures are always busy with hunting and inspecting their surroundings. The most difficult part of photographing jumping spiders is their small size and quick, erratic movements.

When I started macro photography a couple of years ago, I faced a lot of difficulties in effectively photographing these spiders, especially because they are always moving. After a lot of patience and practice,

I finally succeeded. While they are moving, it's best to carefully observe them and wait for the moment when they stop. It may be two-thirds of a second and then you must quickly click your shutter.

The beauty of macro photography is that you do not have to go to a sanctuary area or national forest to get the shot. Most of my macro shots are taken in my own backyard. You do not have to spend a lot of money to buy mammoth lenses and fast camera bodies. There are many affordable pieces of gear.



Macro photography can be one of the toughest genres of wildlife photography including, but not limited to, several technical considerations.

Size

The subjects are small and difficult to identify. The macro subjects are almost invisible to the human naked eye. It requires practice and searching to get subjects in frame.

Lighting

You'll often need to supplement available light with a flash to be able to use such low apertures (like F:16, F:22 etc) along with a reasonable shutter speed. A standard on-camera flash will often cast a shadow of the lens into the scene. A couple of special flash designs solve this problem - one is a ring light, like it sounds, a ring of lights positioned around the lens of your camera. There are also dual flash mounting systems to move a pair of flashes forward from the standard hot-shoe to counteract the shadow problem.

The greater the magnification, the more light you need. The problem is that as you increase magnification your lens is getting closer to the subjects, making it harder to illuminate. A longer focal length lens will help. Other options are a ring flash, high intensity LED lights and off-camera flash.



Depth of Field

At macro ranges, even with a small aperture (e.g. f:16, f:22) your depth of field (the amount of the scene that is in focus) could be in the range of a few millimeters to a few centimeters. It's also a challenge to maintain the desired area in focus, especially if the camera is handheld. If your camera shifts just a few millimetres, you could throw your subject completely out of focus. Therefore, tripods are essential, and a slide is often used to 'fine-focus' by shifting the position of the camera.







Queen of the Forest

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RANJAN RAMCHANDANI

A famed former hunting ground for India's royal families, Ranthambore National Park is one of the oldest and largest national parks in India, boasting 392 square kilometers and one of the planet's scarcest creatures: tigers. For almost 20 years, Ranthambore has been a staple for wildlife enthusiasts and photographers alike, and given its proximity to one of India's most beautiful cities, Jaipur, it is understandably becoming more and more of a tourist hotspot. Yet, Ranthambore has remained well-preserved. The animals live in harmony with the villagers they seem to regard as family. The park rangers are well-informed, enthusiastic and protective of the park and its inhabitants. It can seem as if you're speaking to proud parents about their children. Ranthambore was home to one of the world's most celebrated creatures, the late tiger, Machali.

What seems to separate Ranthambore from other similar parks is the way in which their respective tigers are treated. Each individual tiger's story is well documented, and can be found on the park's website. The animals have, in some cases, been given human names, which has helped identify them to the public. I have yet to come across a person who has ventured to this national park and left without their own, personal, touching tiger story. I myself have many of my own. For example, a moment I'll never forget is when a tigress, Krishna, led her cubs to the 'badha' (which translates to 'big' in English) gate, and proceeded to scale the nearby wall to show them the other side for the first time. Often times we forget that animals experience emotion as well, and that moment of awe was one I felt touched to witness.

Of course, one of the most famous tigresses of our time, and of Ranthambore, was the late Machali. Until August 2016, she was perhaps the most photographed tigress, as well as the longest living wild tiger. She dominated the park with her territory, and was exceedingly friendly with human visitors, showing off herself and her cubs, and adapting to tourism by taking advantage of the vehicles and using their distraction to hunt. Machali always had a dominating nature about her, and was a strong feline. In fact, she once fought off a 14-foot crocodile. This tenacity is the reason she is the subject of so many documentaries, articles and books, and might have been what led to her being given the title of "Queen of the Forest". She has even been honored with a commemorative stamp by the Indian government.

There are many such stories of tigers in Ranthambore. Mala is another example; her almost perfect waves appeared to have been drawn on by a skilled artist, and her slow, feline

prowling made her skin appear to move like the ripple of a wave. Mala's mother is actually Machali's sister, Chotti, and as seems to run in the family, is quite the extrovert. Often, she can be seen putting on a show for visitors of the park. Another famous, albeit morbid and sad story, concerns the male tiger Ustad, who ruled over Ranthambore for nine years prior to being relocated. His dominating nature was extreme, to the point where he dragged his prey out to the highway in order to consume them in full view. Though many lived in fear of him, their limit was reached when he infamously mauled a brave forest guard, and took the lives of two other villagers, leading to his ultimate relocation. He continues to live out his days far from human settlement, and under close supervision. His personality is the antithesis of most tigers one would encounter in Ranthambore. Tigers typically shy away from humans, which is why we keep our vehicles at a safe distance and as concealed as possible.



Tigers have been a focus of this article because they are becoming increasingly rare and because Ranthambore is so well known for them. However, there are many other types of wildlife such as Cheetal deer, Sambar deer, langurs, crocodiles and leopards amongst the mammals, along with a very large variety of bird species.

Given their endangered status, I feel very fortunate to have witnessed so many tigers in their natural habitat where they roam free and coexist in seemingly perfect symbiosis with nearby human communities. Although conservation efforts are rampant, and in Ranthambore itself the number of tigers is actually on an incline, worldwide tigers have lost 95% of the land they once dominated and every day that number increases, whilst the number of tigers globally decreases. Ranthambore is a wonderful example of a park that caters to tourists without limiting the freedom of its animal inhabitants. I truly believe that it is a must-do for wildlife and nature lovers alike, but also for conservationists and anyone looking to lend a hand to this growing crisis. It doesn't take much to save a species, as Ranthambore has shown, just a little love.



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PHOTOGRAPHER FEATURE

Michael Beder

Mike and his wife Arlene hail from Johannesburg, South Africa. Their travels have taken them all over the world, including the Galapagos, Japan, United States and southern and eastern Africa, searching for the wildlife that inspires them. Their next international trip is to the northern Arctic, Svalbard. Mike uses Nikon equipment to garner his dynamic images and, as you can see, is quite fond of spotted cats. He is headed back to his favorite spot, Londolozi, to photograph leopards again very soon.



When the Rains Did Not Come

*Wildlife's
Struggle
for Survival
in Australia*

Story & photos
by Courtney J.



When I was a little girl, I dreamed of living in Australia and working with Australian wildlife. Like many others, I was fascinated by how unique and diverse Australian wildlife is. A remarkable 80% of the continent's flora and fauna are found nowhere else on earth. From marsupials to egg-laying mammals to the largest living reptiles – I couldn't get there fast enough.

In 2013, my dreams came true and I immersed myself in the natural wonder that is Australia. Each morning, I woke up to an orchestra of birds that I would hear throughout the day. Dusk would bring the distinct, laughter-like call of the kookaburras and a cloud of flying foxes would cover the sky as they ventured off from their roosts to forage for fruit. The amphibians would lead the orchestra at night, with intermittent chatter from gliders and possums. The smell of the air was so fresh, even though I lived within 20 kilometers of a city. I moved into a house surrounded by bushland where goannas frequented my doorstep and I saw wallabies every time I walked my dogs. The landscape was green and lush, with a creek that wound across the road, creating various swimming holes during the wet season where water dragons and snakes could be seen regularly.

Slowly, the rains stopped coming and the summer night storms seemed like a distant memory. It wasn't until the spring of 2019 that I felt the full weight of the drought. I knew it was coming, the science had been telling us that the warming temperatures from climate change would exacerbate the droughts. Despite this, I wasn't prepared for what the future held.

Everywhere I looked it was brown and barren. Plants were not flowering, they were dying. Even the drought-adapted, fire-tolerant eucalyptus trees were dying. The bushland around me looked like a temperate deciduous forest approaching winter with all of the trees dropping their leaves, which is an unnerving sight for an evergreen sclerophyll forest. While I still heard some of the birds, I no longer saw the flying foxes; a reflection of their starvation events and mass die-offs. The creeks dried up and with them went the sound of the amphibians. There was no grass for the macropods to eat; their protruding hips and visible rib cages were evidence of this. There was no water for the wildlife to drink and even our own water tanks ran dry. Wildlife veterinarians and care groups were inundated. Everything was fighting for survival.

Perhaps the drought wouldn't have been so dire for wildlife had they not already been impacted by other threatening processes. Nowhere was this more evident to me than for one of Australia's national icons: the koala. With the majority of their habitat cleared, koalas were already struggling to find food and shelter. They usually got their water from the eucalyptus leaves that they ate, but with the drought conditions, they were drinking from water sources more often. Koalas having to spend more time on the ground in search of water, food, and shelter resulted in an increase in road strikes and dog attacks. Confounding their plight even more has been a widespread battle with the chlamydia virus.



I witnessed the drought taking its toll on this already threatened species. Breeding female koalas withered away, losing condition as the drought pressed on. More koalas were being found on the ground, unable to cope with the heat and dehydration. Koalas with wet bottoms and protruding spinal columns, indications of disease and hunger, were seen more and more. Plastic jugs full of water, equipped with a stick to provide smaller animals with an exit strategy, started appearing throughout the forest, offering the wildlife a short reprieve from the drought.

Then came the fires.

It's difficult to put into words what it feels like to experience a declared a "state of fire" emergency. The fear of leaving your pets at home to go to work, the anxiety that comes when the winds begin to gust and the temperatures soar. The realization that if a fire were to start on your road, you wouldn't have time to escape. The obsessive checking of fire apps on your phone as you watch all of the patches of bushland around you set alight. The preparation of your home in case you get trapped in it and the conversations you have with your neighbours to put some sort of plan in place to prepare for the worst. And the closing of all of your windows and doors, barricading you from the natural world because the smoke from the fires is so thick that it is unsafe to breathe. This was the human experience.

Most wildlife cannot escape fires as easily. While Australia's flora and fauna have evolved with fire in the landscape, they have not adapted to the intensity of fires that come with exacerbated droughts and climate change. More than one billion mammals, birds, and reptiles are estimated to have been affected by Australia's unprecedented fire season of 2019-2020.

More than eleven million hectares of bushland were burnt; of which, an estimated six million hectares were home to threatened species. Up to 30% of koalas on the New South Wales mid-north coast were killed, along with approximately 25,000 of the chlamydia-free koalas on Kangaroo Island. And this is just the initial impact. With their habitat burnt, the survivors continue their struggle to find food, water, and shelter. They are forced to disperse, making them more vulnerable to predators. With habitat loss being the biggest driver of wildlife decline, they are running out of places to go, resulting in a second wave of wildlife loss that will not get the same amount of media attention or public outcry as the fires did.

When disaster strikes, we often see the best of humanity. Veterinarians, wildlife carers and volunteers flocked to charred areas in search of survivors. Significant funds were raised instantaneously from people all over the world. Food for wildlife was dropped from helicopters. The Australian army was sent in to assist with the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife. But if our daily choices are contributing to an increasingly volatile climate where unprecedented bushfires are expected to become more frequent, will this reactionary approach be enough to save Australia's wildlife?

Climate change is unforgiving, even to those who have adapted to the often-harsh conditions of the Australian environment. Australia's unique wildlife is the result of millions of years of evolutionary history and potential. We, as drivers of habitat loss and climate change, have become an integral part of their story.

Now, it's up to us to decide how this story will end.



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