

# PHOTO ARTS

April 2018

## The Wild Coasts of New Zealand

by Arindam Bhattacharya

---

The Wild Side of Goa  
explored by **Anvay  
Nakade**

---

Ranthambhore and its  
Tigers through the  
lenses of **Souvik Kundu**

---

**Rahul Pratti** documents  
the conservation success  
story of Costa Rica

GLIMPSES FROM THE BAUL FAIR OF KENDULI through the lenses of KOUNTIK MITRA  
FEATURING THE 14 WINNING PHOTOGRAPHS FROM OUR PREVIOUS TWO ONLINE CONTESTS

Dear Readers

In this issue we bring to you stories from the natural world, a world in which we coexist with thousands of other species, each of them uniquely beautiful and designed to thrive in their respective environments. These species, so many of them, have successfully withstood the test of time and have been perfected by millions of years of evolution, nature's very own miracle. Yet the developments of the recent past, suggest we human beings as a species have developed a well cultured apathy and disregard towards nature and its species. Such disregard is steadily and it can be argued no longer slowly resulting in irreversible damages to the natural world on an everyday basis. The death of Sudan, the last remaining male northern white rhinoceros has virtually sounded the death knell for yet another magnificent species. With only two more females left and no other known individual in the wild, we have successfully added one more species to the list of animals that have gone extinct, and there can be no denying the list is growing fast. In this issue we have endeavoured to highlight some of the issues threatening the survival of some rare and beautiful creatures, the exceptional beauty of the wild world and some rare and heartwarming positive news from the world of conservation. It is our sincere belief with knowledge comes awareness, the much needed tool for making this planet safe for thousands of species, we hope this issue of ours will add in its very own way to the commendable efforts of hard working people working relentlessly to save the natural world, this is a tribute to them and a tribute to the recently departed Sudan.

Regards

Rahul Bera (Editor of Photography & Design)

## **Indian Photo Arts**

Founder and Editor-in-chief: Prasun Mazumdar

Editor of Photography & Design: Rahul Bera

Consulting Editor: A. Shankar

Designed by: Rabin Paul

Researcher and Content Writer: Naorem Antra

Technical Advisor: Debadri Mondal

# Contents

April 2018

---

The Wild Coasts of New Zealand by Arindam Bhattacharya 04

---

The Roaring Voice of Ranthambhore by Souvik Kundu 28

---

Speaking Ruins by Shreenivas Yenni 50

---

The Hidden Gems of Wild Goa by Anvay Nakade 70

---

Forever Wild Domain of Costa Rica by Rahul Pratti 88

---

The Treasures of Ocean by Garima Garg 106

---

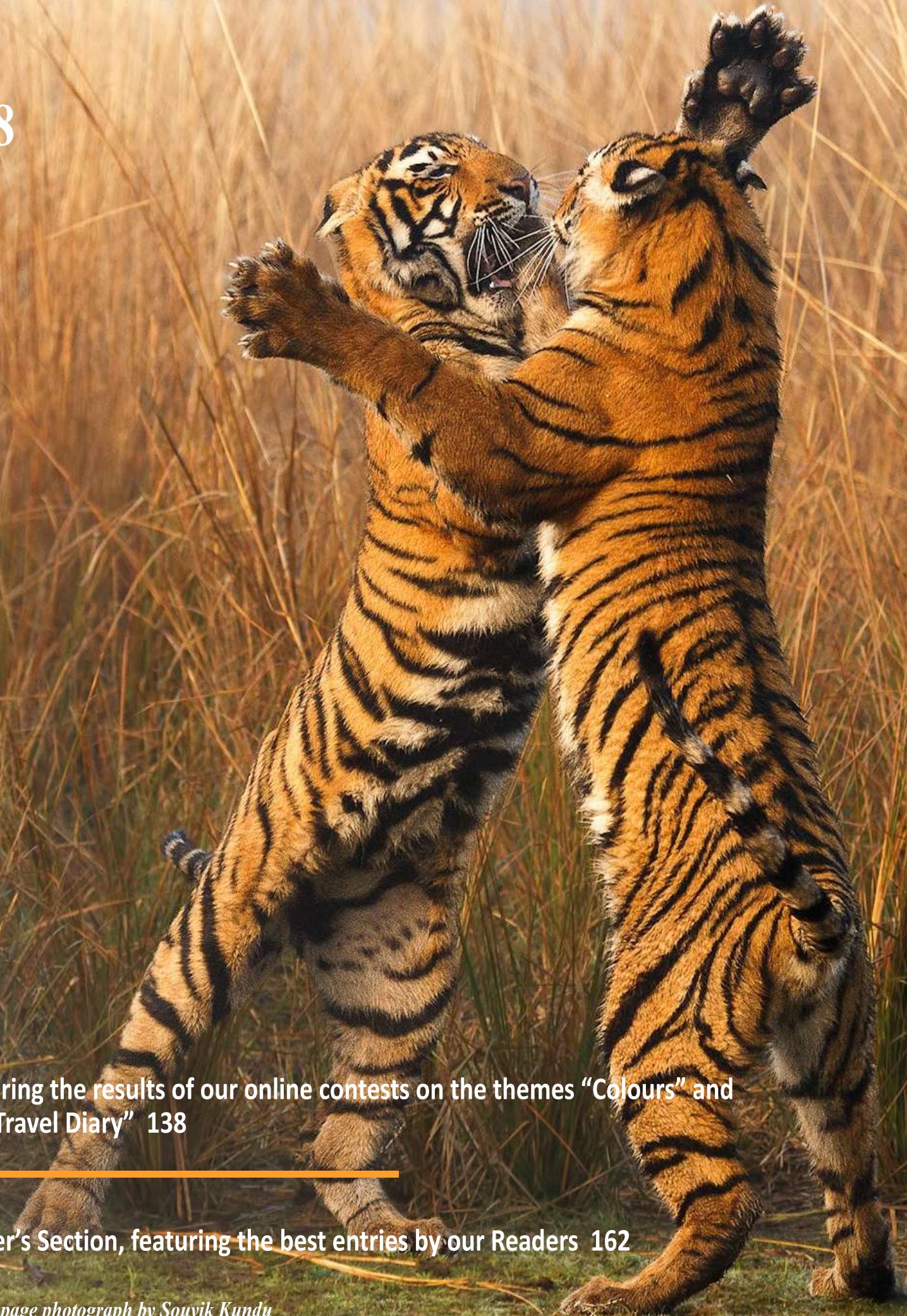
The Baul Symposium of Kenduli by Kountik Mitra 120

---

Featuring the results of our online contests on the themes “Colours” and  
“My Travel Diary” 138

---

Reader’s Section, featuring the best entries by our Readers 162



# The Wild Coasts of New Zealand

*A TALE OF TWO ICONIC SPECIES AND WHAT THE FUTURE HAS IN STORE FOR THEM*

*by Arindam Bhattacharya*

A fur seal basks in the afternoon sun along the rocky shores of New Zealand's coast.





A male fur seal rests along the rocky shorelines of New Zealand. These creatures are equally at home on this rugged terrain as they are in the depths of the ocean.

New Zealand is possibly best known to the rest of the world for its wide array of landscapes ranging from its majestic mountains, beautiful forests, the tranquil waters of its serene lakes, the meandering courses of many a rivers which chart their courses through this incredibly beautiful piece of landmass. In the midst of such picturesque setting where so many different elements of the natural world come together and find themselves to be a part of an incredibly beautiful tapestry of nature, the spectacular wild coastline of New Zealand, all 19,000 kilometres of it deserves special mention both for its natural beauty as well as for the incredible bio-diversity which it harbours in its every nook and crevices. The coasts of New Zealand are home to an incredibly large number of coastal

redoubtable elements. As a result of which the wild coastlines of New Zealand teem with life all around, the rocky cliffs, the sandy beaches, the coastal waters are home to a plethora of wild species all of which together interweave an intricate meshwork of an incredibly delicate yet fragile ecosystem. This awe inspiring wilderness is home to some of the rarest and toughest species on this planet, carefully handpicked and moulded by nature for survival in the face of the most trying conditions, species which have withstood the test of time and proudly call this hard yet beautiful setting their home today. The rather strange and unique ecology of this region, the intricate patterns of its geology and the inter relation of countless species which reign supreme in the fields and waters of this amazing

**T**he coasts of New Zealand, stretching over 19,000 kilometres are home to an incredibly large number of coastal species some of which are endemic to these rocky shorelines.

species, some of which are endemic to these rocky shorelines. These rocky coasts frequently interspersed with steep cliffs and fjords carved by ancient glaciers at the first glance certainly appear to be inhospitable. Yet as it is the case with so many other places in the natural world the indomitable force of life has managed to not just find a way but assert its dominance over such a vast stretch of seemingly unforgiving and treacherous terrain. It is quiet befitting that the most vital and potent force of nature, life itself, was successful in taming some of nature's other

natural setting have enthralled scientists, naturalists, conservationists and every human soul with a lust for knowledge and beauty for generations now. Apart from the stunning natural beauty which is blatantly obvious from one look at this wilderness the wonderful animal species which have thrived in these remote settings for millions of years are the true gems in this part of the amazing natural world. Among the countless species one such species which has dominated the shorelines of New Zealand is the New Zealand fur seal also known as kekeno. The most

common and most widely distributed seal species found across New Zealand, in a remarkable contrast to the fate of most other species all over the globe the population of New Zealand fur seals has been on a steady rise and the species is currently categorised as “Least Concern” by the IUCN. Fur seals or Kekenos are widely distributed across the rocky coastlines around the mainland, in the archipelago of Chatham Islands towards the east of South Island and in the North Island and South Island of New Zealand. The fur seals are not restricted to the islands of New Zealand only; these animals have successfully carved niches for themselves along the Southern and Western shorelines of Australia. The Australian population exhibits certain genetic traits which vary from their trans-Tasman neighbours, yet these two different populations are morphologically very similar to each other and hence have been grouped together as a single species. In spite of their taxonomy the fur seals of New Zealand are much more closely related to sea lions than true seal species. Their sea lion lineage gets clearly reflected in their external pinnae, their rather long and muscular rotating fore flippers and their ability to walk on all fours like sea lions. The rocky shores in these parts of New Zealand make up for the ideal home for these rather unique animals. The adults of this species are not sexually dimorphic, meaning both males and females have similar appearances, although the males of this species are

significantly larger than the females. An adult male fur seal can easily weigh up to 130 kg or more, almost three times the average weight of an adult female. While the males grow up to 2 meters in length the females tend to be on an average 1.5 meters in length. They have a rather pointy nose with long pale whiskers, which led to the name of long-nosed fur seal by which these animals are commonly known in Australia. These animals are covered with two layers of thick fur, which helps them retain their body heat and stay warm even when they swim in the ice cold waters of the South Pacific Ocean. The fur coat is usually a dark greyish brown in appearance on the back and pales off on their belly. Like most other seals and sea lions the fur seals too are excellent swimmers and divers. It has been noted that the diving patterns of fur seals in fact reflect the manoeuvring patterns of their prey. Typically the fur-seals tend to dive deeper and stay underwater for longer than most other seal species. Such diving techniques intricately linked with foraging for food are crucial for any seal species’ survival, a skill which even the young pups start honing from a relatively early age. The diet of fur seals includes a wide range of species, although a particular preference for squid and octopus is well documented. Medium to large sized fish too feature regularly in the diet of fur seal in the form of Jack mackerel, red cod, hoki and even the barracouta. The fur seals engage in a feeding frenzy after sundown,

*In a remarkable contrast to the fate of most other species the population of New Zealand fur seals has been on a steady rise and the species is currently categorised as “Least Concern”.*

particularly during the summer months when they dive almost continuously from sundown till sunrise foraging for food. This exclusively nocturnal foraging habit is governed by the fact that fur seal’s preys stay deep underwater during the day. At night however these fish, squids and other prey items swim closer to the surface of the sea or ocean making it easier for the fur seals to get hold of them. Fur seals have been known to dive as deep as 250 meters while holding their breath for in excess of 10 meters underwater. Such deep diving behaviours are more noticeable during autumn and winter months when they have been known to travel hundreds of kilometres beyond the continental slopes in search of food. In the summer months however these animals reap rich rewards by putting in relatively less efforts. During summers their dives are almost entirely concentrated around the continental shelf where food is plentiful.

An average fur seal colony is a picture of peace as these animals gently laze away the days lying on their rocky beds along the shores. The picture however takes an entirely different turn in a breeding colony which is characterised by relentless noise and chatter, a cacophony of males issuing threats to one another over their dominance or mating rights, females communicating

with their young ones, lost pups desperately trying to raise an alarm. Females attain sexual maturity by the age of 4-6, while males achieve the same by the age of 5-6 years. However before a male can have a litter of his own he must establish his dominance over another resident male and stake a claim on his harem. This often leads to gruesome encounters between heavyweight males where they stake their all, for the rewards are too tempting. The dominant male mates with multiple females during the breeding season. After a gestation period of nine months the females give birth to one pup between November and January. At birth the new born pups weigh only about 3-4kg. The young pups depend on their mother’s milk for roughly 9 months or so before they are weaned. The mothers tend to stay close to their pups and often react aggressively if they feel their little ones are in trouble.

The early days in the life of a fur seal pup are fun filled and are spent mostly in the company of other pups. In the fun and games of early life lie the valuable lessons which eventually will bestow these young fur seals with the much needed skills to survive in the natural world. The young pups pick up these skills such as foraging, evading a predator, challenging each other in a rivalry by observing their mothers .

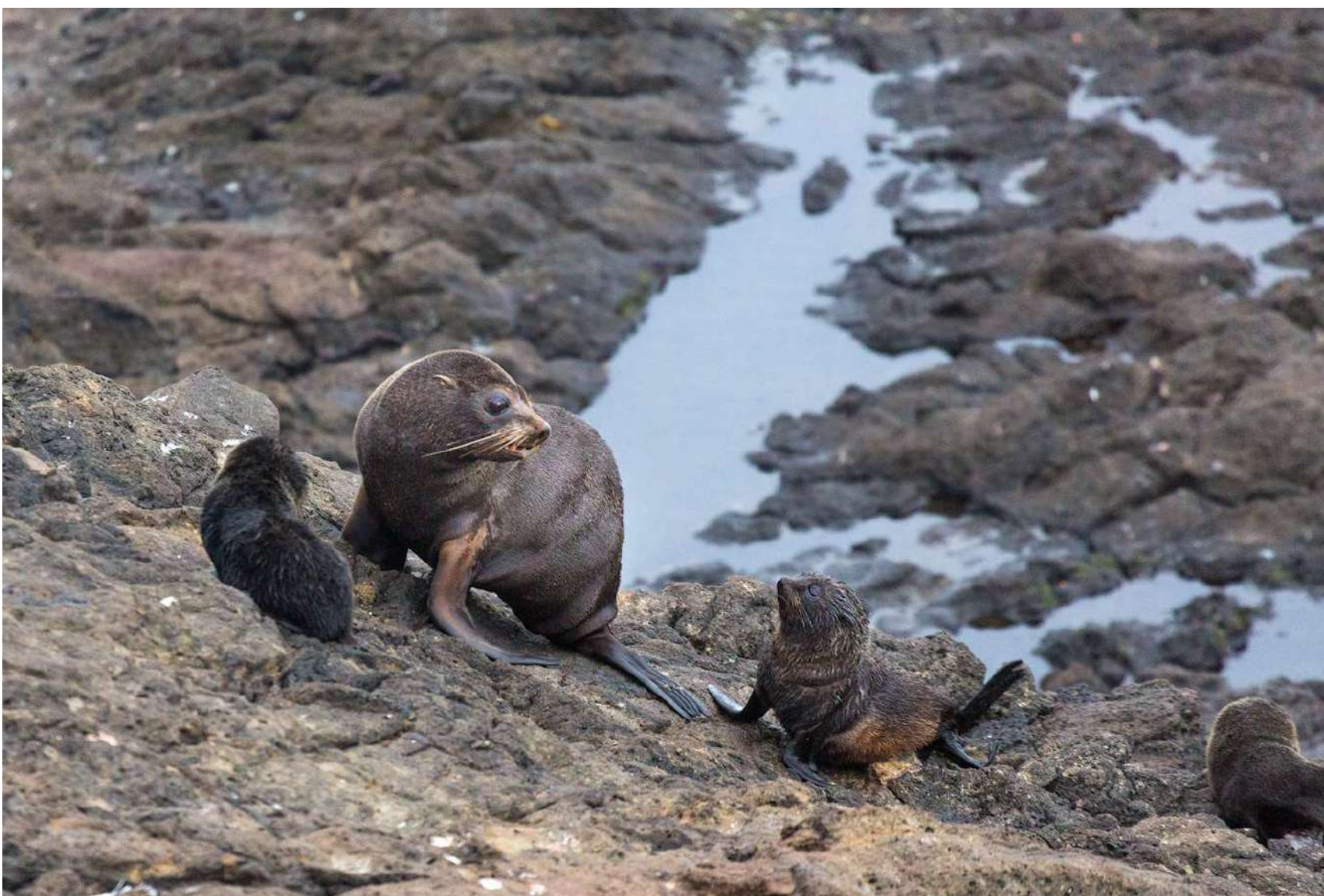
Most of daytime is spend lazying around in their rocky coastal homes.  
Sundown leads to a feeding frenzy when the fur seals engage in relentless  
diving sessions while foraging for food.





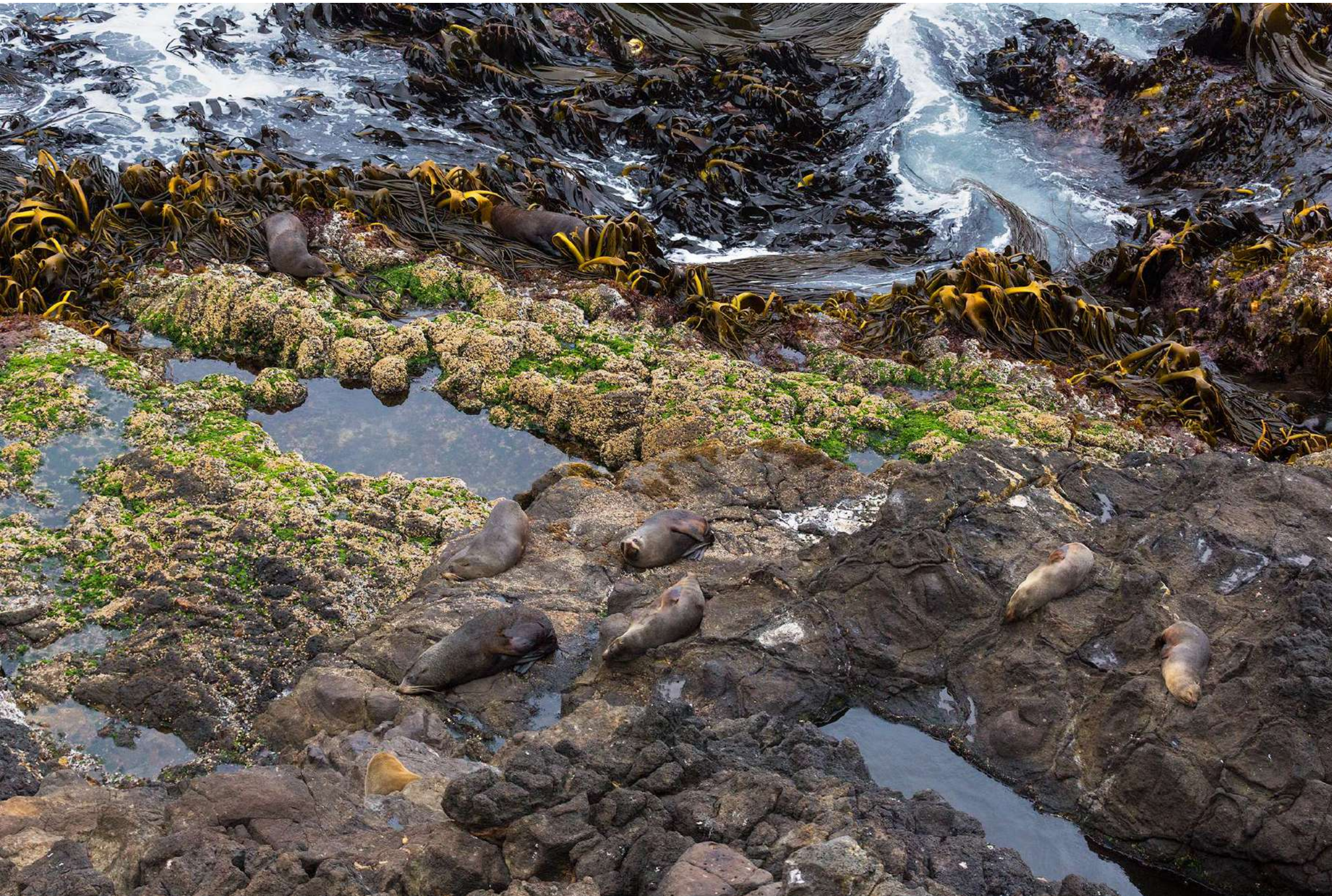
**The cubs often indulge in play fights and mock displays of aggression which equip them with the much needed skills to defend their territories or ward off any intruders once they reach adulthood.**

In the absence of any large terrestrial predator the rocky shores of New Zealand turn out to be safe homes for fur seals to form their colonies and raise young ones. However the waters around these rocky continental shelves spell an entirely different story. Foraging trips underwater are laden with countless dangers. While foraging fur seals themselves are the most susceptible towards falling prey to their natural predators in the form of killer whales, sharks, sea lions and even the much larger leopard seals. However for a long time until recently fur seals faced a threat of a very different kind. Seals were widely hunted in New Zealand until the late 19th century. Seal population in New Zealand including that of fur seal's dropped below 10% of the original population. Commercial fishing too posed a huge threat to the existence of this species. Depleting food resources and untimely death due to entanglement in fishing nets were the common reasons. In 1978 fur seals were fully protected by the Marine Mammals Protection Act, and they have continued to grow in numbers ever since. The last estimated population in 2001 placed the number at 200,000. Although unknown researchers and experts are of the opinion the actual number today stands much higher than the 2001 estimate. While all these are terrific news for this species which has staged a remarkable comeback some of the threats still remain real for these animals and threaten to raise their ugly heads in the future. Commercial



**The young pups feed on their mothers' milk for the first 9 months of their lives before they are weaned. During this period the mothers stay close to their young ones and react aggressively if they perceive any threat to their pups.**





**A typical fur seal colony in its typical natural habitat. As inhospitable as they might appear these rocky cliffs and slopes along the coasts of New Zealand with their rugged terrain provide the ideal home for fur seal colonies. Such a scene of peace and tranquility is in stark contrast to the chaos which ensues in the colonies during the breeding season with rival males challenging each other over prime real estates and mating rights while the females frantically search and call out for their young ones who lose their way in the resulting melee.**

fishing still poses a big threat to this species. A growing population means frequent encounters with human beings from close quarters which often threaten to destabilize the dynamics of a seal colony. Washed up debris such as plastic debris, discarded nets can spell doom for any seal species. Other commercial activities such as oil and natural gas exploration if carried out in an uncontrolled and careless manner have the potential to disrupt the delicate balance of this eco-system which the fur seals are an integral part of. There are plenty of reasons to rejoice when a species such as the fur seal makes such a stunning comeback from the brink of extinction, yet we must keep a lookout for any dark cloud looming large in the horizon which may threaten the survival of this species, the job of preserving a species can never be over.

The other notable species which dominates the coastal wilderness of New Zealand couldn't have been any more different from the rather lazy fur seals. The yellow-eyed penguin also known as hoiho in Māori language is a species native to New Zealand and is the largest species of penguins found on the mainland of New Zealand. This widely distributed species inhabits and breeds on the south-east coast of South Island, on Stewart Island as well as on the Auckland and Campbell islands. On the mainland of New Zealand they are widely distributed over the wild coasts of Otago Peninsula, North Otago and Banks

Unlike fur seals, the other iconic species from the coasts of New Zealand, the yellow-eyed penguin is faced with an uncertain future in which the very real threat of extinction looms large over the horizon.





Peninsula. With such a wide range of habitat it goes without saying the yellow-eyed penguin has become the most recognizable penguin species in New Zealand. This species shows a particular preference for coastal forests or dense patches of coastal shrubs for building their nests. Pastures and rocky cliffs along the shores of the sea too provide the perfect setting for breeding. The yellow-eyed penguin is moderately tall and heavy penguin with a distinctive band of rather pale yellow feathers around its eyes and the nape of its neck. The males of this species are larger than the females measuring 60-80 cm in length. The yellow-eyed penguin is a relatively long lived species with some individuals reaching a lifespan of 20 years or more rarely. Yellow-eyed penguins are predominantly continental shelf dwellers and forage along the rocky cliffs and sandy beaches along the shores of New Zealand. While foraging for food they have been known to cover a distance of up to 25 km from the shores in search of food while diving to depths of 100 m or more. Their diving patterns

and ranges are hugely influenced by the season of the year which in turn affects the availability of fish as well as their breeding patterns. While breeding the penguins partake both in diurnal and nocturnal foraging trips. While the day trips are longer and cover a wider range often ranging up to 25 km or more, the evening trips are much shorter during which they are seldom away from their nests foraging for more than a few hours and the range covered too is much less compared to the day trips. Excellent swimmers and divers like all other penguin species the yellow-eyed penguin specialises in foraging for food along the sea bed. They swim close to the sea bed looking for unsuspecting fish while foraging, which means their dive patterns and foraging habits are determined by the depth of the sea bed in their vicinities. Apart from fish which comprise the majority of their diet these penguins show an affinity towards jellyfish. Yellow-eyed penguin parents can easily qualify as some of nature's most vigilant ones. Both parents play an active role in incubating their

**Sandy beaches with hints of coastal scrublands make up for the perfect homes for yellow-eyed penguins.**

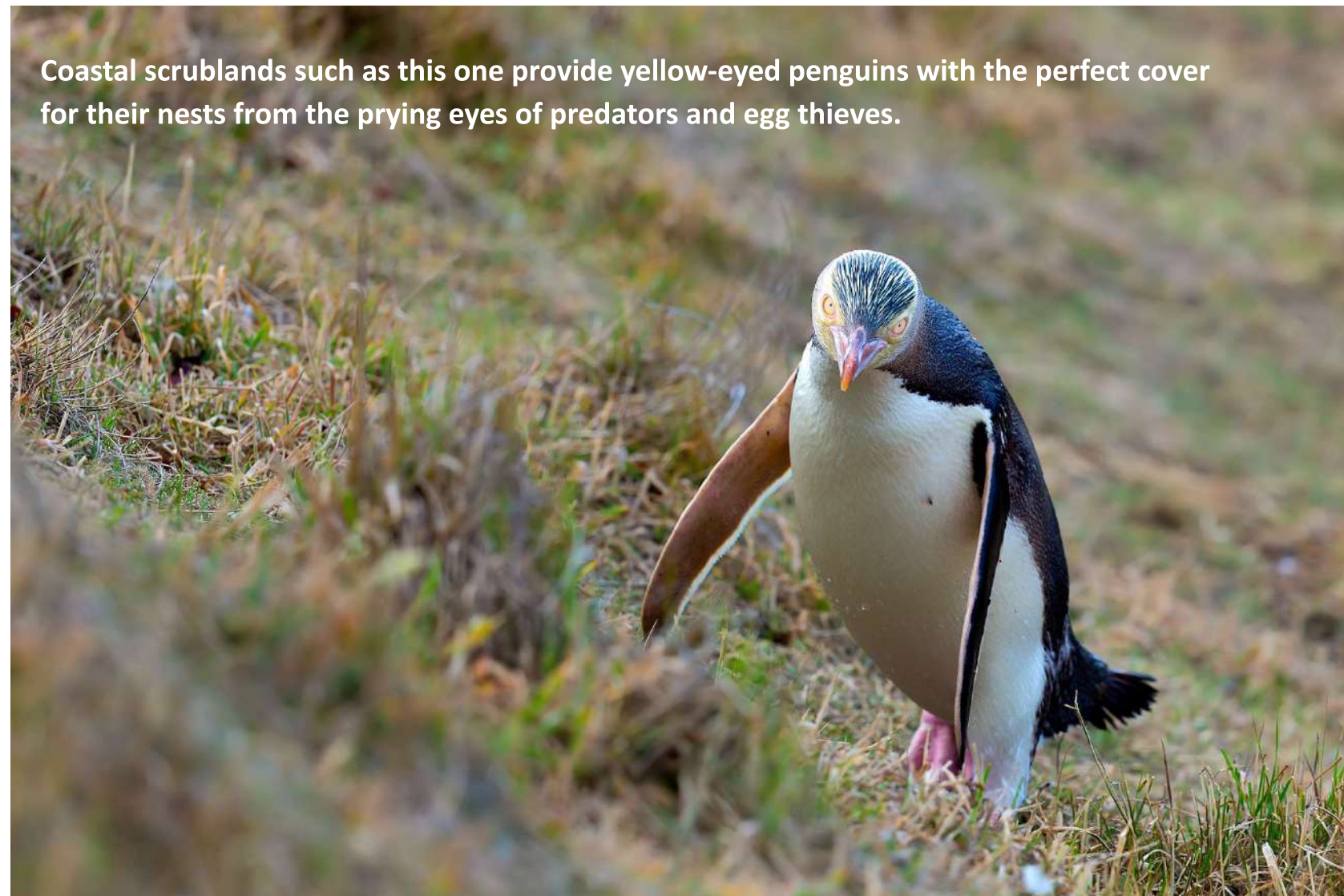
Yellow-eyed penguins apart from being the 4th longest penguins in the world are also one of the rarest and most ancient of all the existing penguin species.



The juveniles with their greyish brown coat of fur appear remarkably different from the adults.



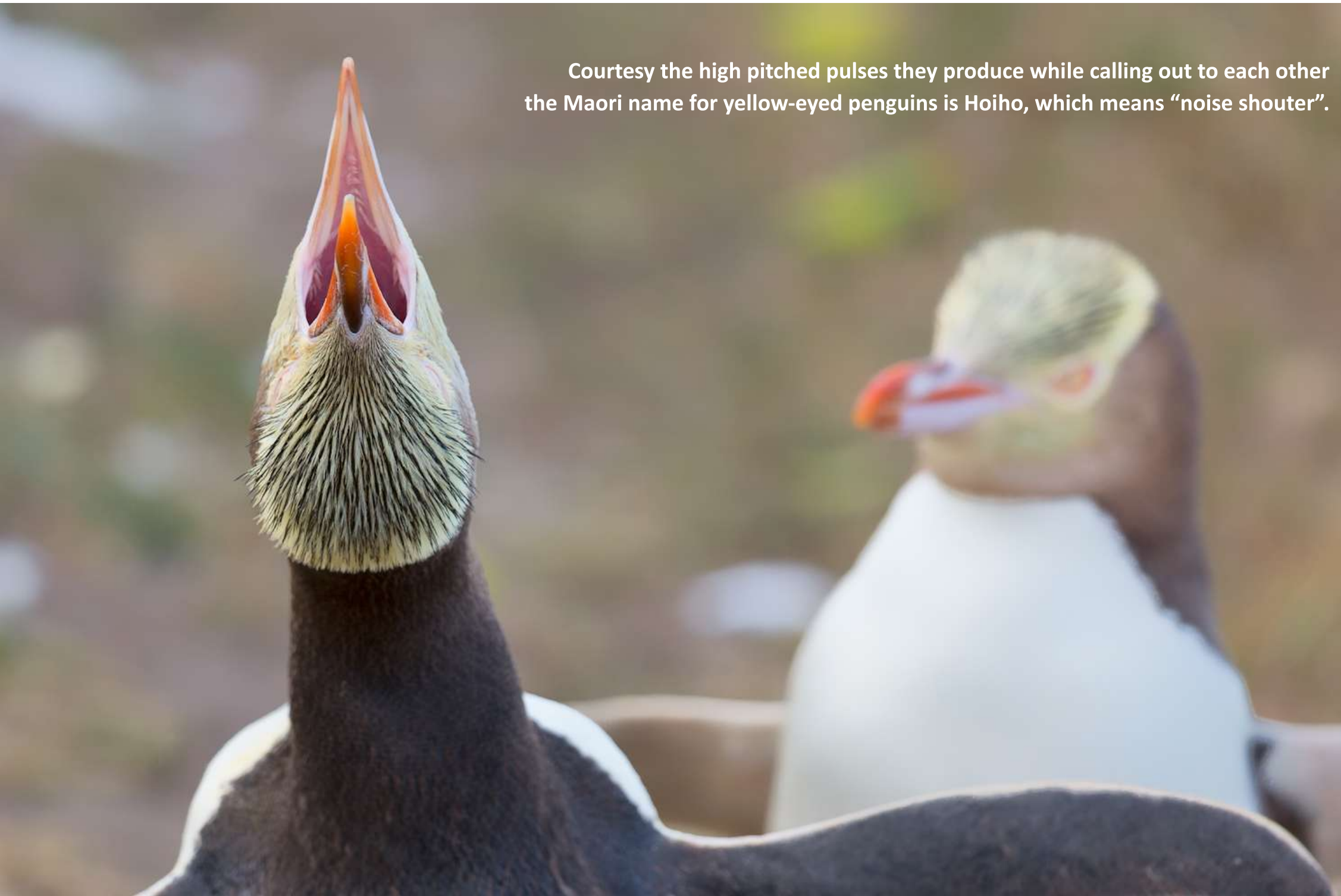
Coastal scrublands such as this one provide yellow-eyed penguins with the perfect cover for their nests from the prying eyes of predators and egg thieves.



clutch of eggs. These penguins assiduously select their nesting sites which are often well concealed from the ever present glares of opportunist predators and egg thieves. The nests are usually made of twigs, grass and leaves and resemble the shape of a shallow but spacious bowl. Typically one clutch of egg contains around 3-4 specimens. The eggs hatch after an incubation period of 30-50 days which again happens to be the most variable among all penguin species. The young ones are well cared and well attended for. The chicks in the early phases of their lives are constantly guarded by their vigilant parents and brooded with great care. Once they are old enough the parents leave them alone during the daytime when they themselves set out for foraging. Quite disturbingly and not unlike the fate suffered by so many other species across the planet, yellow-eyed penguins too have been in the news for their fast depleting populations. In a series of unfortunate events the populations of this species have suffered major jolts which have severely threatened the future existence of this species. The first warning signs surfaced in the 1980s when researches indicated a steep decline in the breeding population as well as nests. In January 1990 it was noted the total number of nests in the entire Otago coast had dwindled to a mere 140.



**Yellow eyed penguins are not as noisy as some of the other penguin species. Their calls have been described as semi-musical in comparison to other species. They emanate short high pitched rhythmic pulses while calling out to each other.**



Courtesy the high pitched pulses they produce while calling out to each other the Maori name for yellow-eyed penguins is Hoiho, which means “noise shouter”.

To make matters even worse over time repeatedly there have been events of mass mortality, the reasons yet to be ascertained. Such unfortunate events such as the mass mortality during the January of 2013, the widespread starvation in 2014 and the increasing predation by barracouta in early 2015 have further jeopardised the survival of this species. In 2016/17 there were

reportedly a meagre population of 266 pairs along the coast of South Island, which came as a severe blow to the efforts put in by the researchers and conservationists. A rapid loss of habitat and increased human interference combined to wreak havoc on the lives of these animals. The rapidly vanishing coastal scrublands have robbed yellow-eyed penguins of some of their

favourite nesting sites. Increased activities along the coasts too are detrimental for the existence of these species since these solitary creatures are rather secretive and greatly value their privacy. On the mainland the young chicks are helpless against the threats posed by introduced predators in the form of feral as well as domestic cats and dogs. To further

complicate matters increasing populations of ferrets and other members belonging to the weasel family not indigenous to this mass of land have greatly contributed towards the fast dwindling numbers of the yellow-eyed penguin population. A rather recent disturbing trend has revealed even Catlin’s pigs too often prey upon yellow-eyed penguins. In the midst of such threats it comes as little surprise the number of yellow-eyed penguins stands at a meagre 4000-6000 today, and is unfortunately categorised as endangered.

Two species vastly different from each other in every way, currently blessed with equally different fortunes call the coastal wilderness of New Zealand their homes. These two iconic species have battled against all the odds, withstood every stern test of time and evolution and have come a remarkably long way in carving a niche for themselves in this unforgiving and challenging environment which they call home. Yet they are faced with challenges alien to them and possibly something they were or no species for that matter was designed to counter. No species on this planet is designed to ward off the evils of the rapidly expanding human world. Fur seals and yellow-eyed penguins have mastered the icy cold depths of the seas and the oceans, they are very much at home along the steep cliffs and crevices and coastal scrublands of New Zealand’s coast, they have survived and thrived in an environment which is nothing short of



A pair of yellow-eyed penguins takes a leisurely stroll along the beach.

brutal, yet we humans have figured ways to threaten the very existence of these animals with our unique ways which often are a blatant disregard for the beauty as well as might of nature. In the wake of such scenarios the onus firmly lies with us to undo our previous wrongdoings and take every necessary step to ensure not a single species which inhabits this coastal wilderness suffers the tragic fate of going extinct. This unique wilderness, home to wonderful creatures, each blessed with

unique set of skills and abilities to tame the formidable challenges thrown at them by nature, is one of the last few remaining gems of the natural world, there can be no bigger shame than losing this amazing stretch of unique natural wonder falling prey to our insatiable greed.

**D**espite significant efforts to stabilise the rapidly dwindling populations of yellow-eyed penguins, the species still remains at high risk.

## About the Photographer



Arindam Bhattacharya is a nature and wildlife photographer from India who has travelled extensively in the jungles of India and has been to a number of wildlife destinations in Canada, New Zealand and Japan over the past decades. A software architect by profession he is based out of Kolkata. Along with common subjects currently he is focusing more on some of the rare, endangered and less photographed and documented wild species. More of his extensive work can be found on his website- <http://www.arindambhattacharya.com/>

# The Roaring Voice of Ranthambhore

*by Souvik Kundu*

*The fate of Ranthambhore and the fate of the tiger hang in the balance in a race against time before the roars fall silent forever.*

Such mock fights among tiger siblings are extremely common and help them hone their skills which could be the deciding factor between life and death once they reach adulthood and venture out on their own.





The first rays of sun pierce through the thick veil of mist on a cold winter morning which engulfs this vast wilderness, with every passing minute as the rising sun grows bolder and proudly flaunts its might the picture becomes clearer, the forest and its inhabitants come alive marked by the growing chirping of the winged residents. The increased sense of activities all around is clearly palpable as the different species of animals venture out of their nightly refuges and set about their daily businesses. In the midst of all this, emerging through the reddish golden haze of mist and dust the familiar silhouette of a Bengal tiger appears accompanied by the frenzied cacophony of alarm calls sounded by the langur monkeys, peacocks and the grazing herds of antelopes. The apex predator of this eco-system scans its surroundings with a torpid indifference, unsheathes its claws to leave its mark on the bark of a tree and after relishing the frenzy its presence has caused lazily ambles into the still overhanging veil of mist. Such scenes pan out on a daily basis in Ranthambhore National Park, located in the state of Rajasthan in the northern part of India. The park widely known across the globe for being one of the few last refuges of the Bengal tiger, a species pushed to the brink of extinction and fighting for its survival every single day. In a cruel irony of fate, the one species which rules this wilderness, the slightest hint of whose presence causes other creatures to assume the utmost precaution and prompt evasive

*The Bengal tiger, Panthera tigris tigris is one of the 6 remaining sub-species of tiger left and the one with the most number of individuals left in the wild.*

measures, is the one whose future survival is under the biggest of threats. The tiger is the largest of all the big cats, a species which reigns supreme in any eco-system it is a part of, a supreme creature of sheer magnificence and power, often showered with distinguished biological terminologies such as “apex predator” or “megafauna”. The Bengal tiger, Panthera tigris tigris is one of the 6 remaining sub species of tiger and the one with the most number of individuals left in the wild. Most of these individuals can be found in various national parks across India with smaller populations restricted to parts of Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and a handful of individuals in the wild realms of China. This colossal powerhouse of nature is endowed with up to four inches long retractable claws and in some cases four inches long canines. Stealth is its primary modus operandi while hunting down preys, which involves sneaking within 50 meters or less of an unsuspecting prey which is followed by a quick burst of pace and a lethal bite to the jugular. Although not built for speed the tiger has been recorded notching up a speed of 35 miles or more during certain chases. Naturally the question arises, how exactly then a creature so formidable is facing the very real threat of extinction

today. The tiger faces no real threat in the wild, except from the members of its own species. This animal so very well equipped to hunt down its preys and defend itself against any threat however has little defence against our bullets and greed and most importantly ignorance. For centuries the tiger has been hunted down for its hide, claws and canines which are falsely believed to have medicinal values. In times gone by tiger skins or stuffed tigers hunted down by royalties and nobles used to grace the palaces and halls of such establishments as proud symbols of their courage and valour. Even long after such practices were rendered illegal by the involved concerned authorities the demand for tiger skin and other body parts only kept surging, fetching hundreds of thousands of dollars. This paved the way for the flourishing illegal practices of poaching, which still continues rampant despite stringent laws acting as deterrents. Along with this the tiger was faced with its worst enemy, the rapid and aggressive expansion of human settlements leading to the unbelievably rapid loss of its natural habitat.

A cumulative effect of all these factors meant over the last century or a little more the world has lost more than 90% of its tiger population. It is believed a meagre population of approximately 4000 wild tigers belonging to all sub species are left in the wild. The last tiger census of 2014 carried out in India revealed a total of 2,226 Bengal tigers living in the national parks of India.

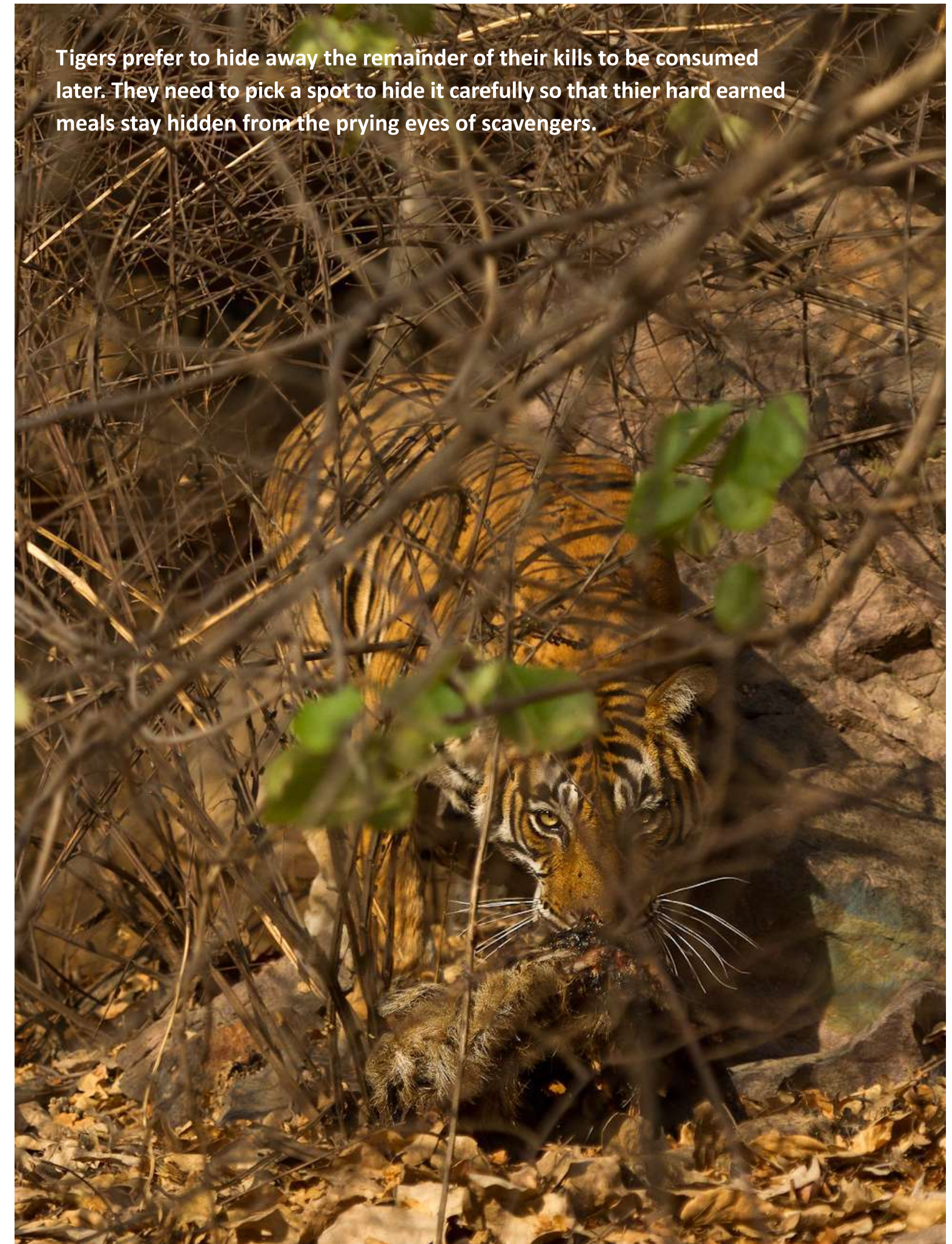
In more ways than one Ranthambhore National Park encapsulates the history of tigers in India and its plummeting fortunes. Ranthambhore National Park previously known as Sawai Madhopur Game Sanctuary was declared a national park in 1980. Ranthambhore was one of the first tiger reserves included in the historic and ambitious Project Tiger programme aimed at conserving a rapidly dwindling tiger population in India launched in 1973 by the erstwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Ranthambhore was formerly the private hunting estates of the maharajas of Jaipur, their now decrepit hunting lodges and perimeter walls engulfed by the forest’s vegetation and dwellers still stand as grim reminders to the tiger’s blood laden past in this wilderness. In fact this not so glorious past of Ranthambhore is not that ancient since hunting tigers was legal in these forests until the early 1970s. Once Ranthambhore was declared a national park in 1980 and stringent anti-poaching laws were brought in there were reasons to believe there will finally be a reversal in the tumultuous fortunes of the tigers. However that has not always been the case, the ever shifting fortunes of tigers in Ranthambhore have been marked with crests and troughs. In 2005 it was reported

*A cumulative effect of all these factors meant over the last century or a little more the world has lost more than 90% of its tiger population*

Wonderful scenes such as this one with the national bird and the national animal of India in a single frame pans out in Ranthambhore everyday.



Tigers prefer to hide away the remainder of their kills to be consumed later. They need to pick a spot to hide it carefully so that thier hard earned meals stay hidden from the prying eyes of scavengers.



On a misty winter morning a tiger cub makes the most of its precious moments with its mother. Scenes like this reiterates the devotion and the affection tiger mothers show towards their cubs.



er cubs stay with their mothers for almost 2 years before venturing out on their own. This two year old male tiger, only cub, enjoys the last few remaining days with his mother, whom he has already outgrown in size.



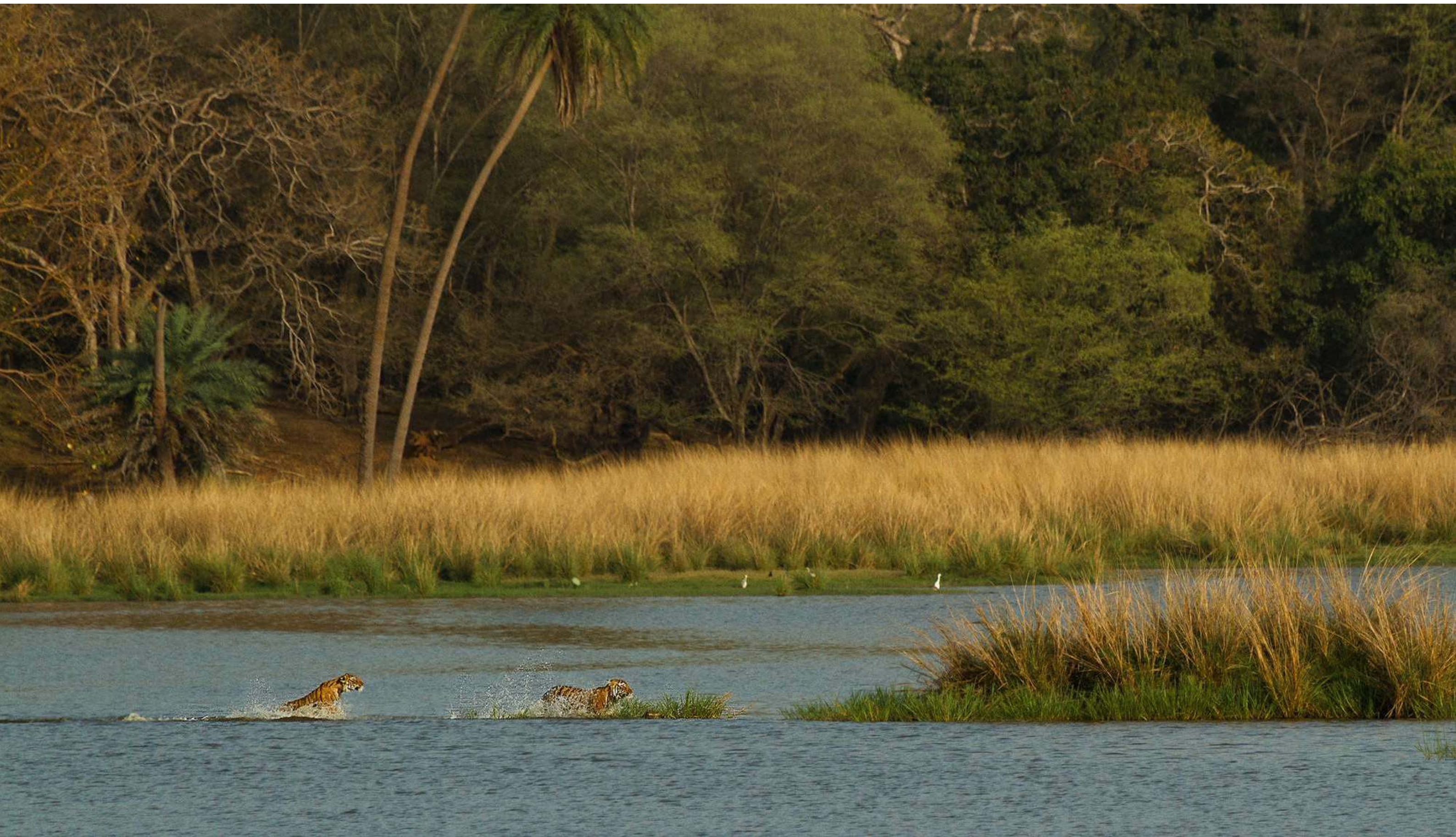
there are about 25 tigers left in the park, a sharp decline from a previous figure from the 1980s which had put the number at more than 40. It was identified poaching was the primary reason behind this decline; authorities suggest almost 20 tigers had fallen prey to illegal poachers between 2000-2004. Authorities were left with no other choice but take stock of these grim developments. The government of India too intervened in this matter and several measures to eliminate the evil of poaching were put into place. The outcomes were heartening and swift, with Ranthambhore

recording a steep increase in about 20 or more tigers during the findings of 2008. The other significant milestone in the history of Ranthambhore put the national park at the heart of the ambitious relocation program in which an adult male tiger was aerially relocated to Sariska Tiger Reserve which shockingly revealed to have not a single tiger living within its wild domains.

Ranthambhore's and its tigers for decades now have been subjects of intense global scrutiny. This could be partially due to Ranthambhore's curious history and its

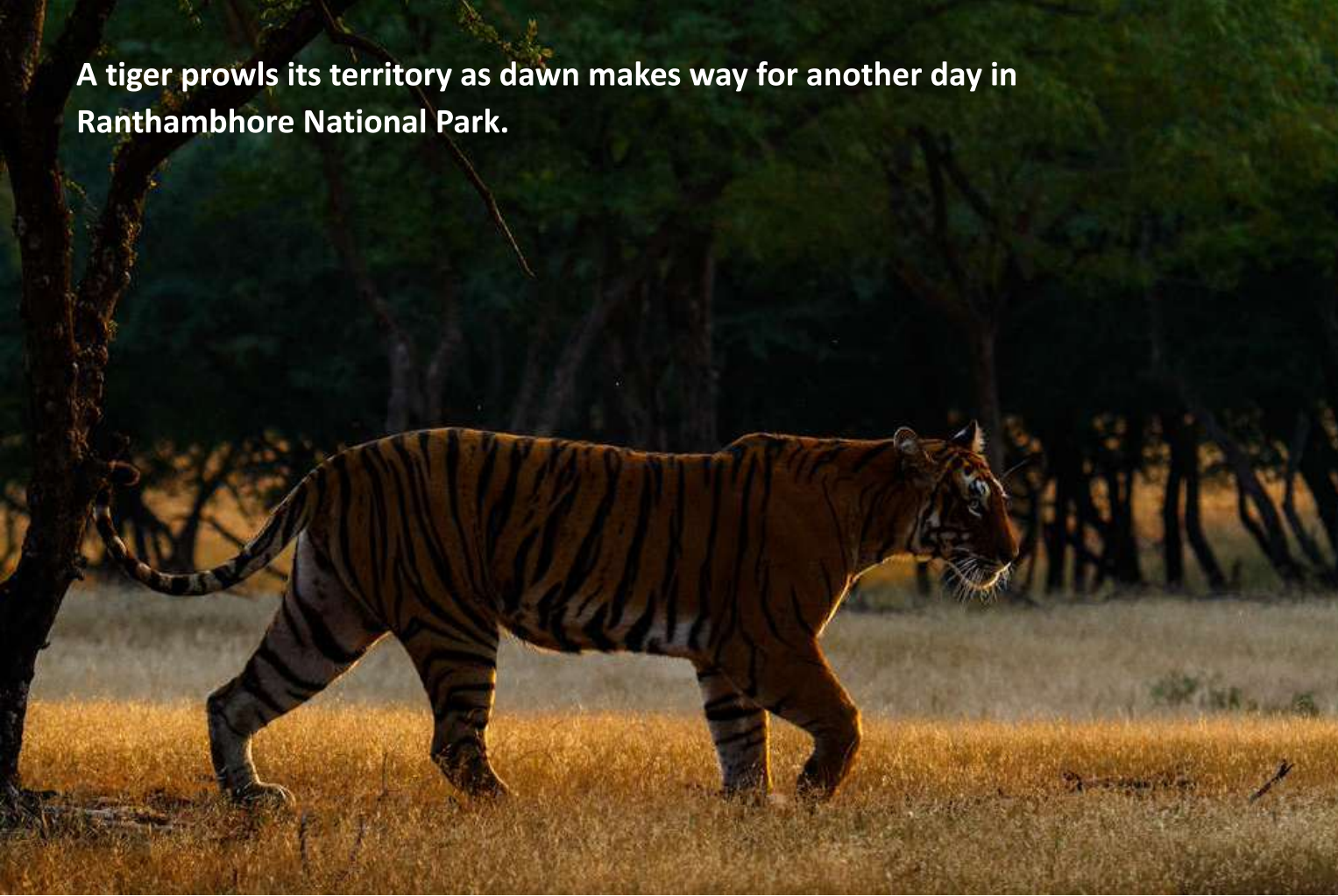
journey from being the death bed for tigers during the rule of the maharajas and nobles or the British to becoming one of the last few remaining safe havens for these magnificent animals. It could also be the presence of some of the more celebrated occupants of the park. Ranthambhore became a household name as the life and times of Machli, arguably the world's most famous tigress unfolded over the countless documentaries and feature films. Machli officially known as T-16 gained worldwide prominence as the "Lady of the Lake" named after the many iconic lakes of

Ranthambhore against the backdrop of the Ranthambhore palace, a territory befitting of the most illustrious queen of the park. Ranthambhore couldn't have asked for a better ambassador than Machli, named after her mother and the signature fish shaped markings on her face was a tigress of superlative skills, an excellent hunter and a most capable mother Machli was incredibly successful in bringing up four litters between 1999-2006, staggering numbers for any wild tigress. This could be attributed to the remarkable skills which this animal displayed from a very early age. In 1999 by the age of two she had developed a fearsome reputation among other park dwellers as a formidable hunter and soon afterwards vanquished her own mother and usurped the prime real estate of Ranthambhore National Park. A dutiful mother fiercely protective of her cubs Machli played a huge role in rejuvenating the park's tiger population after the unfortunate incidents of poaching in the early 2000s. Her exceptional skills as a hunter will forever be etched in the folklores of Ranthambhore, the most significant one being the one face off in which she took on the formidable might of a 14 foot long mugger crocodile and smothered it to death. Machli shared the waters of the lakes in her territory with these fierce predators who themselves are nothing short of nature's miracle, yet Machli almost always seemed to have her way, in other words she was the undisputed queen. As is the rule of life and death,



Ranthambhore is well known for its lakes, in fact Ranthambhore's most famous tiger, a female called Machli was also known as "Lady of the Lakes" after the number of lakes within the territory she ruled for almost 7-8 years. The waters of these lakes are infested with crocodiles and their presence makes these two sub-adult tigers extremely nervous while swimming across the waters of one such lake to the other side. In the absence of their mother their nervousness is even more palpable.

A tiger prowls its territory as dawn makes way for another day in Ranthambhore National Park.



A tiger overlooks its territory within the magical realms of Ranthambhore National Park. (*above*)

Scent marking is the most common technique used by tigers to mark their territories and to ensure any intruding individual steers clear of their domain.



The snarl is usually a display of threat by the tiger and can be the most spine chilling experience of one's life. (*below*)



A tiger family, with the mother and three cubs enjoys the soft gleaming rays of the rising sun in Ranthambhore. The golden-orange hue of their coat along with the black stripes provide them with the perfect camouflage in this setting of light and shadow as is made evident by the third cub who keeps a close watch on its family remaining hidden away in the background.



even the mighty queen couldn't fight off the tolls of old age, this once mighty queen of the lakes had to surrender her territory to a younger and more capable rival. She disappeared from the lakes in 2014 which led to massive search for Ranthambhore's most celebrated daughter. Finally Machli was found far away from her kingdom and was in relative good health. On the fateful day of 18th August in 2016 this

warrior queen of Ranthambhore breathed her last at the exceptional age of 20, leaving the park staff and millions of wildlife enthusiast and admirers teary eyed. In a remarkable turn of events to honour this legendary animal the park authorities cremated her in an iconic public ceremony observing the traditional Hindu crematory rituals. Machli was and will forever remain the pride of Ranthambhore, possibly the

brightest chapter in the entire history of Ranthambhore until surely another Machli comes along; the adulations received by this brilliant being was reflected when in 2013 when the Government of India issued a commemorative stamp to honour her.

The immense contribution of Machli towards Ranthambhore National Park and tigers all over India cannot be emphasized

enough. The life of this tigress from a feisty young cub to the undisputed queen of Ranthambhore could be the critical turning point in the history of the tiger's survival. Seldom has one individual animal been so very successful in captivating the imagination of millions across all spheres. The life and times of Machli changed the future course of Ranthambhore. One of the better maintained parks across the



*Ranthambhore National Park recorded 62 tigers as per the reports of the 2014 tiger census, a remarkable increase from the numbers recorded previously.*

country, Ranthambhore receives hundreds of thousands of tourists every year, the ensuing constant spotlight has forced the authorities to take note of any loopholes of the past which were detrimental to the tiger's well-being. The national park spread over an area of 392 square kilometres, a mosaic of dry deciduous forests and open grassy meadows is home to 62 tigers as per the reports of the 2014 tiger census, a remarkable increase from the numbers recorded previously. The constant flow of visitors has contributed greatly towards the economic benefits enjoyed by a large section of people in this region. While it would be safe to say Ranthambhore appears to be in good health and the tigers are thriving in this safe haven doubts loom large in the horizon. Despite relocations and several fair relocation schemes made available, the ever present and growing human population along the fringes of the park and increased human activities in the buffer region of the park eventually lead to the ill-fated man-animal conflict, the tigers are often at the heart of which. Tigers are known to prey upon the livestock of the villagers, despite the compensations they receive the loss of which hurts them badly, as a result of which the people retaliate either by poisoning the remainder

**While hunting the tiger primarily relies on stealth. Tigers are not built for speed, hence they need to sneak in within less than 50 meters of their prey before charging in for the kill. In spite of being blessed with supreme hunting skills and all the tools required for it, being a predator is not an easy job. Most attempts end in failure, some scientists are of the opinion in places like Ranthambhore the tiger is successful only 5-10% of the time. The deer, its main prey has the advantage in numbers, a deer flock has many pairs of eyes and ears. On top of it, other animals such as the peacock, the langur monkeys sound alarm calls whenever they spot a tiger. This makes the job for a tiger to conceal itself extremely difficult. On other cases such as here, overzealousness got the better of this individual. He leapt into action too soon, allowing the deer that extra bit of time to stage a narrow escape.**



nkkk



A dominant ruler of the lake region for many years, this huge male has been recently ousted by a younger and stronger male. Such developments are typical to the life of a tiger. With old age taking its toll the once undisputed king now prefers a quieter way of life and lives along the fringes of the park.

of the carcass or by hunting down the animal. Increasing tiger numbers too is a double edged sword, with only enough room for a growing tiger population, young or old individuals pushed out of the park boundaries may pose significant threat to the neighbouring human settlements or may even die of starvation or infighting. It is absolutely imperative to keep the designated animal corridors free of any intrusion so that the vanquished tigers may have a safe passage to elsewhere, where they would be able to carve a territory of their own.

The challenges, it goes without saying are great, the park authorities are stretched to

their limits in terms of resources, the neighbouring human settlements' dependence on the forest and its resources will only keep growing, yet the non-negotiable need of the hour is to save the precious very few remaining tigers, in Ranthambhore and elsewhere alike. Despite repeated crackdowns poaching still remains a big concern, the demand for tiger parts in the Chinese black market has only surged with time, the evils plaguing the tiger's future are never at rest. While many previous ambitious efforts and initiatives have yielded no discernible result most conservationists are of the opinion that the tiger's fortune



While the old male was ousted a new generation of rulers are coming up elsewhere in Ranthambahore. This individual with his signature poise is already showing a lot of promise.



can indeed be reversed but for that the efforts have to be relentless and well planned and sustained. Every single small initiative if waged with proper acumen can go a long way in creating an environment where the tiger will roam free without the fear of a bullet or getting caught in a poacher's snare. Ranthambhore of today is the result of hundreds of hours of hard labour put in by legends like Fateh Singh Rathore, who was relentless in pursuing his dream of a safer tomorrow for the tiger, a dream that should live on, a dream that one day must be realised.

**Tigers and humans have always lived in close proximity in Ranthambhore National Park and elsewhere. A huge male tiger nonchalantly passes by as the forest guards in the background look on. From a pragmatic point of view such proximity cannot be desirable since the impending man-animal conflict looms large in the horizon, something out of which neither side can emerge victorious.**

## About the Photographer



Souvik Kundu is from Mumbai and is a banker by profession. He is a keen nature enthusiast and has travelled extensively across various National Parks in India to photograph their biodiversities. His favourite destination is Ranthambhore National Park which he visits frequently to document its famous tigers. Souvik is a firm believer that wildlife photography is a powerful tool for awareness and educating people about the necessity of conservation. Souvik's photographs have been published in a number of national and international publications.

A large, cylindrical monolithic Shiva Linga stands in the center of a stone-walled chamber. The linga is composed of several stacked sections, with a smooth, rounded top. A man with a white beard and hair, wearing white shorts, stands to the left of the linga, leaning against its upper section. The chamber is built with large, rectangular stone blocks, and the floor is a dark, polished surface. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the stone and the man's form.

The monolithic Shiva Linga inside the Badavilinga Temple in Hampi is the largest of its kind among the ruins.

# SPEAKING RUINS

*by Shreenivas Yenni*

*The ancient city of Hampi continues to live through its ruins which offer more than a few glimpses into the past when Hampi used to be one of the richest and one of the most modern cities of the medieval era.*

The surreal ensemble of ancient architecture the stone carvings of which bear testimony to the region's once glorious and affluent past, the culturally as well as historically wealthy anecdotes of its annals and the prestigious insignia of being a UNESCO World Heritage Site which it proudly wears on its lapel, together in a nutshell describe the iconic tourism destination that Hampi is. Hampi, often referred to as the Group of Monuments at Hampi, an ancient city carved in stone is located in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. The origin and the subsequent rise of Hampi can be dated back to as early as the 14th century when the city used to be the nerve centre of the erstwhile powerful Vijaynagara Empire. Several factors contributed towards the meteoric rise of Hampi to such dizzying heights, the most significant one of which was its geographical location. Hampi located along the banks of the Tungabhadra River and bordered by hills on three sides was naturally well fortified, which served as the ideal site for becoming the capital city of the empire. The waterways of Tungabhadra River served as the ideal trade routes to carry out business with other empires which led to the rapid prosperity which ushered in a new era in the history of Hampi. During this period, particularly by the end of the 14th century the riverside capital city of Hampi had

metamorphosed into arguably the richest city in India and second only to Beijing in the whole of Asia during the mediaeval era. The enviable growth and prosperity of Hampi remains documented in the chronicles of a number of travellers from Persia, Eastern Europe as well as the Portugese traders from their colonies in Goa. During this period Hampi used to carry out regular trading affairs with these foreign countries. This steadily led to heavy investments being made by the rulers in uplifting the overall infrastructure of the city. A busy and prosperous city, with its bustling markets, numerous trading centres and places of worship and a keen eye for aesthetics, it would not be an exaggeration to say Hampi was one of the more modern cities of the mediaeval era. Despite the natural defences with which the city was blessed with, it failed to hold out against the pillaging hordes of the mighty army of the Sultan of Bijapur. Hampi and the Vijaynagara Empire fell to the might of the combined mighty forces of the Muslim Sultanate led by the Sultan of Bijapur, who ravaged the city, reducing its beautiful architecture carved in stone to mere ruins, usurping its flourishing economy and trade markets and vandalising everything which stood in their path. The blow was too severe for even a flourishing city like Hampi to recover from, after these fateful

occurrences of 1565, the once iconic city of Hampi was forever reduced to a city of ruins.

The ruins of Hampi's once glorious past are spread over an area of more than 4000 hectares and are located near the modern day city of Hosapete in Karnataka. Even in the ruins, Hampi upholds much more than just glimpses of its once beautiful past. The ruins are everywhere and so are the artefacts of the unparalleled architecture of Hampi. The ancient places of worship, the temples, the shrines, the pillared courtyards, the ceremonial halls for the royals and nobles, the memorial structures all of which had shaped the city of Hampi carved out of the surrounding mountains now lie in ruins. Their glory days are a thing of the past, the water fountains no longer produce the symphony caused by streams of water gushing out of their mouths, the royal courtyards have for centuries not witnessed the gathering of the emperor and his subjects, an eerie silence looms large over the ruins of the busiest market places and trading hubs, yet in all its ruins Hampi has carefully preserved the unmatched craftsmanship and the brave visions of the long forgotten artisans. It almost seems like the ruins are still indebted to the abled hands which carved them out of the course surfaces of the mountains all around and elevated them to such a pedestal of beauty which is still being admired by millions who throng all around them to doff their hats in sheer admiration. It is in these ruins,

the legacy of Hampi still lives on, attracting millions of tourists from all over the country and across the globe.

One of the most visited places in the state of Karnataka, Hampi has been one of the most prominent tourist destinations in India for many decades now. Among the ruins which still tell the tale of Hampi, the ancient Virupaksha Temple plays a crucial role in preserving the legacy of Hampi. This 7th century temple, a place of worship for Lord Shiva who is popularly known as Virupaksha in this region is one of the finest specimens of the famed Dravidian architecture is a fiercely imposing structure. According to some records this temple was located at the heart of one of the most flourishing trade markets of ancient Hampi. Episodes from various Hindu mythologies are carved on the interiors and the pillars of the temple reiterating the architectural excellence of the artisans of this era. This is among the very few structures from the ancient era in Hampi which has survived the test of time and the slaughter at the hands of the Sultanate and still stands in its full glory.

The other remarkable structure which stands proudly among the ruins is the Kadalekalu Ganesha Temple, situated along the slope of Hemakoot hill. The monolithic statue of Lord Ganesha inside the temple premises is a towering structure measuring at almost 4.6 meters and is one of the largest statues of Lord Ganesha in the whole of southern India. The belly of

**D**uring this period particularly by the end of the 14th century the riverside city of Hampi had metamorphosed into arguably the richest city in India.



A devotee offers her worships to a deity in the Virupaksha Temple.

Devotees and visitors gather outside the Virupaksha Temple during the ceremonial chariot procession.



A devotee cleanses himself before entering the sacred premises of the Virupaksha Temple. (above)



Every year millions of devotees and worshippers visit the Virupaksha Temple to offer their worships to Lord Virupaksha.



**The Anjeyanadri hill in Hampi lies at the centre of Anegondi area. The hill is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Hanuman. The white washed temple of Lord Hanuman which rests at the top of the hill can be accessed by the 570 steps leading up to it. The summit offers a panoramic view of Hampi and promises to be a breathtaking experience.**

*he ruins of Hampi's past are spread over an area of 4000 hectares and are located near the modern day city of Hosapete in Karanataka.*

the statue resembles the shape of a Bengal gram, which in local language is known as Kadalekalu, this explains the interesting name of this place of worship. An array of slender granite pillars upholds the robust structure of the iconic temple, the beautiful carvings of mythological characters on these pillars stand out in their own rights. Every year millions of devotees through the temple premises to offer their worships to Lord Ganesha and several others visit this place for its beautiful architecture and the scenic view of the surrounding landscape.

Among the few remaining structures in the ruins of Hampi nobody else celebrates the extraordinary architecture of Hampi in a more extravagant manner than the Vittala Temple. An abode of Lord Vittala, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the temple was constructed during the rule of King Devaraya, a ruler of the then Vijaynagara Empire during the 15th century. However it was during the rule of Krishnadevaraya the temple premises were expanded and the temple received a further facelift, the present structure of the Vittala Temple can be attributed to the patronage it received during the reign of Krishnadevaraya. The sprawling temple complex is home to a number of prayer halls, community halls, shrines and pavilions and can be accessed via three towering gateways. By dint of its sheer grandiose the Vittala Temple remains the most visited as well as the most photographed among all the temple sites in Hampi.



The gigantic monolithic statue of Lakshmi Narasimha is the largest of all the monolithic statues still standing among the ruins of Hampi. The statue located within the premises of Lakshmi Narasimha temple was built during the reign of Krishnadevaraya during the 15th century. This giant structure stands tall at an imposing 6.7 meters with exquisite and detailed carvings all over it. The statue was vandalised by the Sultanate's army at the hands of whom the figure of Goddess Lakshmi was severed from the figure of Narasimha. Even now one arm of Goddess Lakshmi can be seen resting upon the back of Narasimha. The severed statue of Goddess Lakshmi is currently preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Kamalapura.

The monolithic statue of Lord Ganesha inside the Kadalekalu Ganesha Temple situated along the slope of Hemakoot hill in Hampi is an imposing structure standing tall at 4.6 meters and is one of the largest statues of Lord Ganesha in the whole of southern India. The belly of the statue resembles the shape of a Bengal gram, which in local language is known as "Kadalekalu". This explains the curious nomenclature of the statue as well as the temple here. Every year millions of people throng the premises of this temple to offer their worships to Lord Ganesha.



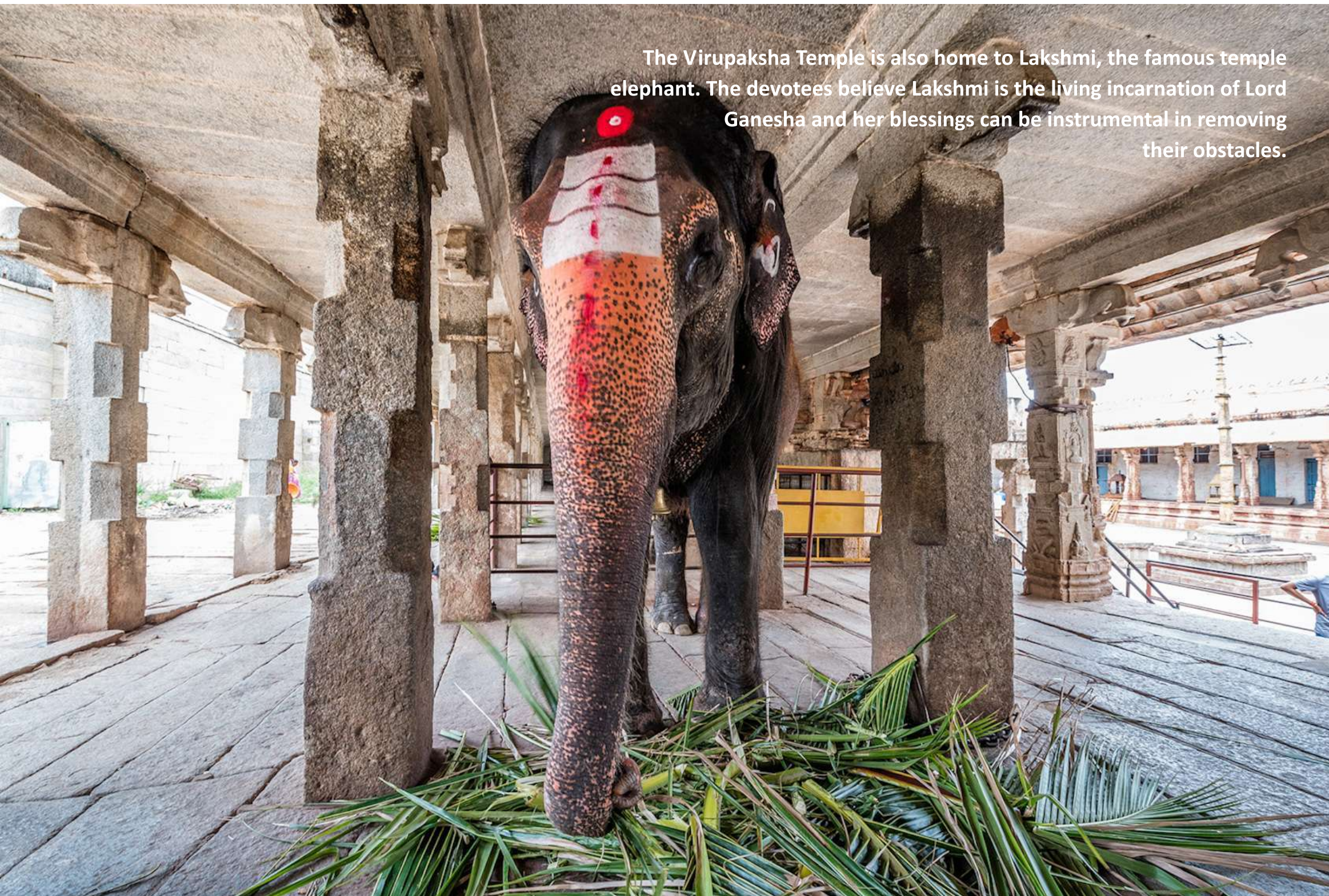


The sprawling premises of the Vijaya Vittala temple is home to a number of prayer halls, ceremonial halls, shrines and community halls. The temple was built during the reign of Krishnadevaraya in the 15th century.





The Manmath Pushkarini is among the many pushkarinis or sacred water tanks in the ruined town of Hampi. These water tanks were used for various religious functions and rituals and still remain one of the major tourist attractions in Hampi.



The Virupaksha Temple is also home to Lakshmi, the famous temple elephant. The devotees believe Lakshmi is the living incarnation of Lord Ganesha and her blessings can be instrumental in removing their obstacles.

No mention of Hampi can be complete without a reference to the iconic statue of Lakshmi Narasimha. This sheer gigantic monolithic structure is the largest of the entire monolithic statues still standing among the ruins of Hampi. Once again a result of the patronage enjoyed by so many iconic monuments in Hampi, the statue and the temple of Lakshmi Narasimha was

built during the reign of Krishnadevaraya in the 15th century. The statue of Lakshmi Narasimha one of the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi is a giant structure standing tall at 6.7 meters with numerous exquisite carvings and detailed craftsmanship all over it. According to Hindu mythology, Narasimha is the fourth incarnation of Lord Vishnu and descended

upon the earth in the form of a man with the face and claws of a lion. The statue too adheres to these mythological descriptions, bearing the face of a lion with the manes carved in great details. Like so many other monuments and structures the statue of Lakshmi Narasimha too bears the blemishes from the darkest as well as the most violent episode which

smear the rich history of Hampi with the invasion of the Sultanate's army. The invading pillaging hordes of Sultan's army desecrated the statue and severed the figure of Goddess Lakshmi from the back of Narasimha. One of the arms of Goddess Lakshmi was separated from the body which can still be seen resting on the back of Narasimha. The severed figure of Goddess Lakshmi since discovery has been preserved at the Archaeological Museum of Kamalapur which also houses several other ruins from Hampi in a bid to preserve the ancient past of Hampi etched in the carvings on the stones and granites.

In this ancient land, which stood witness to the best and the worst of humanity, the history and tales from eras gone by remain carved in the pillars, the sculptures and the monuments. The ruins within their rocky cores preserve stories from their tumultuous past, enthralling us, titillating our senses to get a glimpse of what life was like in one of the richest and most advanced mediaeval era city in India. Within the realms of Hampi, the past still dictates terms, the history still reigns supreme, it seems like a place where time has stood still, where the ruins of the once imposing structures, the finest monuments still long for their glory days and refuses to move on, only eagerly waiting for streams of admirers to come their way with the hope of reliving the glory of their past through the adulatory glances they cast at them.



Anecdotes from the once prosperous ancient past of Hampi still remain entrapped in these ruins, which are the only connecting dots between Hampi's present and its past. These ruins offer more than glimpses into the ancient history of Hampi, when it used to be arguably the richest city in India and one of the most modern cities in the whole of Asia, second only to Beijing.



The Kadalekalu Ganesha temple is also well known for its slender granite pillars on which characters from Hindu mythologies are carved with great details. The temple premises are also extremely popular among the visitors for the spectacular view of Hampi and the countryside which it has to offer.



The setting sun casts a beautiful hue of golden yellow upon the ruins of Hampi, painting a sublime picture.

**T**he ruins within their rocky cores preserve stories from their tumultuous past, enthralling us, titillating our senses to get a glimpse of what life was like in the ancient city of Hampi.

## About the Photographer



Shreenivas Yenni hails from the town of Gangavathi in Karnataka. He is an engineer by profession and is currently working as the Junior Engineer in the Karnataka Power Transmission Sector. By his own admission photography has been his favourite hobby for ever since he can remember. Most of his photographs are based on street life, portraits of people whom he meets during his travels and the beautiful landscapes and the beauty of nature which he encounters. He wishes to keep travelling with a view of achieving his long cherished dream which is to document the different cultures, rituals, heritage and traditions across India and the globe.

More of his work is available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/shreenivas.a.yenni>

[https://www.instagram.com/shreenivas\\_yenni](https://www.instagram.com/shreenivas_yenni)

<https://www.flickr.com/people/136553948@N07/>

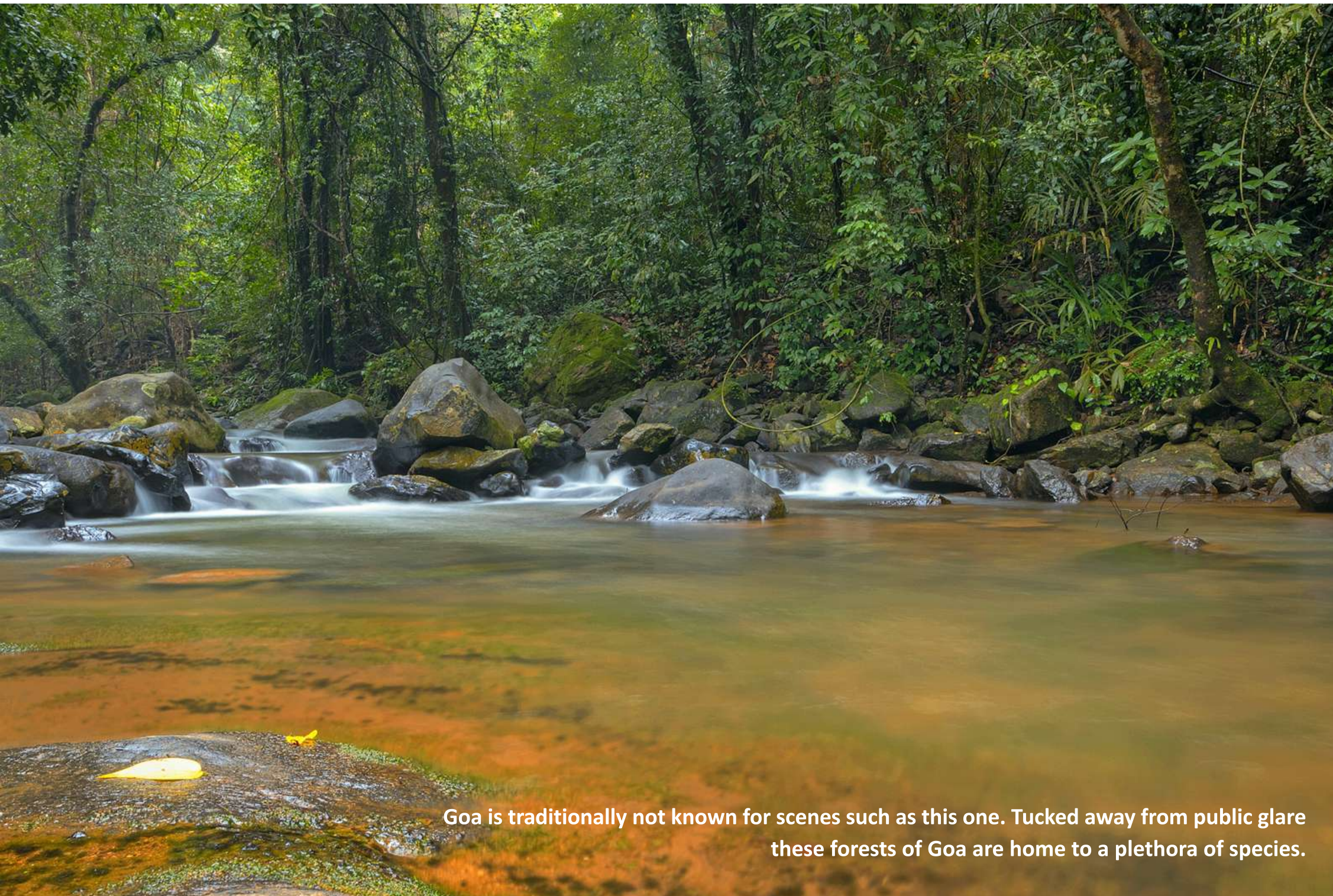
A large, smooth, reddish-brown snake is coiled on a tree branch in a forest. The snake has a glossy, scale-like texture and large, cat-like eyes. The background is a dense forest with sunlight filtering through the trees.

# THE HIDDEN GEMS OF WILD GOA

*by Anvay Nakade*

*A look into the lesser known and much lesser celebrated wild side of Goa*

The Forsten's cat snake like other species of cat snakes has large cat like eyes, however this particular species is a giant among cat snakes and the largest of this species.



Goa is traditionally not known for scenes such as this one. Tucked away from public glare these forests of Goa are home to a plethora of species.

**T**he state of Goa may be the smallest in India in terms of geographical area but certainly scores well above many others by dint of its charisma and attitude. For decades now, Goa has been synonymous among Indians as well as foreign tourists with a spirit of festivity, a place of relaxed vibes, a place where celebrations need no particular reason. The major attraction of

Goa lies in its 101 kilometre long coastline which stretches along the Arabian Sea. While it is true the beaches of Goa are popular partying destinations and are still struggling in more ways than one to shun their identities as being the staple of the hippy trail, it would be grossly unfair to characterize the whole of Goa with such clichés. More so since the state of Goa is

not only about its beaches, beyond these beaches and far removed from the glitzy realm Goa unveils to its tourists, lies a lush landscape, home to a rich variety of spice fields, ancient temples and churches and possibly the most well-guarded secret of Goa, a fabulously rich and diverse ecosystem. This diversity can be attributed to the varying altitudes and soil types of

Goa, which has resulted in a diverse range of ecosystems and forests ranging from the mangrove trees which jostle for space against each other along the muddy river banks and the backwaters to the sub-tropical hilly forests. Along with it, the large number of beaches too boast of a rich coastal ecosystem and marine wildlife. In spite of its diverse coastal and mangrove ecosystem along with the open scrublands, it is the Western Ghats running across Goa which has played the most crucial role in establishing Goa's very own identity as a biodiversity hotspot.

The Western Ghats running across Goa roughly constitute about 20-22% of the total geographical area of the state. Despite being the smallest state in India in terms of geographical area and accounting for only 2% of the total area of the Western Ghats, the 754 square kilometres of the forest cover of Goa's Western Ghats is contiguous with the Western Ghats in the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka. As a result of which the sub-tropical forests of the Western Ghats in Goa become extremely significant in terms of being a crucial animal corridor as well as adding the much needed diversity in the existing gene pool of the various populations. Apart from this the location of Goa means the junction of the northern and the southern sector of the Western Ghats lies in Goa, towards the south of Valpoi. As a result of which the protected forests of Goa play the most significant role of

The forests of Goa are home to many wonderful creatures such as this owlet moth. These moths are mainly night fliers and feed on the nectar, fruit saps or other sweet fluids.



A female huntsman spider with her egg sac. The females of this species are well known for aggressively defending their egg sacs when they perceive any threat to their youngsters.



becoming the connecting links between these two sectors of the Western Ghats and are extremely vital for maintaining the cohesive nature of this wilderness, especially when forest fragmentation and the perils associated with it are some of the biggest challenges threatening the future of the Western Ghats. Thus Goa ensures the wilderness of the Western

Ghats extend as one large stretch of wild wonderland all the way from Maharashtra till Karnataka as one contiguous repository of countless of nature's unique species. Among the wildlife sanctuaries of Goa, some of the most prominent ones such as those of Mhadei, Mollem, Netravali and Cotigao and the Bhagwan Mahavir National Park at Mollem are nestled in the

lush lap of the Western Ghats. The Western Ghats one of the most prominent and environmentally crucial hotspots in the world with its remarkable plethora of flora and fauna needs little introduction. Home to thousands of varied species and several thousand yet to be discovered this is truly a wonder of nature. It goes without saying the forests of the Western Ghats have

blessed the wild realms of Goa with this same diversity too. The wildlife sanctuaries of Goa, have slowly gained prominence among nature enthusiasts, naturalists and conservationists over the years and are presently the nerve centres of countless researches and other study programmes conducted by scientists not only from India but also from across the globe. In fact



The Indian violet tarantula is a beautiful arachnid endemic to the forests of the Western Ghats.



The hump-nosed pit viper can be readily identified by its triangular broad head and the distinct snout which is turned slightly upwards resulting in a snout like appearance.

many experts are of the opinion the tropical and sub-tropical wilderness of Goa can be compared in terms of bio-diversity with the Amazon basin. These wild wonders come in all shapes and sizes. Any trail along the pristine mountainous slopes of the Western Ghats in Goa is laden with some of nature's amazing creatures. The sheer joy in finding them, observing them and marvelling at the various adaptations developed by these creatures to carve a niche for themselves in this wild domain can be one of the most surreally satisfying experiences for any nature enthusiast. It will be an exercise in futility in trying to chronicle this wild plethora in one single article, there are thousands of them, each unique and beautiful in their own rights, each most capable of thriving in this wild domain which they have been calling their homes for so many centuries now. This feature is an ode to some of the exquisite macro fauna which can be found in the wild lap of Goa and some of their cold blooded neighbours who are an integral part of this wild kingdom.

This previously not so well defined aspect of Goa has slowly but steadily come to light over the past few decades, with more and more people visiting Goa with a view of experiencing the wild side of the state instead of the much popular and sought after beach life it has to offer. This goes without saying has raised significant awareness among the local communities and successfully piqued the interests of

naturalists from all over the world. It seems Goa's wild kingdom along with its subjects have embarked upon a mission to carve an entirely different identity for the state, one which couldn't be any more different from the one which has been splashed on the covers of many a travel magazines or journals, a narrative which has so far been predominantly headed by its sun kissed beaches and the festive way of life along them. With an increasing interest in exploring the wild diversity of Goa, comes the added responsibility of devising a sustainable model which would ensure such explorations are in sync with nature and never develop an intrusive character. While an increased interest in Goa's wildlife certainly guarantees an increase in awareness and the much needed resources in monetary terms which can be crucial in safeguarding these forests, it brings with it the scourge of an increased carbon footprint in some of nature's most pristine dominions.

In this regard it is absolutely imperative to put in place certain rules and regulations and encourage ethical practices while observing the many different acts of this never ending play being conducted by nature on a daily even minute by minute basis. Even in all its might and vigour any ecosystem is a fragile one, which can suffer an untimely demise in so many different ways. The delicate balance of any ecosystem including that of Goa's can be tilted unfavourably with the slightest of





intrusions or foreign influence. If the proposed plans and the strategies are implemented properly in a well thought out manner the wild kingdoms of Goa will not only thrive, they will affect the lives of millions of human beings in the most positive manner and we will be able to safeguard the future of a wide range of species during a time when the world can ill afford to lose any more.


The forest floors of Goa are often witnesses to such dramatic scenes. A scorpion mother can have as many as 100 babies in a single brood. The young ones are born alive instead of hatching from eggs like insects. When they are born the young scorpion babies have extremely soft exoskeleton which leaves them vulnerable to predators. During this period the babies crawl on to their mother's back as can be seen in this photograph and stay with her for the next 10-20 days waiting for their exoskeletons to grow thick and hard before venturing out on their own.

The saw-scaled viper is a widely distributed snake across India and is well known for its irritable predisposition. When threatened the snake assumes an S shape and rubs its scales against each other mimicking the sound made by a wood saw to warn off its enemies, which led to its name. The extremely potent venom of this snake is a lethal combination of hemotoxins and cytotoxins and is believed to be the leading cause of most deaths due to snake bite in India.



A close encounter with the ever so majestic saw-scaled viper.



A Malabar pit viper snake is coiled on a mossy tree branch. The snake's body is covered in intricate patterns of brown, blue, and yellow. Its head is raised and turned to the left. The background is a lush green forest with many trees and branches.

The majesty of a Malabar pit viper endemic to the Western Ghats is something no naturalist can ever get tired of. The famed pits right in front of their eyes are crucial to the hunting abilities of these serpents. These heat sensitive pits enable these snakes to produce a thermal image of their surroundings allowing them to pinpoint their warm blooded preys even in complete darkness by sensing their body heat which particularly during nights is higher than the surroundings.



In the natural world the Malabar pit viper can be easily regarded as the flag bearer of polymorphism, a phenomenon in which different individuals belonging to the same species exhibit different colour morphs. The Malabar pit viper exhibits a wide range of colour morphs along with various patterns, some of the commonly seen morphs are green, yellow and brown. This particular individual sporting an orange morph is also a fairly common colouration observed in this species.



## About the Photographer

Anvay Nakade is a Pune based amateur photographer with a passion for shooting anything small in nature. He started off with a humble Pentax point and shoot camera before graduating to a Fuji S6500FD during his college days. During this period he developed a particular affinity towards photomacrography. He was one of the first users of the Raynox DCR-250 in India and still owns the original Japanese box packing. These days he is devoting all his attention to improve his photomacrography skills. He also runs a small group called “Pune Macrographers” on facebook and instagram where everything is focused on photomacrography.

More of his work is available at:

**Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/anvancy>

**Website:**

<http://anvancy.com/>

**Instagram:**

<https://www.instagram.com/anvancyphotography2/>

A vibrant green palm viper snake is the central focus, coiled elegantly around a dark, moss-covered branch. The snake's body is a brilliant emerald green, with lighter green and yellowish stripes running along its length. Its head is pointed towards the right, and its eyes are visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a dense forest. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture of the snake's scales and the moss on the branch.

FOREVER WILD  
DOMAIN OF  
**COSTA RICA**

*by Rahul Pratti*

*An unlikely success story of the Central American nation beating all odds  
in its noble quest to conserve its natural resources and the wild realms.*

A green palm viper gracefully slithers along the branches of Costa Rica's forest.

A red-eyed tree frog perched on its arboreal home in the forests of Costa Rica.



The Central American nation of Costa Rica is a place of unparalleled natural beauty, where in stark contrast to modern times ancient rainforests, pristine beaches and towering volcanic peaks still dominate much of this country's geography. Costa Rica is home to one of nature's finest ensemble cast of rare and unique animals, this treasure trove of the natural world hides in its realms some of the rarest animals found on the face of earth; the canopies as well as the forest floors of the widespread rainforests across the country are home to a plethora of species. It is quite remarkable how this small Central American nation sandwiched between two of its more illustrious cousins in the form of North and South America has forged the distinct reputation of being one of the most prominent biodiversity hotspots in the world. In today's world it is quite inconceivable to think of an entire nation much of whose identity is governed by its natural world and its elements. This incredibly rich biodiversity has done much more than just shaping an identity for this Central American nation. The richness in biodiversity attracts millions of tourists, conservationists, naturalists and wildlife enthusiasts from all over the globe to the shores of Costa Rica which has contributed significantly to the ever so booming tourism industry in Costa Rica. Quite naturally the question arises what are the factors which have contributed towards this amazingly rich bounty of life found in the Costa Rican forests. A significant

portion of this can be attributed to the location of Costa Rica. The country is located within the Meso-American biodiversity hotspot region, which includes the landscape from southern Mexico to Panama. As it is with any other biodiversity hotspot, the Meso-American biodiversity hotspot region too is teeming with species. Costa Rica being curiously situated in this geographical location is blessed with an abundance of wild species. For a small mass of land which occupies barely 0.03% of the world's landmass Costa Rica is home to a phenomenal number of species, both in terms of sheer population as well as diversity. There are more than 850 identified species of birds found in Costa Rica which makes up for almost 9% of the total avian population in the world. Various species of bats too have developed a strong affinity for the Costa Rican wilderness with almost 10% of the global bat population calling Costa Rica their home. Life flows seamlessly dawning its most colourful cloaks in this wild wonderland, while the endless chatters of its colourful feathered occupants reverberate across the forest canopies, life in cold blood although not devoid of colours pans out on the forest floor, along the streams and pools of water as the reptiles and amphibian species jostle with other species for survival in this intricately weaved ecosystem. Among the Costa Rican amphibians the different species of frogs deserve a special mention, partly because of their incredibly diverse and colourful



appearances and mostly because they are the most widely distributed and easily found of them all. The most easily recognisable among them all is the red-eyed frog, easily distinguished by its large red eyes with vertically narrowed pupil. The vibrant green of its body along with the blue stripe along the sides makes it one of the most colourful and recognisable species of frogs found in Costa Rica. Among the other species of frogs which enjoy their fair share of attention are the poison dart frogs of Costa Rica. The one reason for their ever increasing popularity is they can be easily spotted since these animals are diurnal in nature. Apart from being diurnal this happens to be an incredibly vocal species where the males constantly defend their territories by sending out loud warning calls to any intruder. The reptiles too have carved a well-defined niche for themselves in the wilderness of Costa Rica. Flanked by the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean on either side the beaches of Costa Rica welcome a wide range of sea turtles which arrive at these beaches during the nesting period. The olive ridley turtle, the loggerhead turtle, the leatherback turtle are some of the frequent visitors to these beaches. While the beaches are dominated by the turtles, the forest floor and the branches of trees are preferred homes for a wide array of snake species. A significant majority of Costa Rica's snake population is non-venomous. Some of them spend their entire lives on the forest floors while some lead an arboreal way of life, often mimicking branches and vines of trees while lying waiting for an unsuspecting prey to come within its reaches. Among the few venomous species of snakes found in Costa Rica the green palm viper is one of them. This arboreal species spends most of its life among the dense foliage of trees and the emerald green colouration of its body coupled with its slender built provides this snake with the perfect camouflage in the greenery of the forest.

**The green palm viper is a brilliant emerald coloured slender pit viper found in the montane rainforests of Costa Rica and Panama. Being an arboreal species the green morph of this snake helps it to blend perfectly with its surroundings where it stages an ambush waiting for its unsuspecting prey.**



The golden-eyed leaf frog is a relatively large arboreal species of frog found in the high altitudinal forests of Costa Rica and Panama. The signature golden yellow iris of these frogs led to their nomenclature.



The tropical rattlesnake is among the other venomous snake species found in Costa Rica. The realm of this rainforest dweller extends from the wilderness of Mexico all the way to Argentina and Brazil in South America including the rainforests of Central America. This heavy bodied snake ranging within 3-6 feet in length lies in ambush for its prey along the forest floors where it preys upon smaller rodents and other mammals, lizards and other reptiles and even birds which venture close enough to it. The venom of this species is a lethal cocktail of neurotoxic and hemotoxic components which target the central nervous system of its victim at the same time causing severe damages to tissues and muscles. In this amazing wild wonderland which is home to such a medley of species, each beautiful and unique in their own rights it is impossible to list together all of them. This photo feature highlights some of the cold blooded species which have called this Central American nation their home for millions of years now. This is just a glimpse into the treasure trove of natural wonders which lie hidden in the thickets and canopies and beaches of Costa Rica-nature's very own paradise. In this regard it will be unfair to not acknowledge the efforts put in by the concerned authorities to maintain the sanctity and pristineness of the Costa Rican wilderness. Nature had blessed many other parts of the world with a bounty of its own only to see them denigrate under the clutches of our insatiable greed, ill-thought

urbanization and cruelty. However quite remarkably that has not been the case with Costa Rica. In 2010 Costa Rica won the Future Policy award at a global summit for biodiversity in Japan for being a pioneer in protecting its natural wealth. This achievement was even more significant since Costa Rica is one of the many developing nations across the globe, which as conventional norms suggest are more dependent on their natural resources than some of the more developed nations. Well planned policies such as channelling funds from fuel taxes, car stamp duties and collection of energy fees for the protection and management of its natural resources and providing environmentally beneficial services such as clean air, fresh air and biodiversity protection have played a huge role in achieving this noble objective. Landowners have been encouraged and incentivized to preserve and replenish the existing forest cover in a sustainable model which has led to the increase in forest cover from 25% in 1985 to almost 50% today. All this along with setting up expert panels and several commissions with civil servants, political representatives and field experts in the form of scientists, naturalists, conservationists, weather experts have greatly helped the authorities to come up with a sustainable model for development in sync with the primary objective of preserving the natural resources and the rich biodiversity of the country. When all these factors are taken into account it comes as a little surprise that Costa Rica's



The medium sized parrot snake is a species endemic to the tropical forests of Central America and the northern reaches of South America. Armed with a mild venom the parrot snake is largely arboreal and feeds mainly on small lizards, birds and tree dwelling frogs. Its slender body and uniformly bright green colouration give this snake the appearance of a tendril often fooling its prey.

rank was 30 among 180 countries in the list of Environmental Performance Index of 2018. In today's world where vanishing forest cover, extinction of endangered species and depleting natural resources have become more or less a way of life for all of us, the urgency shown by Costa Rica in stemming the rot and the results achieved within a relatively short span of time can certainly act as a successful model of conservation for some of the more illustrious nations across the globe. This small Central American nation with its incredibly rich biodiversity has shown the courage and the heart and above everything else has embraced its natural world with the noble purpose of safeguarding it, something we all can take a leaf out of to express our gratitude to the amazing natural world we all are a part of.

The masked tree frog easily distinguishable by its relatively large size and a masklike stripe extending from the nostril to the upper end of its front limbs is a tree frog species found in Costa Rica. These frogs are nocturnal and during the day prefer to sleep on surfaces of large leaves. A distinguishably large disk like structure at the top of each finger can be seen, these disks have adhesive properties which enable these frogs to cling on to branches and twigs of trees as they go about with their daily arboreal way of life.





The strawberry poison-dart frog is a widespread species of poison-dart frog commonly found in humid lowlands and premontane forests of Costa Rica and other parts of Central America. The strawberry poison-dart frog is most well known for its widespread variation in its appearance. It is believed the species appears in 15-30 different colour morphs. This is a relatively small species of frog and primarily diurnal in nature. Males of this species are fiercely territorial while females and sub-adults are known to be more sociable.

The red-eyed tree frog, another colourful inhabitant of the Neotropical rainforests of Costa Rica can be easily identified by the virtue of its bright red eyes with vertically narrow pupils. As their name suggests, these frogs are arboreal and the primarily greenish colouration helps them to camouflage in the lush green cover of the forests. The large red eyes is thought of as another defensive mechanism adopted by them where the vibrant colouration of the eyes is meant to momentarily startle its enemies allowing these frogs that extra bit of time to pull off a hasty escape.

The tropical rattlesnake is widely distributed across Costa Rica inhabiting rainforests, open grasslands, dry forest even open dry regions. The venom of tropical rattlesnake is a deadly cocktail of neurotoxin and hemotoxin which affects the central nervous system of its victim causing paralysis along with heavy damages to muscles and tissues. Although armed with a lethal venom they pose little threat to humans as they tend to avoid human presence and would only resort to using its venom when it is not left with the option to escape when accidentally confronted by humans.





The forest floors of Costa Rica teem with lizards such as this one. They come in different sizes, shapes and most importantly colourations.



## About the Photographer

**Rahul Pratti** based out of Hyderabad, describes himself as a nature lover, traveller, sports fan and most importantly an avid wildlife photographer. Pursuing wildlife photography since 2008 he is an I.T professional with close to two decades of professional experience with many large corporations. His work has been published in many leading magazines across the globe. He travels extensively both within India and abroad, visiting places of interest to hone both his photography skills and update his knowledge of natural history. More of his work can be found on the below mentioned social channels.

**Instagram:**

[https://www.instagram.com/pratti\\_rahul](https://www.instagram.com/pratti_rahul)

**NatGeo Your Shot profile:**

<http://m.yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/profile/1056545/#/photos/>

**500px:** <https://500px.com/rahulpratti>

**Facebook Photography Page:**

<https://m.facebook.com/NatureWildlifeRahul>

*The Treasures  
of*  
**OCEAN**

*by Garima Garg*

THE QUEST OF ONE MAN  
TO UNCOVER AND  
PRESERVE THE TREASURES  
HIDDEN IN THE DEPTH OF  
OUR OCEANS AND SPREAD  
AWARENESS ABOUT THEM



The various stages of development of pearl at display inside the India Seashell Museum.



The place attracts hundreds of visitors everyday and has fast gained the reputation of being one of the most prominent attractions of this region.

than 40,000 shells of 2,300 species on display here. While some are as small as a chickpea, some displays measure up to 2 feet. The museum was opened to public in 2013.

What sets this particular collection of shells and pearls apart is the meticulousness with which they are arranged and displayed. It is breathtakingly detailed and unlike anything one has ever seen in a museum in India. The label slips next to the items mention their scientific name as well as the country of origin.

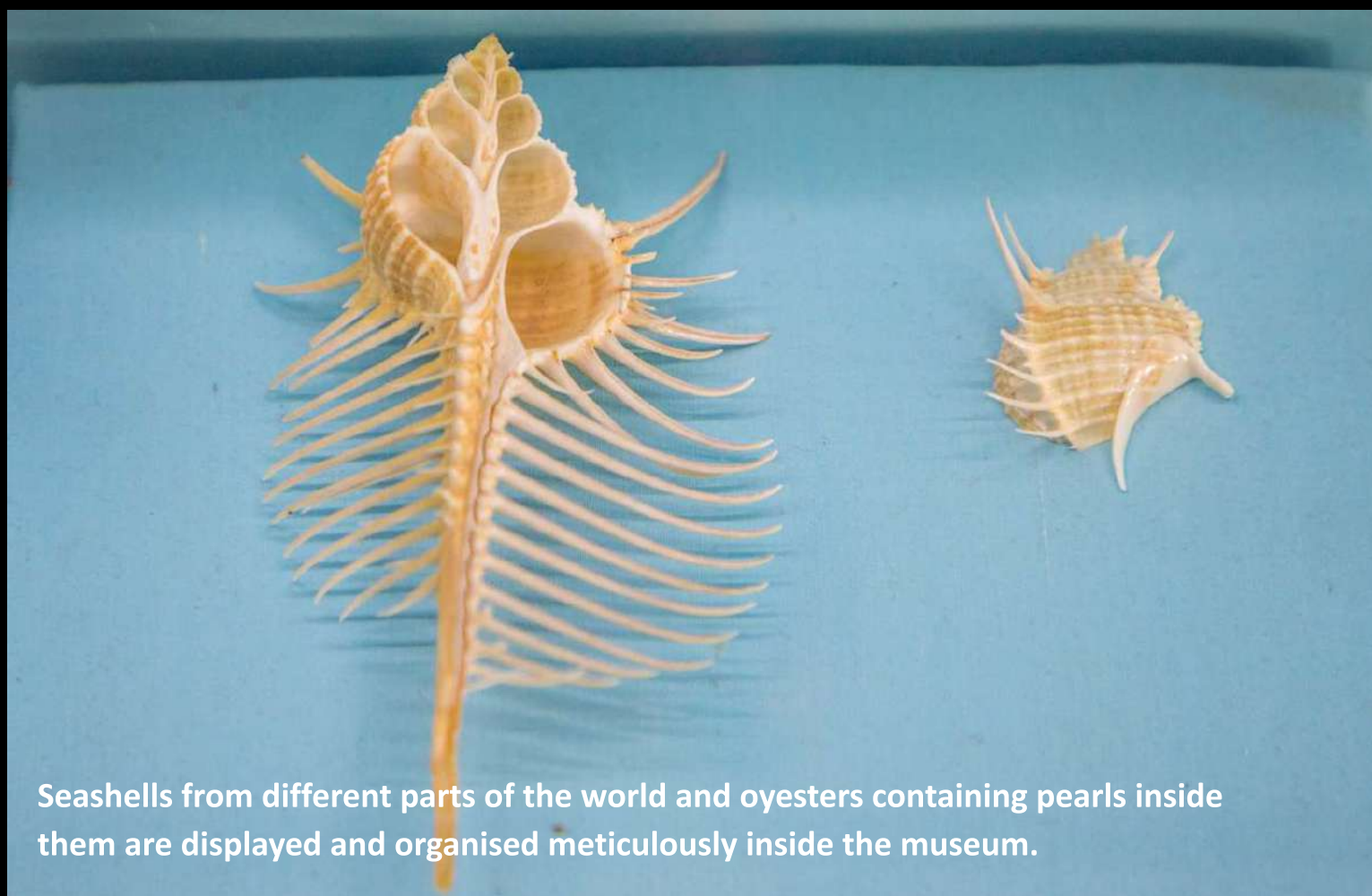
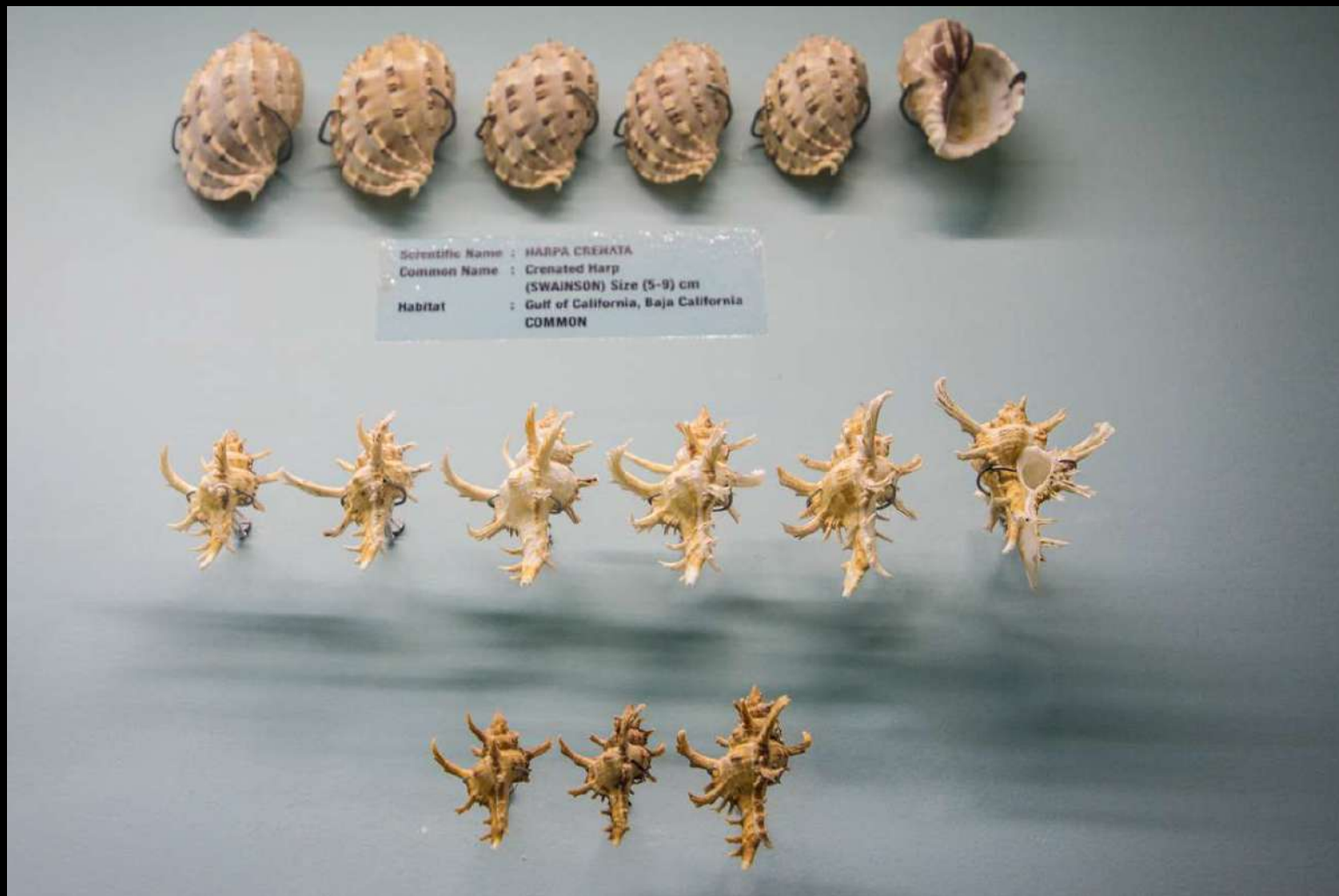
The unique museum would benefit from introducing features such as an audio tour or a video component that can help the people piece together the stories of these

The temple town of Mamallapuram near Chennai is famous for the Shore Temple but do you know about another treasure nestled there? It is the India Seashell Museum, which features an extensive collection of seashells and pearls of all

shapes, sizes and colours you could imagine. For a reasonable fee of Rs. 100, you can explore all these at your leisure. There is an additional fee if you'd like to take pictures as well.

The museum's collection is one man's labour of love, K Raja Mohamed. A native of Rameshwaram, he spent 33 years gathering the shells from around the world including Kenya, Thailand and USA among other countries. There are more





Seashells from different parts of the world and oysters containing pearls inside them are displayed and organised meticulously inside the museum.



Such a vast collection of seashells in various shapes, sizes and colours is the result of the passion of one man K Raja Mohamed, who spent 33 years gathering rare and unique shells from all over the world.



Scientific Name : LUTRARIA LUTRARIA  
Common Name : European Oyster Shell  
Habitat : USUAL (White)

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Spisula  
Common Name : Spisula  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : SIRATUS ALABASTER  
Common Name : Alabaster Murex  
Habitat : RARE (Mouth view)

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : LUTRARIA LUTRARIA  
Common Name : European Oyster Shell  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : LUTRARIA LUTRARIA  
Common Name : European Oyster Shell  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : STROMBUS GIGAS  
Common Name : Pink Conch  
Habitat : USUAL

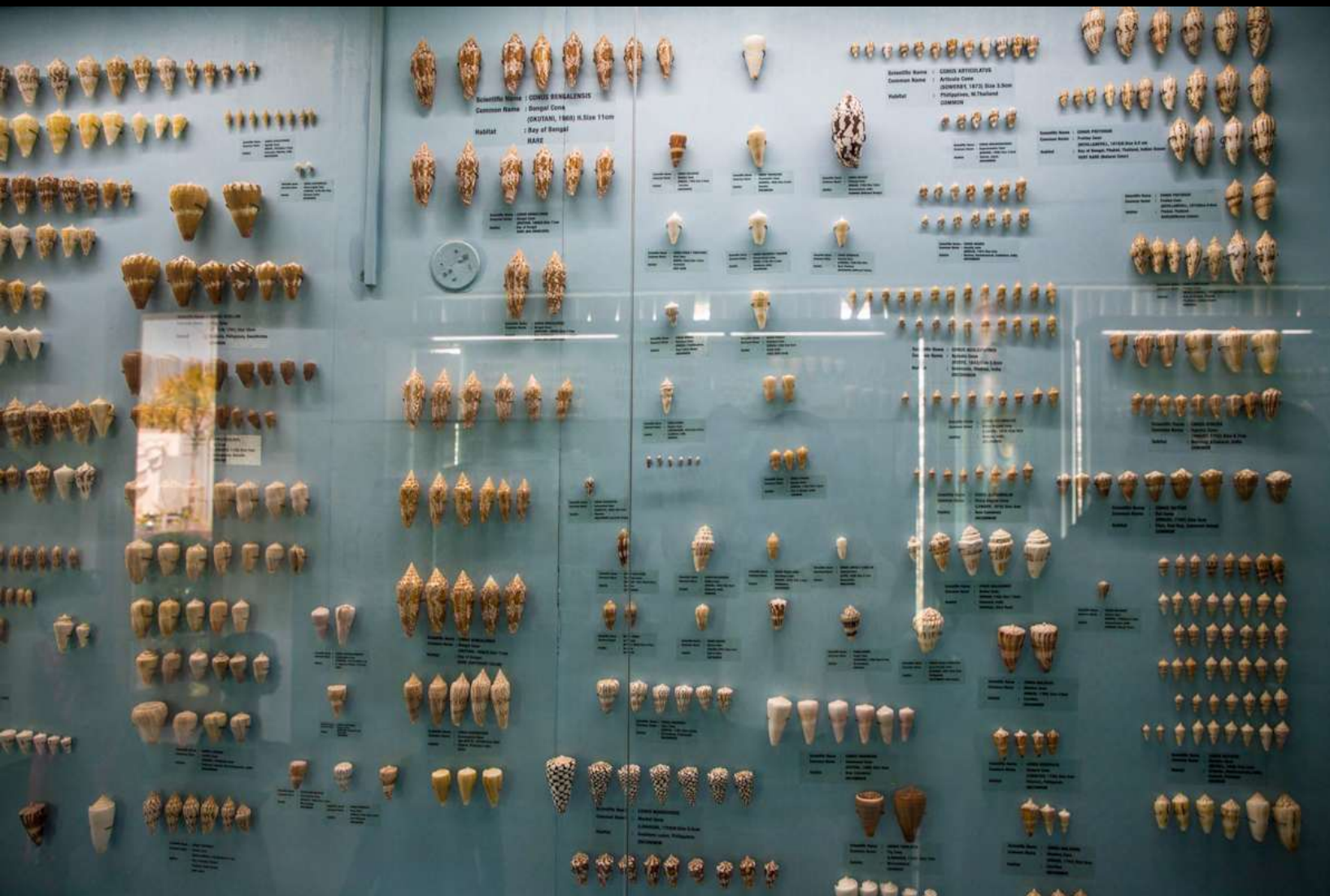
Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL

Scientific Name : Pecten  
Common Name : Scallops  
Habitat : USUAL



The museum was opened to the public for the first time in 2013. Since then the place has become one of the major attractions in this region. For a nominal entrance fee of fifty rupees one can take a look at this amazing collection and learn more about seashells and pearl formation. In an amazing effort spanning over 33 years K Raja Mohamed has been successful in displaying almost close to 2,500 different species of seashells, quite an astounding achievement given the fact there are about 6,000 different species of seashells found across the globe.



The museum is one of its kind in India and possibly the largest one in Asia. In addition to the amazing collection of shells the museum spread over an area of one and a half acre includes an impressive collection of sea fishes in the designated aquarium section.



Usually Pearls are formed in the shape of the particles which gets into the oyster. Here a fish gets trapped into the oyster and we have a Unique pearl in the shape of the fish and such fish pearl is extremely rare to get.

The museum is home to some 40,000 specimens of rare and unique shells as well as pearls such as this one. In this particular case a fish got trapped within the oyster resulting in the formation of a pearl shaped like the fish. The museum is teeming with such rare specimens which not only are a joy to watch but also provide a deeper understanding of the occurrences on the ocean floors.



### About the Photographer

Garima Garg is a New Delhi based journalist and photographer. She is a graduate of Columbia University where she completed her Master's in journalism. Before turning a freelance journalist she used to work with the Hindustan Times. Her stories focus mainly on India's art and culture and can be read at: <https://medium.com/garima-garg> She posts on Twitter and Instagram as: [@garimagarg\\_](#)

A large crowd of people, including men in orange robes and women in saris, are gathered around a large, colorful, circular rangoli on the ground. The rangoli is made of many concentric circles and patterns in various colors like red, yellow, green, blue, and pink. In the background, there are several thatched huts (akharas) and strings of colorful prayer flags hanging from trees. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a festival or fair.

# The Baul Symposium of Kenduli

*by Kountik Mitra*

*A unique festival in rural West Bengal which witnesses the gathering of  
a unique set of people.*

The temporary hermitages or akharas where the bauls stay during the fair are beautifully decorated and extremely well maintained.



A baul who came to attend this fair from the neighbouring country of Bangladesh breaks into a signature energetic performance as the crowd of locals and visitors gathered around him join him.

For most part of the year, life in the small village of Jaydev Kenduli in the Birbhum district of the eastern Indian state of West Bengal resembles the rural way of life in most other villages in this district. There is very little to suggest anything remarkably significant about this rural part of Bengal. Yet the history of the region has an entirely different tale to tell. The village of Jaydev Kenduli shares its own tryst with history and somehow finds itself intricately associated with one of the most prominent pieces of Sanskrit literature, the Gita Govinda. Gita Govinda the most iconic work of the 12th century poet Jayadeva describes the countless tales of romance and pursuit between Krishna and his following of female cow herders known as “gopis”. One of them in particular, Radha finds special mention in Krishna’s life and their tales of love and despair are chronicled in Jayadeva’s Gita Govinda in the form of couplets. Quite significantly the question arises how exactly did an unassuming rural village tucked away in one corner of West Bengal come to be associated with a 12th century poetic work, which over time has risen to cult status. This development can be attributed to the person himself who delineated Radha and Krishna’s amorous saga. It is believed by many that Jaydev Kenduli is the birth place of poet Jayadeva, the composer of Gita Govinda. However it could be never established conclusively and even scholars and historians are of varied opinion regarding the origins of the poet. Such

scepticism received further impetus when one school of thought suggested the neighbouring state of Odisha was the birthplace of the great poet particularly since there happens to be a village going by the name of Kenduli Sasan in Odisha where Krishna who happens to be the protagonist in most of Jayadeva’s work is worshipped as the main deity. The poet himself is still widely revered in these rural parts of Odisha. Furthermore the widespread impact of Jayadeva’s work in shaping various aspects of the Odia culture particularly the incorporation of Jayadev’s works in Odissi dance performances the traditional dance form of Odissa and the subsequent spread of Jayadeva’s work to the southern parts of India and its influence on some of the prominent dance forms of southern India such as Kuchipudi, Kathakali and Bharatnatyam fuelled this debate to gigantic proportions. The other view suggests Jayadev was the court poet of Lakshman Sen, the last of the Sena rulers and the last Hindu ruler of unified Bengal. This particularly crucial piece of information first came to light in the chronicles of a certain Banamali Das, who penned this piece of information in his book titled Jayadeva Charita. Incidentally until 1803, when this book was written, there was very little recorded history of Jayadeva’s early life, more so his place of birth. By dint of being the first such written document the idea that Jayadeva was indeed linked to Lakshman Sen and was born in Bengal’s Kenduli village gathered

considerable acceptance and pioneered the notion of Jayadeva belonging to Bengal, more precisely to the village of Kenduli. These two opposing sets of views have been at loggerhead since their very inception, and the debate still rages on. With so many different views, evidences and counter evidences at work, it is nearly impossible to come to a conclusion with absolute certainty. However in the middle of all this, the people of Jaydev Kenduli village show very little concern regarding the outcome of this debate. It seems they have left the findings, the analysis, the juxta positioning of facts and views up to the more eminent scholars and historians while they concern themselves with their unrelenting faith, which prompts them to celebrate birth and life of the favourite son of this soil once every year during the annual fair of Jaydev Kenduli. The annual fair of Jaydev Kenduli commemorating the life of Jayadeva is an annual affair, beginning from the last day of the Bengali calendar month of Poush and continues till the second day of the next month Magh. This three day long affair unfolds along the bank of the Ajoy River and witnesses the unprecedented gathering of thousands of “bauls”, a community of wandering minstrels with their signature musical instrument “ektara” named after the single string the instrument has. The bauls gather along the banks of the Ajoy River during the fair singing songs the essence of which they have inherited from the works of Jayadeva. Even though the fair lasts for

only three days Jayadev Kenduli and the surrounding regions get thronged with the presence of bauls from a month earlier. Such huge congregation of bauls over the years have led a distinct character to this fair, to such an extent that this annual fair has come to be known as Baul Fair. It is during these three days the unassuming village of Jaydev Kenduli metamorphoses into an entirely different being, all of a sudden the quiet rural hamlet turns into the epicentre of one of the largest cultural gatherings across the state of West Bengal and the thousands of bauls are at the heart of it. The songs of the bauls fill up the air, their contagious energy spreads like wildfire engulfing everyone in its path, the trance in their songs and hymns engulfs the entire village, and during their stay the remarkable change in the mood of the region is palpable in every step of the way.

**This three day long affair unfolds along the bank of the Ajoy River and witnesses the unprecedented gathering of thousands of “bauls”, a community of wandering minstrels with their signature musical instrument “ektara” named after the single string the instrument has.**





The fair also marks the union of bauls from West Bengal and Bangladesh, during this time of the year they meet each other, greet each other and most importantly they make beautiful and soulful music together.

The bauls travel from faraway places to become a part of these celebrations, such participations not hindered by borders of countries with many bauls attending these festivities from neighbouring Bangladesh and thousands of followers inspired by this unique way of life flooding in from various other parts of the world as well.

What started out as a celebration honouring the legacy of Jayadeva in a small village along the banks of Ajoy River, has over time snowballed into one of the most prominent fixtures in the tourism calendar of West Bengal. The Jaydev Kenduli fair owes much of its present day prominence to the soulful and energetic presence of

the bauls, who have undoubtedly rendered a rather eclectic spiritual dimension to this whole affair. In 2005 UNESCO recognised the unique way of life of the baul community and they were inducted into the list of “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”. Keeping such crucial developments in mind the

**In 2005 UNESCO recognized the unique way of life of the baul community and they were inducted into the list of “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”. Such developments have added further sheen to the tradition of the baul fair of Kenduli.**

participation of bauls in these festivities without any iota of doubt elevates the affair to a global pedestal, which is evident from the large gathering of tourists and visitors every year from all over the world to get a glimpse into the lives of these unique human beings. During their stay in Jaydev Kenduli during this time of the year, the bauls put up in temporary hermitages, locally known as “akhara”. These akharas are the best places to observe the bauls and get a glimpse into their enigmatic lives. The air surrounding these akharas reverberates with the unique musical art of the baul community. The trance that looms over these mud huts draws hundreds into their folds, capturing their imagination, as the onlookers bask in the spiritual atmosphere. The music of the bauls, Baul Sangeet, is a particular type of folk song. Music essentially plays



For these three days music never seems to stop. A group of tourists, bauls and locals participate in an early morning music session.

the most significant role in propagating the philosophy practiced by the baul community. Since the time of Lalon Fokir, the greatest of all bauls who is believed to have composed his songs impromptu music has been the the most integral part of a baul's life. Baul songs, composed in simple terms coupled with infectious tunes dwell upon the deeper philosophies of life in the most non arduous manner. The bauls in the akharas of Jaydev Kenduli immerse themselves in these performances with their unique musical instruments keeping them company. The ektara, synonymous with a baul is one such instrument which

is traditionally made of carving out a gourd with a short stub of bamboo to which the single string of the instrument is attached. The ektara is accompanied by other traditional musical instruments such as bamboo flutes, dhol, small cymbals locally known as khartal and manjira among others. The bauls with their musical instruments in tow and their rather eccentric way of life besides providing fun filled musical sessions bring about a sense of enlightenment too through their musical sojourns. The three day long fair begins with a holy dip in the Ajoy River after which the bauls



As the bauls perform the locals too join them in a session of musical celebrations. Such heartwarming scenes are the true gems of this fair, where music brings people together and unites them over a single common agenda of celebrating humanity.

and the other sect of folk musicians the Kirtanias belonging to the Vaishnava sect perform in their akharas. They continue to enthrall the visitors with their performances until the third day, when the bauls and the kirtanias visit each other in their akharas and exchange pleasantries. The fair ground is a hub of various activities. Rides are set up, which never fail to attract hordes of adventurous kids, temporary shops selling all kinds of goods from utensils to cosmetic products spring up everywhere, people queue up in front of stalls selling various local delicacies, in other words the otherwise quiet life of

**The ektara is accompanied by other traditional musical instruments such as bamboo flutes, dhol, small cymbals locally known as khartal and manjira among others. The bauls with their musical instruments through their musical sessions bring about a sense of enlightenment too.**



daily use, or local people renting out rooms or houses for the travellers to spend the night, owners of roadside tea stalls and eateries have significantly benefitted from this fair. The trickling effects of these can be felt even much after the conclusion of the three day long fair. The fourth day marks the end of the fair, when the set ups are dismantled and Jaydev Kenduli braces to return to its quiet old ways for one more year. This particular day is referred to as “Dhulat” which signifies the end or the conclusion. This terminology is in accordance with the baul philosophy, wherein the bauls believe at the end of life everything including the human body is reduced to dust or “dhula”, hence the term “dhulat” widely signifies an ending. On this day, the bauls, the kirtanias along with the local villagers as well as the visitors engage in a heart-warming display of kinship and camaraderie. They smear each other with “aabir” or coloured powder and embrace each other in warm hugs uplifting the beautiful and never ending spirit of humanity. As the fair grounds fall silent, the bauls, kirtanias, local people and the visitors disperse and go their separate ways, each making a promise to return to the same grounds a year later, to again become a part of these celebrations for three days, their departure leaves in the air a heavy sense of longing yet the promise of a joyous reunion looms large in the horizon only to be fulfilled in a year’s time.

**The akharas or the temporary hermitages for the bauls are the best places to enjoy evening sessions of soulful music performed by these unique people. In one such akhara people have gathered around to listen to a group of bauls performing.**

Jaydev Kenduli explodes into a hotbed of activities. This is also the time for many to provide their economy with the much needed boost. The number of visitors to Jaydev Kenduli has grown steadily over the years, which has significantly contributed to the development of the local economy. Traders dealing with goods of



Scenes like these play out on the fair grounds of Kenduli every year for three days during the baul fair, the one time of the year when this quaint little village comes under the spotlight.



A group of bauls teams up with the local villagers and visitors for an ensuing singing session.





The popularity of the fair has soared over time, it attracts thousands of tourists from different parts of India as well as the globe every year. The fair holds a special place among the hearts of the locals and people from the neighbouring villages. Overcrowded buses such as these where people travel on the rooftop due to lack of space inside bear testimony to the ever growing popularity of the baul fair of Jaydev Kenduli.

## About the Photographer



Kountik Mitra born on the 5th of October 1983 is a resident of Tollygunje, Kolkata. An avid reader and movie buff his primary interest lies in documenting life all around him through the lenses of his Nikon D810. Being a management student working in a bank was an obvious choice for him instead he realized that a regular job was not his true calling. His love and passion for photography dates back to his childhood when he would be enthralled by the beautiful photographs taken by his grandfather and his father. He left his job in professional pursuit of photography. Commercial shoots take care of his finances while he dwells deeper into genres like travel, people, culture, ritual, tradition and street photography, things which he loves to photograph the most.

# The Roll of Honour

*Featuring the 14 winning photographs chosen from the ones submitted during the two previous contests themed on “Colour” and “My Travel Diary”. More contests and updates to follow soon.*

**F**irstly we would like to thank each and everyone who took part in the two contests on theme “Colours” and “My Travel Diary” which we conducted during the past one month. It was a sheer pleasure going through all the wonderful submissions and an equally difficult task shortlisting the final 6 images from the contest themed “Colours” and 8 images from the one on the theme “My Travel Diary”. We would like to extend our heartiest congratulations to those who got featured here and our gratitude to everyone who took time out to take part in these contests. There will be more contests, in the coming months, for the upcoming issues, during which we would like to challenge your creative skills, your imagination, your method of storytelling in search of many more wonderful photographic works. Anyone can submit their photographic work to us at [submission.ipa@gmail.com](mailto:submission.ipa@gmail.com).

## THE HONOUR BOARD



*For further updates on our upcoming contests join our facebook group [Indian Photo ARTS](#) or follow us on [instagram-@ipamagazine](#).*



THEME COLOUR

Photograph by Abhay Kasture



THEME COLOUR

Photograph by Abhay Kasture





THEME COLOUR

Photograph by Prianko Moitra



Photograph by Dibakar Roy

THEME COLOUR



THEME COLOUR

Photograph by Udayan Sankar Pal



THEME COLOUR

Photograph by Debarchan Chatterjee





THEME TRAVEL

Photograph by Narayana Sankar



Photograph by Meera Nerurkar

THEME TRAVEL



THEME TRAVEL

Photograph by Ramchander Sanjaykumar

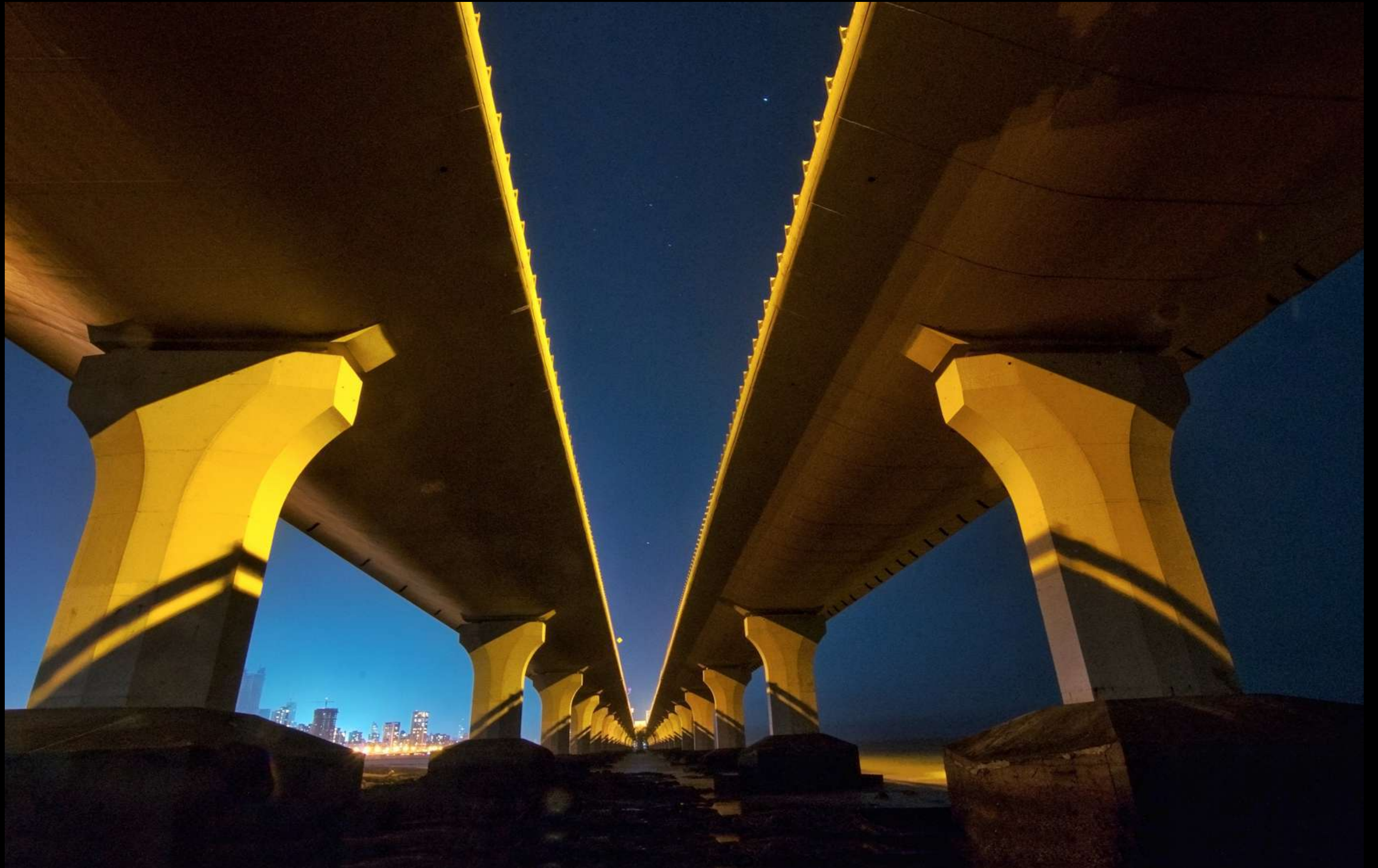




THEME TRAVEL

Photograph by Udayan Sankar Pal





THEME TRAVEL

Photograph by Mansi Chauhan



THEME TRAVEL

Photograph by Mandar Shikhar Mandal

# Reader's Section |

Featuring the best entries made by our readers.

April 2018



Photograph by  
Soumya Dev  
Chandra





Photograph by  
Everts Ranley





Photograph by  
Ratnadeep Mitra

Photograph by  
Pradeep  
Kumar Das





Photograph by  
Gargi Manish

