

# Whispering Wilds

A Product of Exploring Nature Call of The Wild

April 2023



## Wonderland Stories

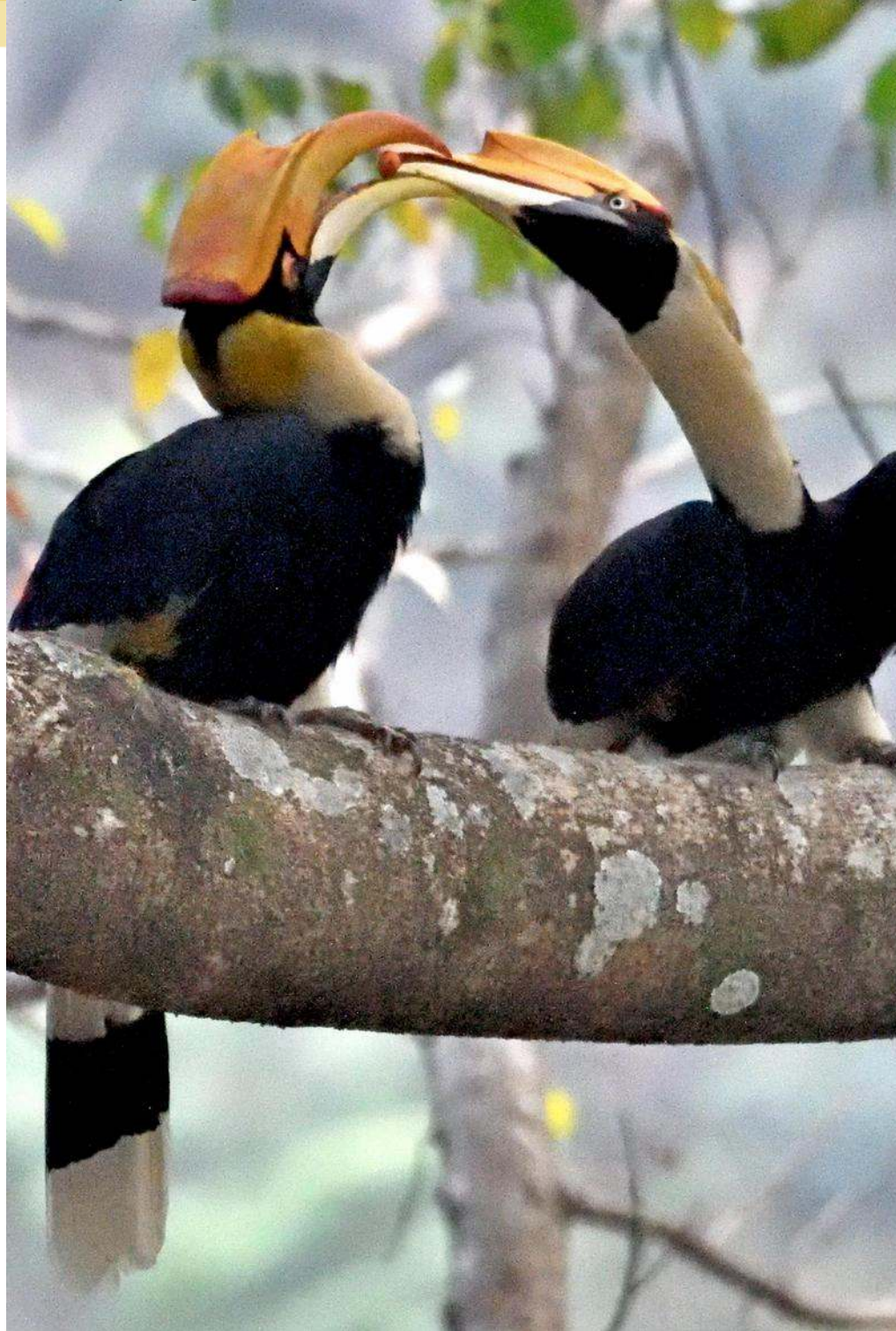
Zanskar  
Javakheti Plateau

## Animal Kingdom

Mammalian World  
Reptilian World  
Arthropods



Exploring Nature  
CALL OF THE WILD



Avian World  
Wetland Day Special



# SFL30 New Launch

ZEISS, a 177-year-old heritage brand in the lens manufacturing business launches ZEISS SFL 30 Ultra-Compact Binoculars for nature enthusiasts, wildlife & travellers' community

The ZEISS SFL (Smart Focus and Lightweight) stands out for its exceptional optical performance combined with an extremely compact design and low weight. The new binoculars come in two models, the ZEISS SFL 8×30 and 10×30 configurations.

1

## SFL – SmartFocus & Lightweight – outstanding optics in compact shape



### Light weight & compact size

- **Optical design devoted to optimal compactness** due to
  - Reduced lens diameter
  - thinner lens elements
  - reduced distance between lens elements in the optical design
- **Magnesium housing** – lightweight and long-lasting

→ Long-term usage without tiring



### Great optical performance with UHD Concept

- **New Ultra-High-Definition (UHD) concept** – lifelike color reproduction due to optimal combination of new lens coatings and optical design
- **90% light transmission**
- **Comfortable viewing behaviour** despite compact size – increases ease of use
- **Wide field of view**<sup>1</sup>: SFL 30 – 142/120m
- **Close focusing distance** of 1.5m
- **T\* coating** and **LotuTec**

→ Outstanding optical performance packed in a small size

### Perfect ergonomics with SmartFocus Concept

- **Perfect positioning** of **large focus wheel** avoiding over-stretching of focusing finger
- **Fast but still precise focusing** – even with gloves on

→ Relaxed viewing experience due to easy product handling



### Finely tuned binoculars accessories

- **Removable flipping lens covers** – can stay permanently on or can be removed with ease
- **Tripod interface** – for a perfectly stable view during long term observations

→ Full flexibility for every application



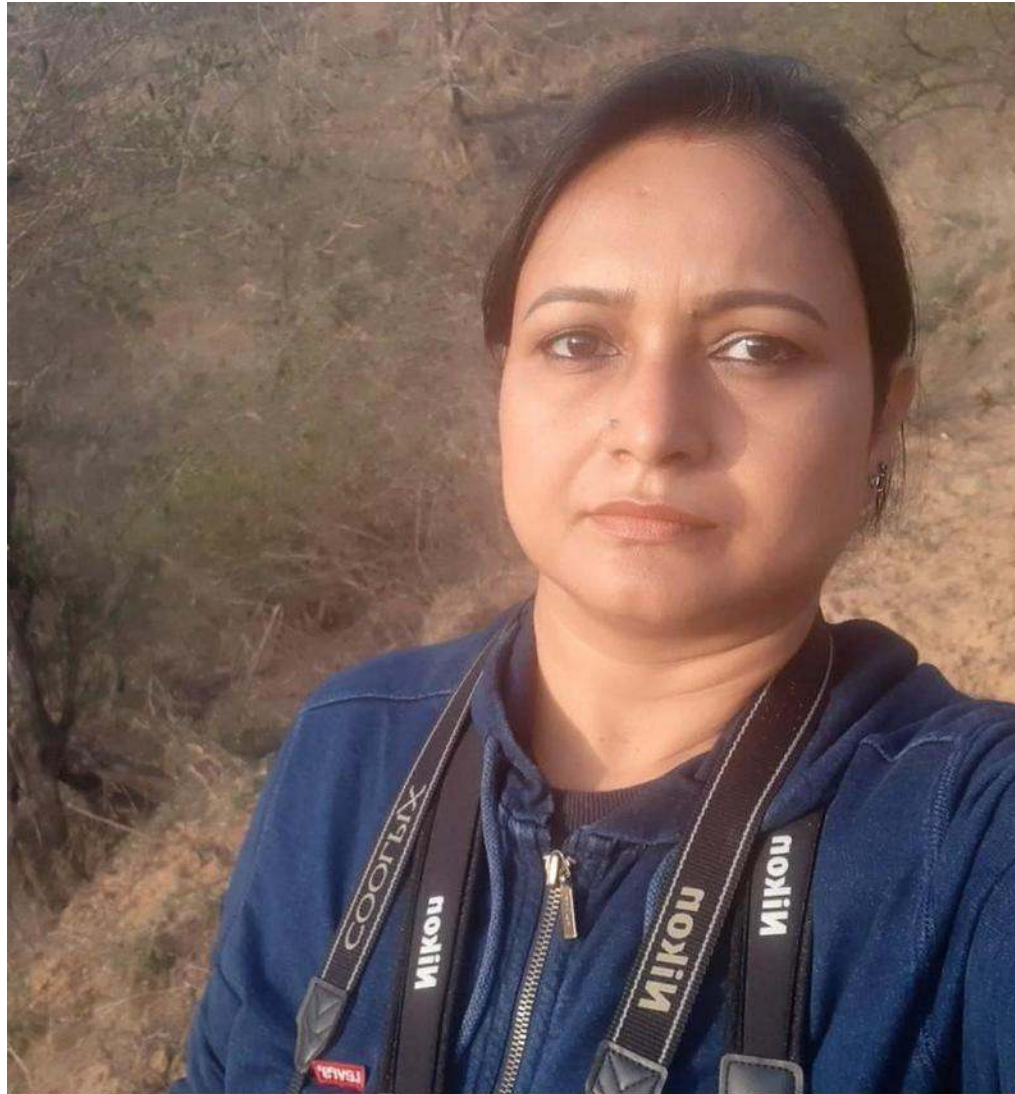
## Does the air speak? Are rivers noisy enough to seek our attention? Why do birds chirp?

Does the air speak? Are rivers noisy enough to seek our attention? Do living organisms in the wild speak to each other? Why do birds chirp? Do trees whisper? These questions – evoked by our own senses and the ability to communicate in multiple languages– always taunt us humans. While we are yet to find definitive answers to these questions, we are sure that a living ecosystem by definition has the entire wherewithal to live. Communication is one of the basic tools to survive. We might not be able to decipher the languages of the non-humans but we live and thrive with their “whispers”.

We capture these “whispers” in various human-used mediums. Some write an essay; some click photographs to express thousands of word worth messages in each of them; and some deep dive into the wild to uncover the lives of other significant living beings on the planet to tell the fascinating world is thriving.

But why do we need to do this? We are not just those enthusiasts on excursions to the unknown world for the sake of satisfying our own pursuits. Our works – the photographs, the article, the research on wildlife – are ways we communicate to a wider population on behalf of those whose languages we are yet to decipher.

And we need to know this. This is because in an ecosystem every existence has a reason and rationale. The release of a virus or the extinction a bird species ferments a wider environmental degradation that ultimately impacts our life and time. For instance, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is a result of humans' mindless exploitation of the ecosystem. Our



aggressive incursion to the wild let loose a virus that became virulent and ultimately killed nearly 7 million of us in just three years.

Whispering Wilds is an initiative to make us humans more aware of our planet where we share the living space with millions of more species. The articles, photographs and thought pieces that you will find in this edition bring home the point that we must become natural again in our approach.

I hope that you find this edition insightful and interesting.

Gargi Mishra  
whisperingwilds1981@gmail.com

**Gargi Mishra**  
Chief Editor  
Whispering Wilds

« Whispering Wilds is an initiative to make us humans more aware of our planet where we share the living space with millions of more species. »





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## Birds As Farmer's Friend

Birds are the biped friends of farmers and actively act as a natural check on insect pest population. They play an important role in biological control without environmental degradation as caused by chemical pesticides in the field of agriculture and horticulture. However, their role is interesting, diverse and complex. It depends upon many factors such as feeding behaviour, dependency on crops, their physiological conditions like age. Bird behavioural patterns are regulated by difference in cropping system, agro-climatic conditions, faunal structure, population density, habitat and physiological condition of the species.

According to the study of Indian Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR), in India out of 2,060 species and subspecies of birds, about 85 per cent are partially or totally insectivorous in various agro-climatic areas. However, some birds also have adverse effects on certain crops and hamper crop production. Some may help in dispersal of unwanted weeds. Few birds may cause harm to apiculture by foraging on bees, fishery and lac culture. In general, the birds are useful in larger aspects. Birds like black-winged kites feed mainly on rats and help farmers to increase crop yield. Some birds bring cross-pollination and maintain genetic diversity of agricultural plants and crops. Birds are natural agents of seed dispersal for many plants and help in horticulture and forestry.



Large congregations of birds increase fertility of soil and aquatic ecosystems by their droppings.

Being at the apex of the living world, the role of human is to act for bird conservation before they face great loss.

Dr. Mithilesh  
Dutta Dwivedi  
Chief Zoologist

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## A Wildlife Consulting Company

Exploring Nature is a community of like-minded people who love to be amidst nature. Mother Nature has its own rhythm and we must tune up to it for a better tomorrow. Our mission is to make people cherish nature's beauty and protect its novelty.

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### Nature & Wildlife Camps

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### Wildlife Consultancy

Designed for tiger reserves, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and community based wildlife tourism.

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## Fighting the 'evil-enemy' - Forest Fire!

India's forests are on fire, literally. According to NASA, in the first 100 days of the year 2023 (January-April 12, 2023), some 2, 84,418 forest fires have been reported in India. India reported 345,989 forest fires from November 2020 to June 2021, according to the State of Forests Report, 2021, released on January 13, 2022. This is the highest recorded in the country for this period so far.

Forest fires break out in India from November-May every





*Gangotri National Park*



*Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary*

According to NASA, in the first 100 days of the year 2023 (January-April 12, 2023), some 2, 84,418 forest fires have been reported in India.

year due to various natural and anthropogenic reasons including accumulation of inflammable materials such as dry leaves, twigs, pine needles, etc. But its severity and spread are increasing. As many researches point out, due to global warming forest fires are increasing across the world. So, we will see more devastating forest fires in near future. The United Nations Environment Programme in its report

“Spreading like Wildfire: The Rising Threat of Extraordinary Landscape Fires” has raised an alarm. “Fire is changing because we are changing the conditions in which it occurs,” reasoned the report that was released on February 28, 2022. “Even with the most ambitious efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions, the planet will still experience a dramatic increase in the frequency of extreme fire conditions. This means that by the end of the century, the probability of wildfire events similar to Australia’s 2019-2020 Black Summer or the huge Arctic fires in 2020 occurring in a given year is likely to increase by 31-57 per cent,” said the report.

way, forest fire decimates the ecosystem. Forest department fire-fighters play the role of valiant soldiers, trying to douse these leaping flames. Unfortunately, every fire season, the flames account for the loss of a couple of these brave souls too. It is hard for us to imagine the lives of these simple men/women, fighting the tall flames in super-hot temperatures with rudimentary equipment. While they are now being supported with satellite-generated early warning systems, fire-retardant clothing, and blowers, fighting a forest fire is not for the weak-hearted! And they are not in adequate numbers to tackle this ever-expanding crisis.

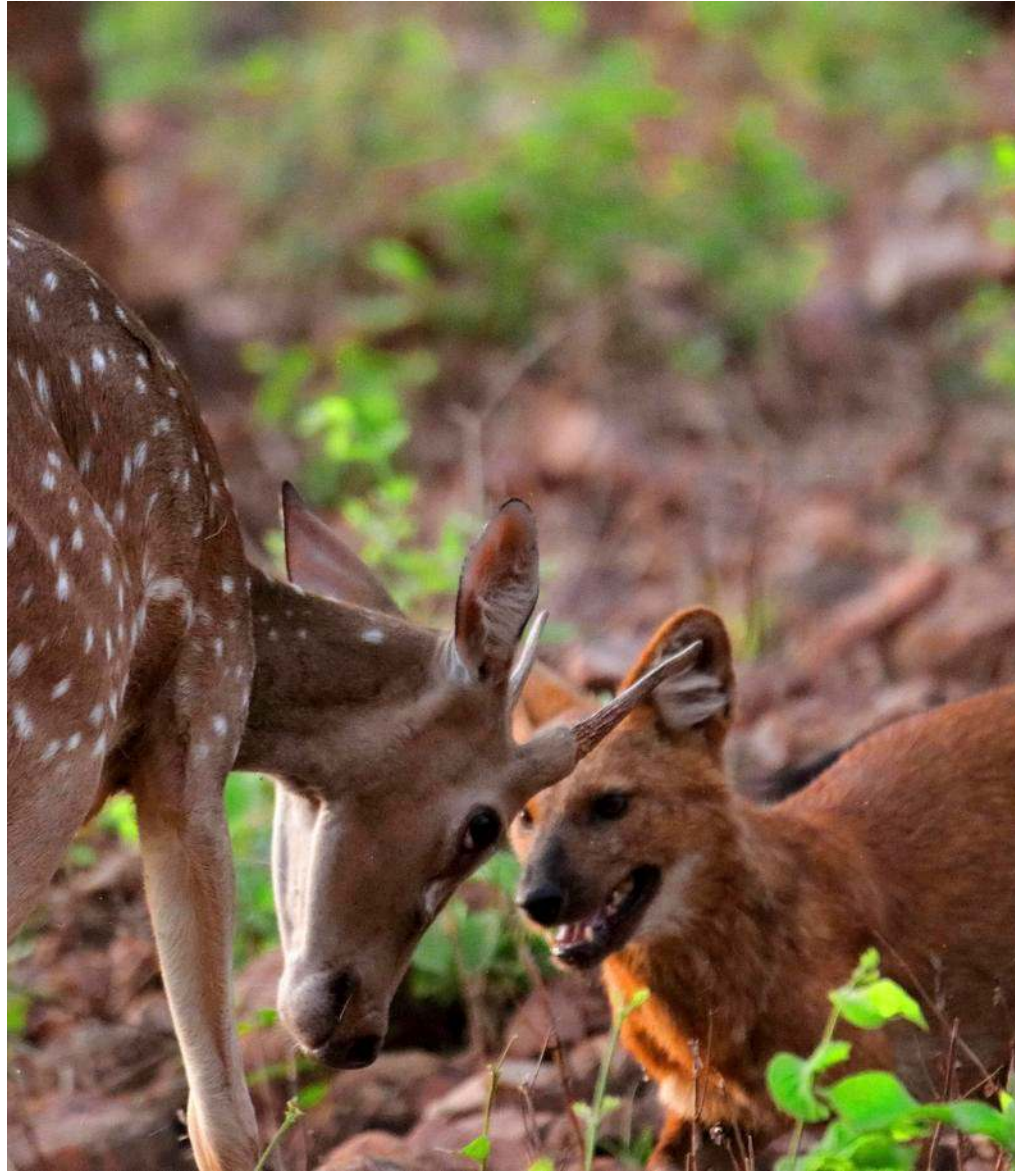
Forest fires have the most damaging effects on our forests. It kills plants, insects, snakes, birds, small mammals, and even the large Indian Gaurs. One



In India, natural fire causes are by far very few. Almost all our wilderness fires have human origins. The real challenge in the Central Indian landscape thus comes from the people collecting Mahua and Tendu collection. The need of the hour is to take fire education to the schools in the affected areas. Through formal and informal modes, we need to help the little minds question long-standing misbeliefs. Hopefully, they will question and correct the wrong mindsets of the elders in the village. Simultaneously, creating jobs for youth and more non-extractive livelihoods is very important. Only these can wean people away from timber, Mahua, and Tendu collection.

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## Dholes in Tadoba - The Power-packed Predators

It was a wildlife camp organised by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) for its members in the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), eastern Maharashtra during May 19–21, 2022. The peak of summer would see temperatures fluctuating around 45 degrees centigrade in this part of central India.

TATR is spread across 625.4 sq. km. and has multiple entry points for tourists. We had opted for the Kolara range. I was leading the camp.

On May 21, the day of our last wildlife safari in the evening, we deposited our mobile phones as per the park's regulations. We spotted numerous Spotted Deer, Sambar deer, Wild Boar, Indian Gaur, four Bengal Tigers, Barking Deer, Neelgai, Four-horned Antelope, Ruddy Mongooses, Three-striped Squirrels, Marsh Crocodiles, and nearly 100 species of birds!

We hoped to see what we had missed, including the Leopard, Golden Jackal, and Dholes (Asian Wild Dogs)! The safari



started at 03.00 pm with a Jackal running across the road in front of our gypsy! The next hour an alarm call by a Spotted Deer alerted us and drew our attention to a young leopardess, which walked through a bush and decided to take a siesta under a huge Banyan tree. We decided to move on as she was dozing off in

front of all the tourist gypsies arriving and leaving!

As we continued our safari, we saw around 10 gypsies parked on the road, everyone looking towards the farthest gypsy.

Proper scanning revealed a pair of Bengal Tigers crossing the road! We could hardly get a glimpse of it as the royal courting couple, named Maya and Balram, disappeared in dense bushes!

The guide was reluctant to take us to the famous Tadoba Lake as this lake was the territory of Maya and Balram and we had just seen them away from there. However, we suggested he take us there. We were lucky to see the three avian predators here: a majestic Crested Serpent Eagle on a tree; a Grey-headed Fish-eagle perched on the ground and leisurely devouring a large fish and two Oriental Honey Buzzards drinking water and taking bath at the lake!

As our gypsy moved on, another alarm call by a young Sambar deer standing on the road alerted us and drew our attention to a drama unfolding in the roadside. We were lucky to see the three



*The Dholes were feeding by taking quick bites and tore the deer soon.*

bushes. We saw a few Dholes trying to corner a sub-adult Spotted Deer. The deer somehow dodged the Dholes and scurried across the road, closely followed by two Dholes! With quick manoeuvres the Dholes toppled the Spotted Deer, one Dhole firmly holding its throat till the deer fell silent and the other held its thigh from behind! The second Dhole started taking small bites of the struggling deer's thigh even though the deer was still alive. In fact, the Spotted Deer was already injured



It has become a hub for tiger conservation!



### **It is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA)**

41 species of mammals,  
30 species of reptiles,  
5 species of amphibians,  
74 species of butterflies,  
26 species of spiders,  
and  
23 species of fishes.





and had severe bite marks on the thigh.

It seemed like the hunt was executed by only two Dholes, but there were additional four Dholes that were

restlessly moving around and playing roles of 'watchdogs' in the proceedings! These members of the pack soon joined the feeding party, always ensuring that one or two of them were on the lookout from a vantage point. We could hear some squeaks and whistling sounds of the Dholes while the hunt was on. The dholes were feeding by taking quick bites and tore the deer up.

They pulled it across the road back towards the bushes, where it had all started. They removed the stomach and intestine parts and pulled the remaining deer to still denser bushes. We decided to take a break for a few minutes, as the Dholes continued their eating frenzy. When we returned, we saw four of the pack taking a dip in a nearby stream. However, soon they marched in line towards the kill and started feeding again!







**Nature's drama started at 5.48 pm and we left the scene at 6.26 pm, all about 38 minutes!**

It was getting dark and it was time to leave the park. Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve has become a favourite destination among nature lovers and general citizens due to the good sightings of large carnivores like tigers, leopards, and Dholes! It is giving employment to local youths as gypsy drivers and nature guides! It has become a hub for tiger conservation! Not only that, it is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) and home to many threatened species of birds, like the Grey-headed Fish-eagle and Letter Adjutant; besides 41 species of mammals, 30 species of reptiles, 5 species of amphibians, 74 species of butterflies, 26 species of spiders, and 23 species of fishes.





# Wildlife Photography Around Urban Purulia

I had been following the pug marks for a long time near the foothills around 35 kms from Purulia town.

Initially, the pug marks I found resembled an adult mammal. Then after frequent visits, I saw some trailing footprints of a cub along with the adult pug marks. These footprints were easily spotted during the monsoon season. However, during other dry seasons, they were comparatively difficult given the terrain and dry weather condition of the area. The footprints resembled that of a hyena. In the meantime, I told my friend Mukul Mukherjee about the same and he was quite enthusiastic and equally curious about it. He was already working as a wildlife consultant at Palamau Tiger Reserve and also had better experience and knowledge. I had to be sure of the find as it looked quite unbelievable.

One day at dusk, we decided to stay around a carcass as hyenas mostly feed on them. After a couple of hours, we saw some movement and a glittery light-type spot at a distance. Then we saw two gleaming spots of light. As we approached it, we saw a furry mammal moving slowly. After seeing it for some time, we could confirm it was a hyena. On that day we saw the hyena with our bare eyes with the help of a torch. After some time, the hyena moved back into the jungle and did not return. Again, we decided to go to the same spot.



But somehow, we got delayed, and it was almost dark by the time we reached the area. Since it was already late, we decided to carry our DSLR cameras with us and started our search near the foul-smelling carcass. There we saw a hyena already feeding on the carcass. We started studying its behaviour from a safe distance (with the help of a torch light). We took a few shots and made a couple of videos.

The hyena later decided to approach us and rather started studying us from around 15-20 ft. After some time, it went back to its feed.

Author:  
Sarbjit Nandy,  
Founder of  
Explore Wild,  
Kolkata



We waited for some more time before calling it a day.

As we started our retreat, we felt a presence behind us. On turning back, we saw another individual right behind us.

Since it was near us, we decided to leave the spot as soon as possible. On the way, there is a dense patch of trees, where my friend Mukul saw another pair of glittering eyes. Also, we heard a very strange call from the hyena which we had never heard before. So, without further delay, we left the place.

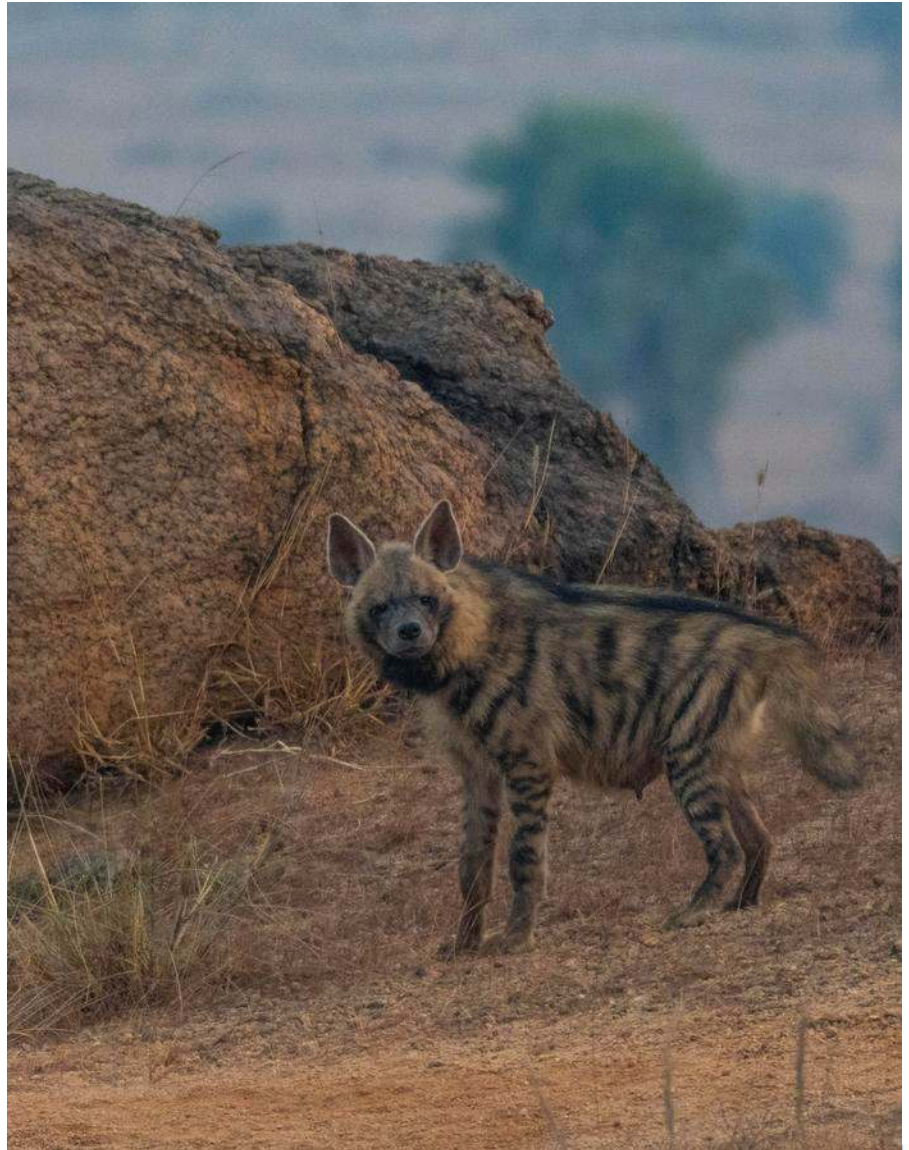


Next day, we decided to work in the same area and at the same time with similar operandi. However, we reached early. Hence, I decided to set up a DSLR trap camera near the area.

Mukul is experienced in setting up trap cameras as he has been already working in Palamau with a similar setup. With his expertise in setting up the trap cameras without disturbing any animal in and around, we were able to successfully set it up.

Before we go further let me explain to you the working of a trap camera. This kind of camera works on sensory motions; it starts to click as soon as it detects the movement of a subject around it. After completion of the setup, we came back home.

Next day before dawn, we left home with high expectations of getting good pictures captured by the trap camera. As soon as we approached to take out the trap camera back, we saw there were three resting individuals. We clicked a few pictures for record purposes. On seeing us they moved away from the place.



After recovering the Trap Camera we returned home.

Afterward, when we started checking the photos, our excitement died. Because the camera trap had failed to take proper pictures. Shots or no shots, we were satisfied with our finding. We are extremely happy to make such an overwhelming discovery in this area.

### Behavioural Traits:

They feed on the carcass and humans' refuse, and occasionally hunt small rodents. They mostly come out of their den during the time shift between dusk to dark. Also, they retreat to their dens just after dawn before there is light.



What we could conclude is that these individuals were staying in very small pockets in various parts of Purulia surrounded by human habitats.

Food scarcity is mostly because in previous days, any form of dead cattle or animal

would be thrown away in barren lands, but now every dead cattle has its own value and is sold in the market for various uses. Due to this they do not get sufficient food and have to travel great distances in search of food. And

since it is a fully nocturnal animal, it searches for its feed during the night.

The striped Hyena is predominantly a scavenger and is generally considered solitary, but has some social organization. It forages individually and is rarely seen in groups. It does, however, associate in small family groups at their Den. It lives in arid, mountainous ranges with scrubby woodlands. It makes a den in rocky hills.

The mother Hyena gives birth to 3 to 4 cubs at a time in one gestational cycle. The cubs are well taken care of by the parents till they are mature enough to take care of themselves.

### Awareness

The creation of awareness at this point of time is necessary to prevent the diminishing of their numbers. We plan to run awareness programs among the villagers residing in the nearby villages who need to be educated and be made aware of the same. A lot of behavioural studies about this species is essential. So that their decline can be prevented.

Mukul and I have decided to visit the same area regularly to study their behaviour further. We will make sure that they are surviving well over there.

### Research Study

As per research papers, Purulia and the entire Chhota Nagpur plateau had a healthy population of Hyena. However, due to habitat loss and scarcity of food, their population is dimming in the plateau region. Habitat loss has always been because of the continuous expansion of human settlements, expansion of cultivation, construction and the never-ending greed of humans..





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### Nimble-clawed Survivors

The Fiddler Crabs of Sundarban Tiger Reserve are intelligent creatures. More than 100 varieties have been discovered till today. They are also known as "Calling Crabs" due to the habit of waving their claws.

Conservations regard them as "Engineers of the Ecosystem" as they remain busy digging out mud. These crabs dig burrows in the sediment to seek refuge from predation and environmental extremes, opening windows of opportunities for both physical and chemical processes and interaction to take place between groundwater, substrate, and nutrient dynamics. The crabs have a maximum life span of 2 years. Another noteworthy fact was that many species native to Atlanta and Indonesia were also seen here in Bangladesh and India at the time of documentation.



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### Spiny-tailed Lizard

The Thar Desert in the state of Rajasthan in India hosts an array of wildlife despite the popular belief that the landscape is exposed to extreme weather conditions. The sand dunes, although a beautiful sight for the eyes, do not make for a great habitat. Still, you will find many endemic, rare, and threatened species here among the gravel plains, desert vegetation, and sandy rocks. The spiny-tailed lizard is one such beautiful mammal, a native of this desert. This diurnal, ground-dwelling reptile is the only herbivorous lizard species currently inhabiting the Indian subcontinent. It thrives in the desert ecosystem and is food for many desert-dwelling raptors. Since spotting wildlife is a matter of chance, we remain thankful that we spotted this spiny-tailed lizard while on the lookout for birds.





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ED 8/10×42

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## An Ode To Rabindra Sarobar

Though much do I ponder Just  
cannot cease to wonder  
How Sarobar of Robi  
Has all the things nice.

Walk around the lake  
And the water looks nice,

Have some jhalmuri  
With nice tangy spice,  
See Blossoming trees  
Bright yellow and red  
On the water, round-leaved, water  
lily does spread

Stroll at Lotus Pond  
See Lotus raise their head  
White and pink, above the water  
And waterhens lightly tread

Safari Park playground  
Bright children in swings,  
While in the green foliage  
A little bird sings

Sunrise and sunset!  
Oh, what a grand sight  
As evening approaches  
The moon rises bright

Old people sit  
And soak in the peace  
While joggers push forward  
And sweat in their tee-s.

Rowers in boats -  
They pull on their oars  
And scare the poor fish  
As they swim for the shores  
A number of swim clubs



*To cool off in summer,  
Budding 'bands' sing*

*To the beat of their drummer*

*Young courting couples  
Murmur in pairs  
As sleek boats pass by  
With practicing rowers.*

*At the islands, in peace  
The painted storks breed  
Birders with cameras  
Focus on where they feed*

*Regal at the gate  
The poet watches all  
At Sarobar of Robi  
Please always stand tall!!*



*Sunrise  
and  
sunset!*

*Oh, what a  
grand sight*

*As evening  
approaches*

*The moon  
rises bright*



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science.





# FROM **MAXIMUM FIELD OF VIEW** TO MAXIMUM **MAGNIFICATION**. **VICTORY HARPIA**

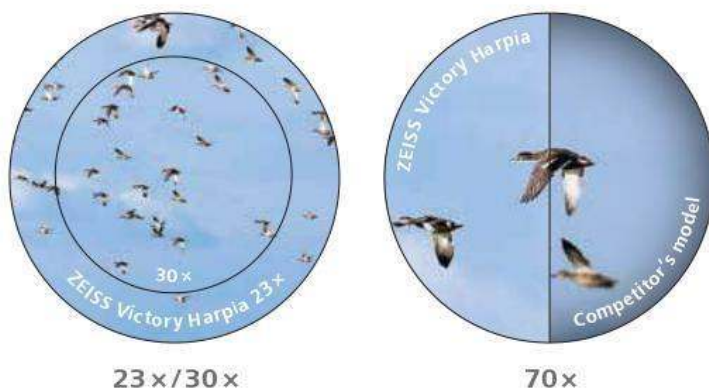
**The great outdoors are already truly fascinating when observed with the naked eye. But viewing nature through a Victory Harpia transforms it into an entirely new experience.**

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## ComfortVision concept

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Field of view comparison of a spotting scope at 30 × minimum magnification (small circle) with the field of view of the Harpia at 23 × minimum magnification (large circle).





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### Madatapa Lake, Georgia

This photo was taken early morning at Madatapa Lake, Georgia in September 2021. Madatapa Lake is a lake in south-eastern Georgia. It covers an area of 885 hectares (2,190 acres) at an elevation of 2,108 m (6,916 ft). A shallow lake, it is one of the most important in the country for breeding and staging water birds, including the endangered Dalmatian Pelican. Since 2020 it has been designated as a protected Ramsar site. In my photo, you can see both Dalmatian and Great White pelicans.



### A Treasure Trove Of Delight

The beautiful birds soon proved me wrong. For the first time, I saw an Ibis feasting on a snake only to have a purple-plumed heron snatching away the Ibis's hard-earned food.

**T**he name 'Mangalajodi' brings back beautiful memories. I had gone to be one with the birds and nature. Mangalajodi is popular with bird watchers and photographers as different types of migratory and territorial birds can be found here.

time, I experienced this amazing functioning of nature, up close and personal.

The local people were very helpful and have been investing their efforts in the conservation of nature. They helped with food and accommodation.

Author:  
Arha Sarkhel

Teacher, Private  
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I visited Mangalajodi during winter this year. When I first saw the place, it appeared to be very ordinary to me. The beautiful birds soon proved me wrong. For the first time, I saw an Ibis feasting on a snake only to have a purple-plumed heron snatching away the Ibis's hard-earned food. I also saw fighting Godwits and other birds hunting snakes, frogs, and fish. The food chain was being lived out in front of me and for the first

As a traveler, I visited different spots in the area to learn more about this place, the people, its cuisine, the climate, flora, and fauna. Tucked away deep within nature, Mangalajodi made me realize that even a simple and ordinary-looking place can also have priceless treasures hidden within it.







*She was confident and enthusiastic about her travel spanning thousands of kilometres across many countries.*

Author:  
Gargi Mishra

Images by:  
Athiya Mahapatra



## World Tour Of A Damsel

**S**omewhere in Central Asia: Mr. and Mrs. Demoiselle were worried. Their little angel was venturing into the outside world alone for the first time. This was her first winter migration. She was confident and enthusiastic about her travel spanning thousands of kilometres across many countries.

"Don't worry Mom 'n' Dad. I'll join you all in the Crane Village Khichan of Rajasthan once my exploration of a few other parts of India is over." The little angel took wings.

Looking back, she said, "Convey my regards to Ratanlal uncle and tell him not to worry either. How can I miss his delicious treat of grains?" After bidding them adieu the hyper active child started her journey towards North-western regions of India.

Ahoy! A perfect place for an on-way layover. That was the wetlands carpeted landscape of Dighal in the Haryana state of India. Landing, she decided to extend her stay for a few days.





Her descent on Dighal marked the start of the world's North-to-South bird migration with the advent of winter in India.

I met her on a winter day in Dighal, alone foraging and skimming the farms. It set me on a jog of my memories.

Most migratory birds to India come from Central Asia, Siberia and Mongolia. The milder winter of India allows Demoiselle Cranes (*Grus virgo*) to visit and spend the whole winter season here. Among all, Khichan village of Rajasthan state has been their most favourite wintering ground.

I remember sighting some 200 Demoiselle cranes while boating in the Chambal River, Uttar Pradesh stretch in October 2018.

Our guide spontaneously said, "All of them are heading towards Khichan village."

I thought, after all, who wouldn't like to be a guest of the grand party thrown by Ratanlal uncle!

But the one I spotted in Dighal was an exception. As if it was meant for me as a teaser before I could go to Khichan to have them as company.

This Demoiselle planned to explore some other parts of our country. Hence, landed in Dighal wetlands by taking a different route and stayed here for a few months. I was told for a strange reason a single Demoiselle crane had been landing up here for the past six years.

*The French queen Marie Antoinette would have been enchanted by the lady-like grace and elegance of this beautiful bird. Hence, aptly named it "Demoiselle" meaning "Lady/ Young Lady" in French.*

Most migratory birds to India come from Central Asia, Siberia and Mongolia.



*Ahoy!  
A perfect place  
for an  
on-way layover.*



**With a slender body not only the damsels but all the guys appear exquisitely gorgeous.**

The bluish-grey attire rimmed with black lace accentuates their beauty manifold. Not to miss their gleaming ruby eyes which are enhanced with long curvy silky white eye lashes specially in adults.

Many different physical features like its slim body, feathered head, short toes and small bill separate the Demoiselles from other cranes. The elongated and coiled windpipe (trachea) helps the cranes to make trumpeting sound. But in case of Demoiselle the length and positioning of the windpipe is different from other cranes. The length of the trachea is shorter and slightly impressed upon the breastbone (sternum) in Demoiselles whereas in other cranes it is much longer and pierced through the sternum. But that doesn't hinder in its way of producing high pitched trumpeting sound. Rather Demoiselle's call is louder than the Common Cranes.

The toes and bill have evolved to be shorter to adapt to the grassland habitats. With short toes s/he can run faster in grasslands. And a short bill allows them to forage efficiently in upland areas.

They use head feathers as a mode of communication by moving or raising them up.

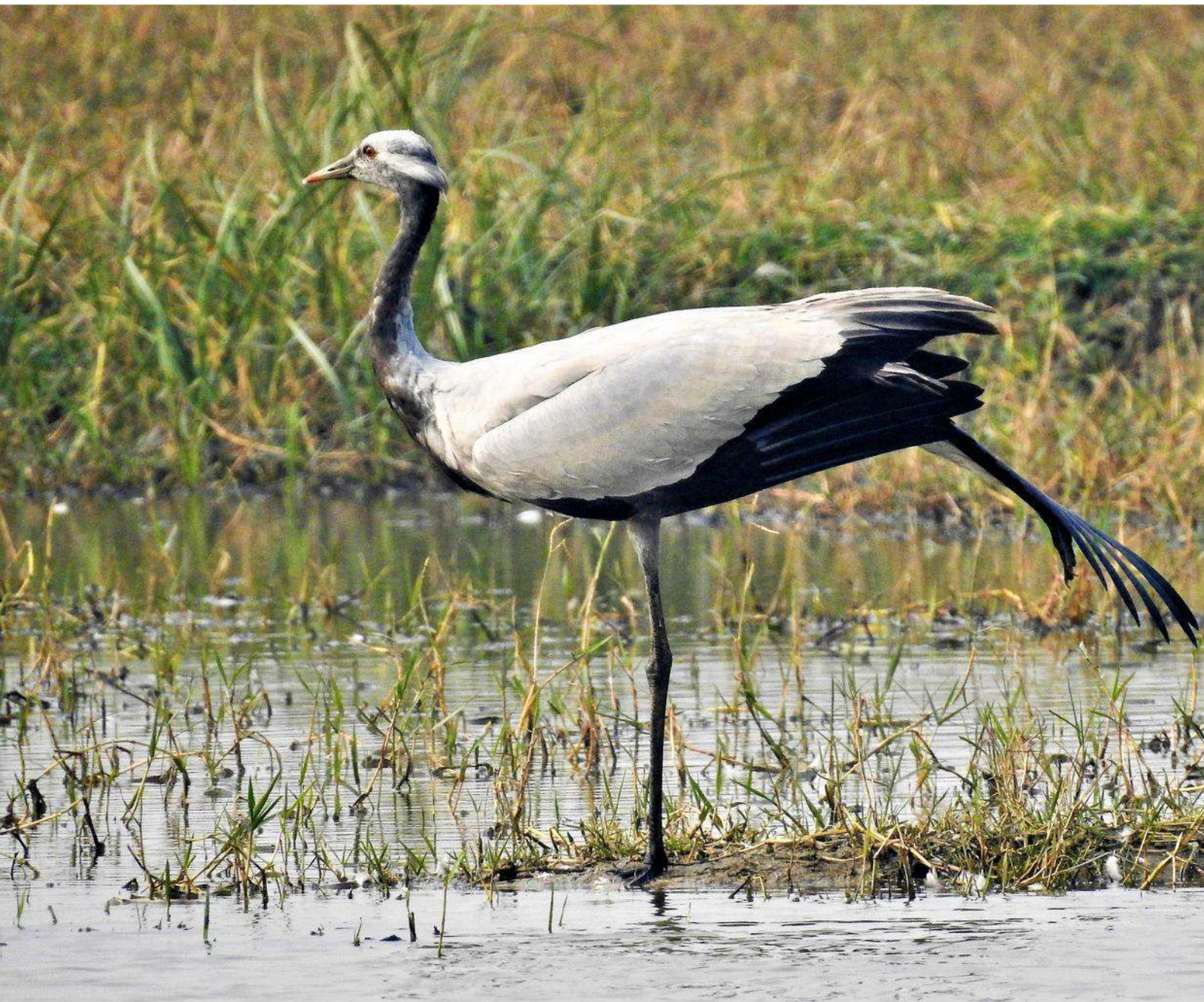
In dance a Demoiselle can surpass the craft and energy of a seasoned ballerina. It is said that the courtship dance strengthens the marital bond among a nesting pair. Demoiselle cranes are monogamous in nature. That means, once paired they stay together for life.

The Demoiselle cranes breed from April to May in Central Eurasia, North East China and Mongolia and as far as June end in the north. The cultivated areas and gravels serve as the nesting place for these birds and eggs are often laid directly on the ground. Sometimes, nests are made of pebbles and some plant materials. They rear a maximum two chicks per breeding season.

### **New Home Khichan village of Rajasthan**

Most migratory birds to India come from Central Asia, Siberia and Mongolia. The milder winter of India allows Demoiselle Cranes (*Grus virgo*) to visit and spend the whole winter season here. Among all, Khichan village of Rajasthan state has been their most favourite wintering ground.





Their chicks are precocial in nature. Precocial chicks are those which hatch with down feathers, open eyes and the ability to leave the nest within hours of hatching. These chicks follow their parents to the nearby foraging ground very soon after hatching and forage by themselves but depend on parents for some 9/10 months before being completely independent.

Omnivorous by nature they can consume a huge range of food like seeds, leaves, acorns, nuts, berries, fruits, waste grains, insects, worms, snails, grasshoppers, beetles, molluscs and many more. Many wetlands in India have been hosting these beautiful cranes since ages but the epitome of man and bird's cordial relationship can be seen in Khichan village. The love and trust that is shared among them is exemplary. Maybe in the near future we can create a few more Khichans and earn the trust and love of some other Mademoiselle and Monsieur too!



**A decade ago more than 350 individuals of Great Indian Bustard were found across India.**

However the species today is confined to 3-4 small pockets in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Rajasthan states of India.

## Protecting India's Last Legacy



Author:  
Arnab Basu,  
Associate Partner at  
(ERM)  
Environmental  
Resources  
Management

“We must build economic systems that value nature as a central source of human well-being and environmental health in the post-COVID-19 world. Safeguarding biodiversity can help reduce future health risks and make our societies more resilient,” told José Ángel Gurría, former Secretary-General, Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to participants at a joint World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and OECD webinar on World Environment Day, 2022.

Nature-based solutions are defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems that simultaneously address societal challenges, providing benefits to human well-being and biodiversity. Investments in landscape approach, coastal recovery, forestry and afforestation projects are some examples of incorporating the concept of nature-based solutions in mainstream sustainable development.

Adopting this concept in the sustainability landscape of one of 17 mega-diverse countries, India, the home to 7.6% of all

mammalian, 12.6% of all avian, 6.2% of all reptilian, 4.4% of all amphibian and 11.7% of all fish, is absolutely crucial. Especially when the 73 species of India including nine species of mammals, 18 species of birds, 26 species of reptiles, and 20 species of amphibians, according to IUCN criteria, are critically endangered. Ironically, adopting nature-based solutions sometimes is in direct conflict with the sustainable development agenda of the state. The victims of these conflicts are often those critically endangered faunal species and the local human community.

My colleague, biodiversity expert Arun Venkataraman, once highlighted this conflict with respect to the Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), a critically endangered species as per the latest IUCN Red List. This bird is endemic to the Indian subcontinent which is now closer to extinction. A decade ago, more than 350 individuals were found across several populations in India. However, the species today is confined to 3 to 4 small pockets in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Rajasthan states of India.

Arun further elaborated on this





## *Great Indian Desert*

issue, by mentioning that the Barmer and Jaisalmer districts in Rajasthan are thought to hold nearly 75 % of the global population of Great Indian Bustard (GIB). These districts are also valued for their extensive wind and solar energy potentials. They have experienced and continue to experience intense wind and solar energy project development. The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has carried out long-term research on GIB within the Barmer and Jaisalmer districts and has obtained a comprehensive understanding of habitat utilisation across this

landscape. The WII also considers overhead high-voltage transmission lines as the leading cause of mortality. Based on this research, GIB habitats in these districts have been zoned into GIB Priority Areas with intense feeding and breeding activity and GIB Potential Areas used in transit across habitats. Specific mitigation planning has been suggested for each of these areas and it has been recommended that this planning occurs in consultation with the WII.

When states, institutions, and policy makers recognise this underlying cause and conflict between conserving GIB and promoting renewable (windmills) as part of the sustainable development agenda, there is





*Close to extinction endemic species of Indian subcontinent – Great Indian Bustards at Desert National Park*

another informal conservation activism that remains inconspicuous. That is the participation of local community turned conservationists in protecting less glamorous but ecologically important species.

In 2013, Musa Khan used to do odd jobs around the Desert National Park (DNP). A sudden encounter with Gururaj Moorching, a famous wildlife photographer, changed his life. He drove the photographer and his friends through the park and

spotted a few birds. It became a turning point in his life and later in 2015, when the forest department organized training for tourist guides, Khan became a top performer. Over the last 6 years, he has become a sought-after guide at the park.

Acting as a link between the forest department and the villagers, he has helped to create awareness about wildlife among the locals. Musa Khan is now a popular name amongst birdwatchers. He is in great demand during winters, particularly between November and March. A lot of people rely on his expertise to plan their trips to the Desert National Park. Therefore, they make bookings only when Khan





*Great Indian Bustard (GIB) of DNP*



## More than 60% of the desert lies in the Indian state of Rajasthan, and Jaisalmer

is free. I remember booking him while planning my exploration in DNP between 28th and 31st of December 2022. For that, I started talking to him at the end of August of that year.

I was Musa's guest for five days during my exploration of the Thar Desert, also known as the Great Indian Desert, located in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. More than 60% of the desert lies in the Indian state of Rajasthan, and Jaisalmer is the nearest city through which one can reach there.

Himalayan and Eurasian griffon, Cinereous and Egyptian Vultures, some special lark species of desert like Bimaculated Lark, Crested Lark and Greater Hoopoe Lark, Trumpeter Finch and various wheatears like Persian, Isabelline, Variable and Desert Wheatears.

However, the most mention-worthy sighting was two different species of bustards. Great Indian and Mac Queen's bustards. Hugely supported by ornithologist Salim Ali, the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) was once in the queue to be crowned as Indian national bird. It lost the title to the Indian peafowl, largely due to the potential of its name being misspelled, as per an article written

During my exploration, we spotted around 60 avian species in the Indian desert. Some very special sightings were raptors like Merlin, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common and Long-legged buzzards, Laggar falcon, Eurasian Kestrel, Tawny, Imperial, and Short-toed Snake Eagles, four types of vultures like



by animal rights and environmental activist Tamanna Sengupta in the online magazine [youthkiawaaz.com](http://youthkiawaaz.com).

Thanks to Musa Khan, in three days, we saw five individuals of GIB, one adult male, two adult females, one sub-adult male, and one juvenile. Mainly they were found foraging within Desert National Park and in the surrounding grasslands of the Sam and Salkha village near the park. The grazing ground was surrounded by several hundred huge windmills.





Community-based ecotourism has huge potential to be an effective element of Nature Based Solutions in order to further uphold the agenda of Sustainable Development

MacQueen's bustards on the other hand are winter migratory species to the Thar Desert. These Mongolian birds leave the wintering areas in Afghanistan and Pakistan from mid to late March and arrive in their breeding grounds after about two months of flying, taking a path that avoids the high mountains of the Himalayas. Their migrations have been tracked using satellite transmitters. In fact, we noticed tags and radio collars attached to the legs of the two adult birds we spotted.

Today wildlife enthusiasts, eco-tourists, and photographers from all over World visit Desert National Park to have glimpses and take their dream shots of these two bustard species. Musa Khan keeps track of these birds' movement with help of local nomads and shepherds who frequently spot these birds while getting their livestock to grassland for grazing. His engagement with them prevented them from hunting the birds, as everybody now started to understand the ecotourism economy of the Thar desert.





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# They are Free Birds!



Once I spotted a beautiful bird  
Foraging under a Hibiscus shrub  
Its stubbed tail and colourful plumage  
caught my eye, I continued to gaze!

I stood still and watched  
Tip-toed when it walked  
And stalked till it flew away  
Out of sight having made my day!

Beholding its beauty in my eye  
I looked for it under the bush and nigh  
Next day, next to next one and so on  
Each day I waited to watch, forlorn!

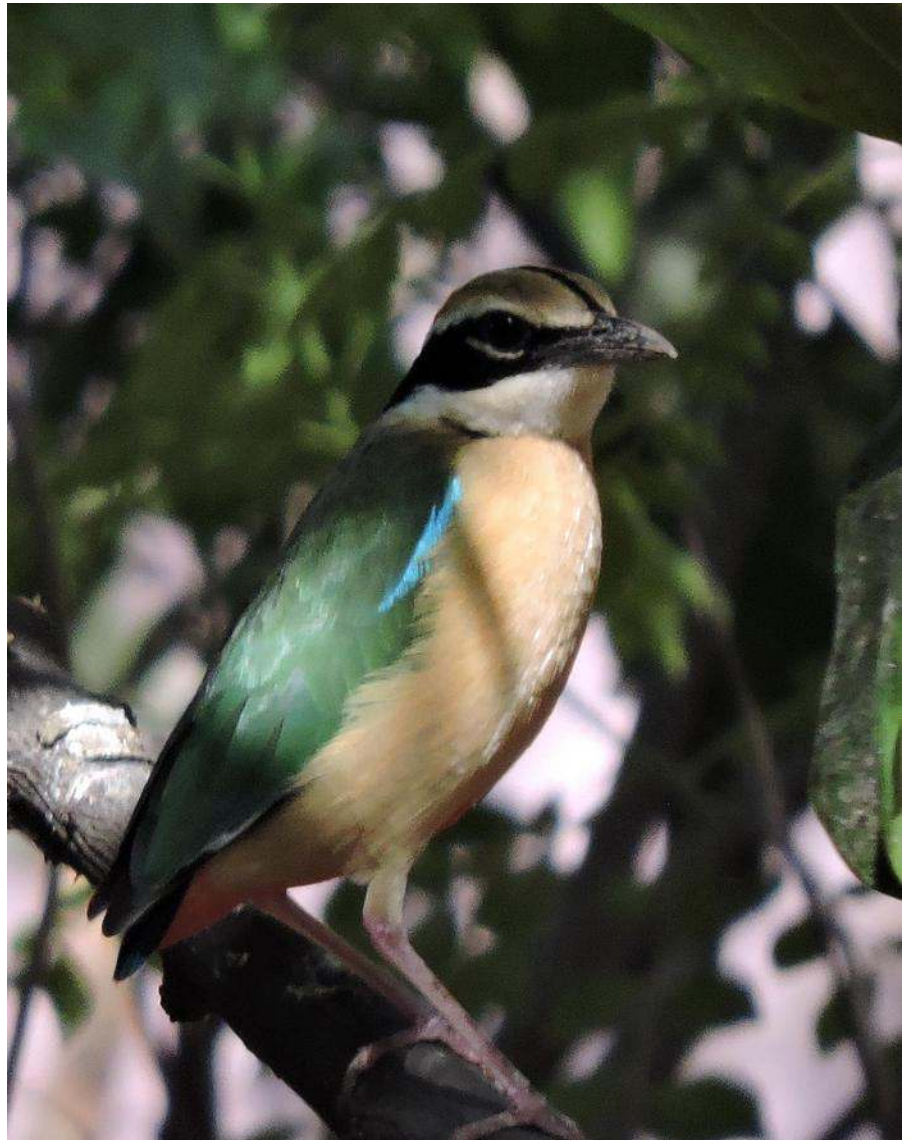
She must have flocked to a faraway land  
Across the seas and across the sands  
Before the onset of the rainy season  
She must've flown to a new habitation.

They flap their wings and set to fly  
Miles and miles across the sky  
They know so well to map the sky  
Wish we fools could demystify!

No boundaries, no borders, sky is their  
limit,  
No passport, no visa, no ticket, no  
permit  
This is their planet, their bower, their  
kingdom  
They are free birds, savouring their  
freedom!

They rest and roost  
Feast on their favoured fruits  
Sing songs and build their nests  
In the nests they lay their eggs!

They shower love and take care  
Feed the brood and prepare  
The fledglings for their first flight  
Abandon the nest and enjoy new  
heights!



They hold on to nothing  
Neither the nest nor the nestlings  
Free spirits they are with joyous  
instincts  
That take delight in all small  
things!

### Author:

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Reliance  
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Navi  
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## Trumpeter Finches

Trumpeter finches are small passerine birds in the finch family Fringillidae. They are a desert species found mainly in deserts and steppe lands. Trumpeter finches breed from February to June in monogamous pairs. They can occur in large flocks, especially during the breeding season. This image was shot in Desert National Park in the state of Rajasthan in India.



# GITZO

## Gitzo tripod Systematic, series 3 long, 4 sections GT3543LS

*The Gitzo GT3543LS Series 3 Systematic Tripod is a powerful, 4-section, professional carbon fiber tripod designed to securely elevate longer lenses and heavy cameras. It is the perfect combination of elevation, lightness, durability, and uncompromising stability.*



## Gimbal Fluid Head- GHFG1

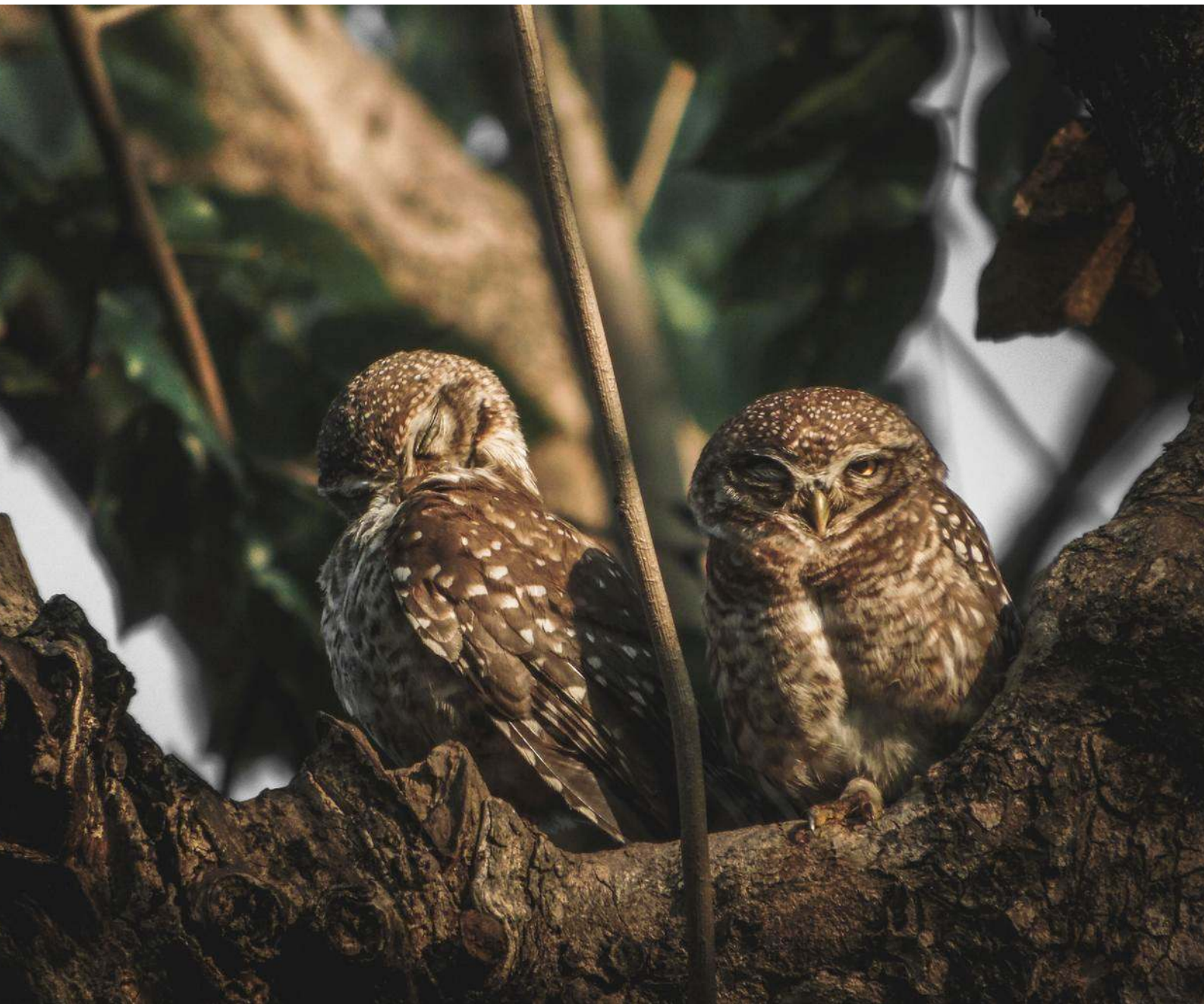
*The ground-breaking Fluid Gimbal Head is far more than celebratory photography equipment. With the new Fluid Gimbal head, Gitzo has once again lived up to its reputation as a brand that keeps pushing boundaries, making every movement precise and uninhibited, enabling photographers to capture flawless, breathtaking photos and videos.*



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Author:  
Upayan  
Chatterjee,  
Howrah,  
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Bengal,  
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## Gone With The Breeze!

There are certain interactions that feel so sure, while they last, and then, they suddenly cease to exist. This is one such story, where I stumbled upon a pair of Owlets at the Indian Botanic Garden and had the privilege of following them around for one whole year. I knew their favorite trees, and their routines and they had grown to be comfortable in my presence. It was a beautiful bond.

After the lockdown and Amphan cyclone happened, I never saw them again. It is good that I made a sketchy journal of our relationship while it lasted.



## MT055CXP04

The new 055 carbon fibre-3 section photo tripod offers outstanding rigidity and is incredibly lightweight. This engineering masterpiece from Italy has been manufactured to very high standards, and features a 90° column that can be extended vertically or horizontally so you can shoot with greater versatility.



## PRO Light Flexloader Backpack L

The Manfrotto PRO Light Flexloader camera backpack L is a professional camera bag specifically designed to provide unparalleled gear protection to fit the preference and workflow of any professional photographer or filmmaker.

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Author: Mukund K. Dass  
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## Egyptian Nightjar

Egyptian Nightjar (*Caprimulgus aegyptius*) is elusive. Spotting this nocturnal bird should be considered an experience to cherish. Even though it is large in size and has long wings. But its pale colour and the natural skill to camouflage itself make it difficult for us to spot it.



The long wings also enable it to be a powerful flier. Usually, we spot them on the grounds. They are found in open flats of sandy or stony desert regions.

My experience of sighting Egyptian Nightjar in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is simply enthralling. Due to its unique geographical location, the UAE welcomes a multitude of birds from two different continents - Asia and Africa. No wonder, more than 400 different species of birds have been recorded in this desert country. Egyptian Nightjar is a migratory bird in the UAE.

This avian beauty comes to this country during the hot and humid months from July to September. For the last three years, I have been fortunate enough to spot them during these months. What I found very interesting is that these birds have been spotted almost in the same regions/areas in the desert, year after year. Generally, I find them resting under the shrubs and trees during the day time. But, just before sunset, they become very active and hunt down their favourite meals like insects or rodents or lizards.

They are masters at camouflaging. Their body colouration merges them with that of the desert sand. So even when you are standing next to them, it is very difficult to spot them. The only way one can spot them is when they fly away as you approach them, even though you are not aware of their presence. During day time, when disturbed, they fly for very short distances which give us the opportunity to follow them. Their song is a peculiar repeating coarse note 'Rrrruu rrruu rrruu...' which sometimes reveals their presence.



## The Owl Story

**Art has the power to inspire, heal, and bring people together!**



Author:  
Grace Marian  
Asistant Manager  
Central Bank of India,  
Kolkata

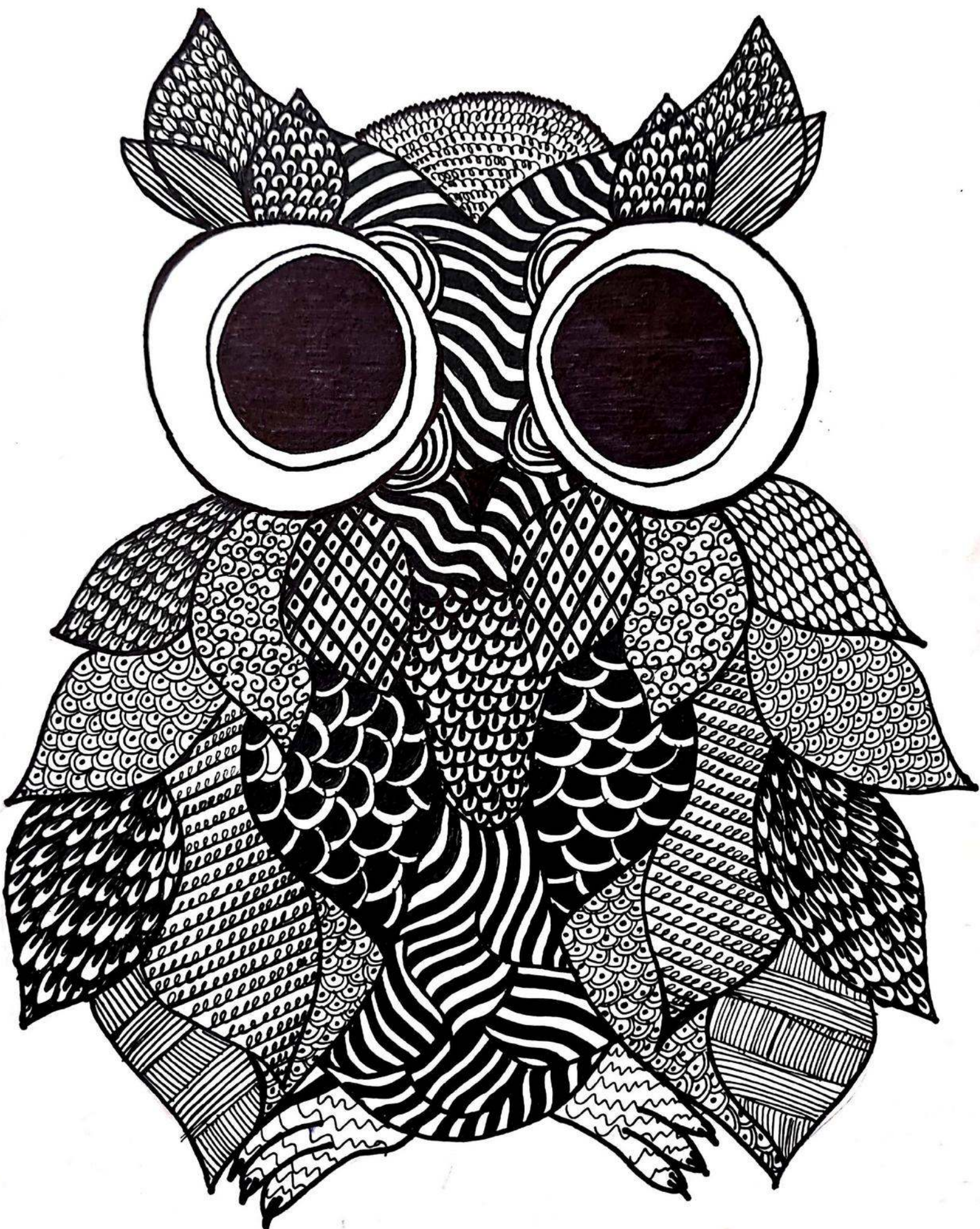
Art has been a passion for me since my childhood days. When I was a little girl, I used to make greeting cards for every occasion, new year, birthdays, and most of all Christmas! I would spend hours drawing and decorating each card. You must be thinking that almost all of us used to make greeting cards in our childhood so what's so special about it, in my case? The difference was that I never used colours for my cards, I had this fascination with pencil-sketched cards. But as I grew older, my love for art only intensified, and I began to explore different mediums such as painting, sculpting, and photography.

I believe "Art" is a form of expression that allows me to communicate my thoughts and emotions in a way that words cannot. It is a way for me to connect with the world around me and express my unique perspective. It also has the power to inspire, heal, and bring people together. Art has been a constant source of joy and inspiration in my life. It has helped me to connect with others, express my emotions, and find meaning and purpose in the world around me. Whether I am creating a painting, taking a photograph, or just making a

greeting card; it allows me to express myself in a way that is both personal and universal. As I gradually blew out more candles on my birthday cake with time, I got swamped with the responsibilities of being a grown-up and especially a working wife. One time amidst the pile of burdens I buried myself with I somehow rekindled my love for art and sketching. Soon I was back in touch with my artistic self being expressed through sketches, glass paintings, canvases, and whatnot. However, pencil and pen sketches dominated most of my artistic extensions.

A few years later, which is in the recent past; I was mesmerised by wildlife photography and soon I got some recognition with my photographs being published by some of the big banners like National Geographic, BBC Earth, Nikon, etc. With my interest growing stronger in nature and its fauna, I thought why not make simple sketches of my favourite animals? And that was the rough origin story for this particular artwork of mine representing my favourite winged life, "The Owl". I hope to continue sketching and keep expressing my art in the future just like this.









# EXPLORING NATURE AWARDS

## "THE WINGS, THE BEAKS & THE FEATHERS"



**Message:**  
**Mukul**  
**Mukherjee**  
**Founder**  
**and**  
**Producer**

Bird photography competition is a fun-filled engaging way to raise awareness about the importance of bird conservation and promote appreciation for these incredible creatures. By encouraging people to get out and capture stunning pictures of the birds in their natural habitats, we can help inspire a new generation of bird enthusiasts and conservation advocates.

Hence, Exploring Nature organised an online bird photography competition cum exhibition called "The Wings, The Beaks and The Feathers".

It was organised on Exploring Nature's Facebook group to engage a large audience and raise awareness about bird conservation. By encouraging people to capture beautiful images of birds in their natural habitats, we can foster a deeper appreciation for these incredible creatures and their role in the ecosystem.

Participants submitted their entries through the Facebook group. Every day the best photograph was featured on the cover of the Exploring Nature's Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter. We have received more than 500 entries. Out of them 56 photographs were showcased one by one on a daily basis during this online campaign.





## **EXPLORING NATURE AWARDS**

### **"THE WINGS, THE BEAKS & THE FEATHERS"**



**Prabir Mukherjee**  
**Winner**



**Uidar Aas**  
**1st Runner Up**



**Grace Marian**  
**2nd Runner Up**



**Karthi Keyan**  
**Best Portrait**



**Abhijeet K Banerjee**  
**Best Behaviour**



**Neeraj Monani**  
**Best Habitat**





**Prabir Mukherjee**  
**Winner**





**Vidar Aas**  
**1st Runner Up**





**Grace Marian**  
**2nd Runner Up**





**Karthi Keyan**  
**Best Portrait**

*P.K's Diary*





**Abhijeet K Banerjee**  
**Best Behaviour**



© neeraj m



**Neeraj Monani**  
**Best Habitat**





**Maia Duishvili**  
**Acceptance**



**Arun Tyagi**  
**Acceptance**



**Grace Marian**  
**Acceptance**



**Raj Pise**  
**Acceptance**







@Subho



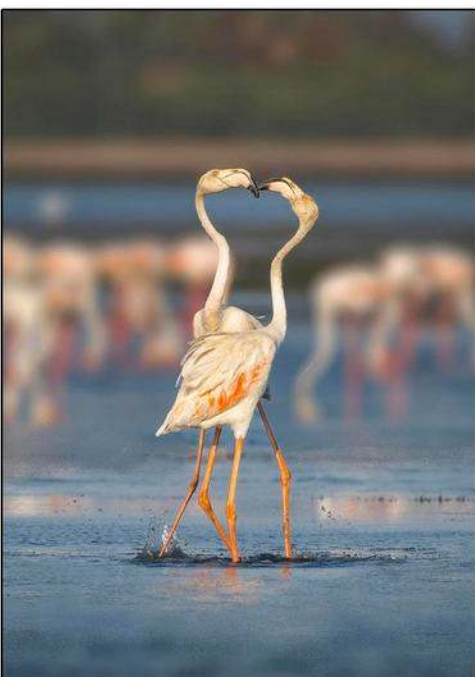
**Subho Das**  
**Acceptance**



**Tarak Das**  
**Acceptance**



**Grace Marian**  
**Acceptance**



**Santanu Majumder**  
**Acceptance**



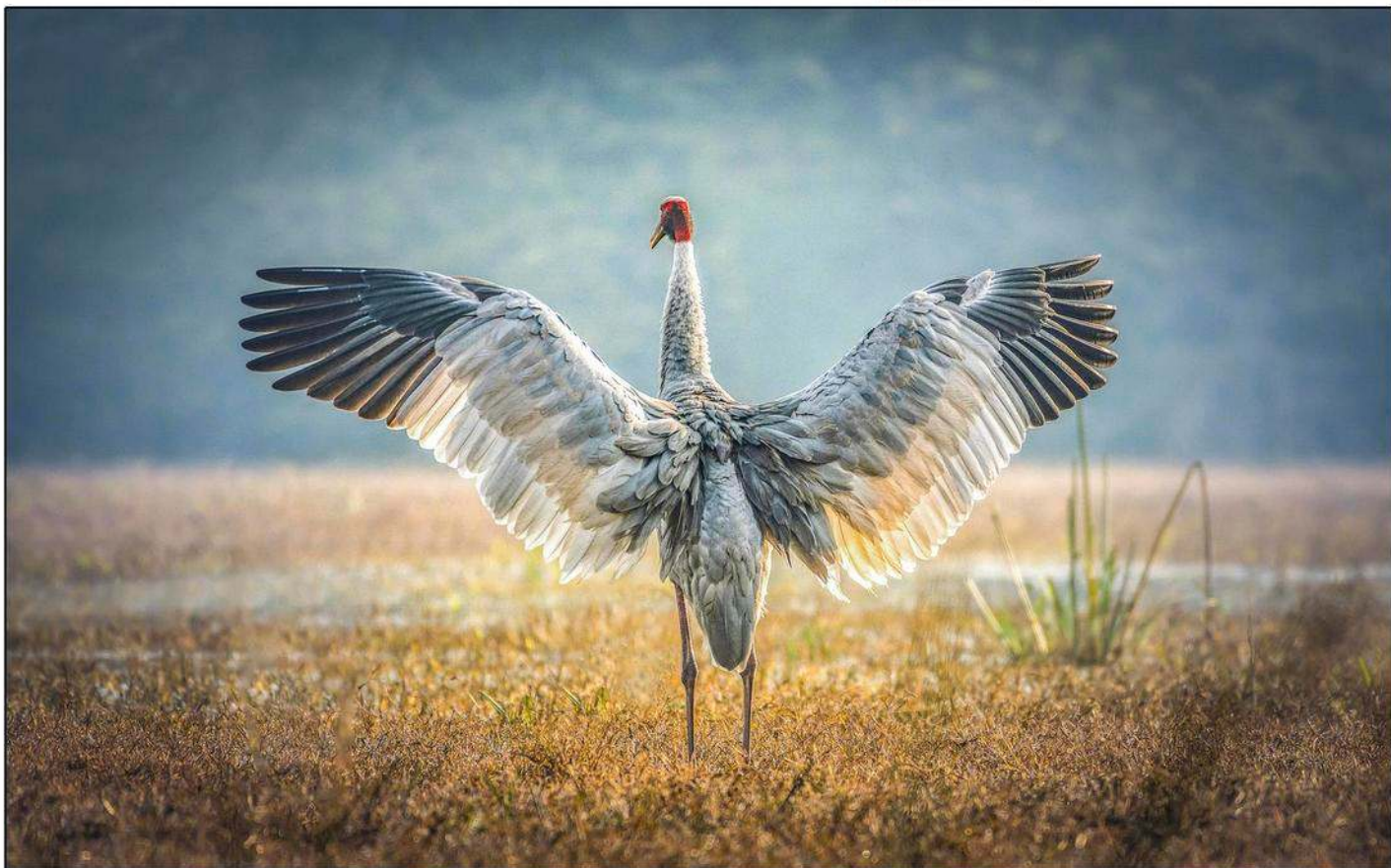
**Debaditya Sarkar**  
**Acceptance**







**Arka Chandra Roy**  
**Acceptance**



**Santanu Majumder**  
**Acceptance**





**Prasad Aslekar**  
**Acceptance**



**Navonil Dutta**  
**Acceptance**



**Samar Jana**  
**Acceptance**



# GITZO

## Gitzo Adventure 45L camera backpack for DSLR with 600mm lens GCB AVT BP-45

*The new GITZO Adventure 45L Backpack (GCB AVT-BP-45) is the perfect backpack for bird and nature photographers who need to carry a full camera equipment kit in a safe, roomy, feature-rich and outdoor-ready bag.*



framed  
on Gitzo

Adventure

## Gitzo center Ball Head, Series 4 - Lever GH4383LR

*The Gitzo Ball Head Series 4 GH4383LR (lever version) is a heavy-duty tripod head ideal for large telephoto lenses, engineered to ensure the ultimate in smoothness and precision of movement.*



framed  
on Gitzo

Ball Head

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Author:  
Santanu  
Majumder,  
Group  
Captain  
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## **ZANSKAR... A Destination Like No Other**

Zangskar or Zanskar, a region in the southern part of the Union Territory of Ladakh, is pristine. The region is relatively isolated, and it remains cut off from the rest of the world for close to eight months in a year. However, in normal time, it has accessibility to other parts of Ladakh. Spreading over 7,000 square kilometres, the valley's altitudes range from 3,500 and 7,000 metres. Geologists say the Zanskar Range is part of the Tethys Himalaya. Tethys refers to that sea that existed in this place millions of years ago, to be later the birthplace of the Himalayas due to plate-tectonic activities.





The high-altitude semi-desert evokes hope and contrasts when one lands up here. The valley consists of the areas along the two main branches of the Zaskar River - Doda and Lungnak (formed by two tributaries Kurgiakh and Tsarap).

The easiest approach is from Kargil through the Suru valley. There are two more roads being constructed - one from Leh through Lingshed or Lingshet and the second from Manali through the Shinku La. None of these roads are all-weather

roads. These roads, especially the one from Manali and the one from Leh, through Lingshed, are virtually closed from around November till April. Even the oldest one from Kargil, through Rangdum to Padum, faces frequent closures due to heavy snowfall in the winter. In such situations, the only way to reach Padum is through the helicopter service operated from Leh/Kargil to Padum or the Trek on Frozen Zaskar River, now famously known as the Chadar Trek.

Unlike many other areas of Ladakh, Zaskar is relatively unspoilt. With one of the lowest population densities in the country, and only one town, Padum, in the entire region, it is the place to enjoy the raw,





*Milkyway Galaxy*



*Cold Desert*

### Day 1: Leh to Kargil

unadulterated beauty of nature in solitude.

I along with a few friends and our cameras as the chroniclers ventured to Zaskar recently. Excerpts from my unadulterated diary:

We were a group of four. Two of us were travelling from Hyderabad, while one each travelled from Mumbai and Jaipur. We decided to meet up at the Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport, Leh early in the morning of June 26, 2022. We loaded all our stuff in our pick-up vehicle (a Toyota Innova) and commenced our journey to Kargil, our night halt destination.

On our way to Kargil, we had many halts to capture the mesmerising landscape. We reached Kargil at 18:30 hours (Hrs) and checked into our hotel.



*The Moonland of  
Lamayaru*









*Fairytale like  
landscape of  
Suru Valley on  
the way to  
Padum*

### Day 2: Kargil to Abran

The sun rises early in these parts. By the time we finished our breakfast, the sun was already harsh. We set off for the next leg of our journey. Our plan for the day was to spend the night at Rangdum. The drive to Rangdum via the Suru Valley is breathtakingly beautiful one. The road winds along the Suru River. On the way, we spot the blooms of colourful wild flowers, brightened by the Sun, and framed by snow-covered mountain peaks.

We reached Rangdum around 15:30 Hrs. Our initial plan was to check into a guest house and then drive to Pensi La and Drang Drung Glacier for night shoot. But after a chat with our driver Tashi, we





*The landscape of Sani Village*



*Buddha Statue at Sani Village*

## Days 3 and 4:

decided to head straight to Pensi La. And after the night shoot at Drang Drung, we came to a village called Abran, on the way to Padum. Tashi managed for us a home stay in Abran.

### **Abran to Padum**



We woke up a little late knowing that we had a short distance to travel till Padum. The home stay in Abran had a small lawn with a couple of tables, where we had our hot cup of morning tea and of course “Maggi”.

On the way to Padum, we stopped in Sani village. The place has a beautiful lake and a huge statue of Buddha by the side of the lake in the open. We visited the Sani Village Monastery. By late afternoon, we checked into our hotel in Padum. We were to travel to Gonbo Rongjon the next day which is a

very cold and windy place with an extremely rarefied atmosphere.

### **Padum to GonboRongjon**

Gonbo Rongjon is a sacred mountain range for the Zanskari people. It is located less than 10 km from Kurgiakh Village. Until last year, you might not have found this place on Google Maps. It lies along the new route from Manali to Padum via Shinku La. The route to Gonbo Rongjon from Padum passes through a few villages like Purne, Cha, Icchar, Anmu, etc. Purne is the

place where the Tsarap River merges with the Kurgiakh River. Purne is also the place from where you start the trek to Phuktal Monastery.

We reached Gonbo at around 14:30 Hrs. We scouted for different possible frames that we could shoot that night. Fortunately for us, the skies were absolutely clear. That night we started shooting nightscapes from 20:30













*Purne is the place where the Tsarap river merges with the Kurgiakh River*



*Monk at Stongdey Monastery*

## Days 5 ,6 and 7:

Hrs onwards and kept shooting till 02: 00 Hrs in the morning.

### **Padum and Zangla**

On Day 5, we drove back to Padum. Enroute, we halted at a small cafe for a cup of tea. The hosts were wonderful people who

refused to accept any money from us for the tea and Chaang (the local liquor made from barley). We reached Padum; had a sumptuous lunch at a restaurant in town; and headed back to our hotel.

Next day, after a leisurely breakfast at the hotel, we visited the Stongdey monastery and the Zangla palace. The Stongdey Monastery is on the way to Zangla and we spent about an hour or so at the place. It is at an elevated altitude thus offering a magnificent view of the valley below. We interacted with a few

monks at the monastery.

We went ahead to Zangla for scouting frames to be shot that night. Zangla, a small village, is about 40 Km from Padum. The palace is built on a hillock, adjacent to the village. Though partially restored by an NGO, it still is in ruins. Yet it provides a magnificent set up for nightscape images. Having identified the probable frames, we returned to the hotel by 14:00 Hrs. We reached Zangla again at around 19:00 Hrs and spent the next five hours shooting the Himalayan nights.



### **Padum to Damsna**

It was time to wind up from Zanskar. We were fortunate to experience absolutely clear skies on all days. This helped us fulfil our primary aim of shooting the nightscapes, in the country's darkest zones.

After breakfast, we started back towards Kargil, via Pensi La. We found an excellent resort at Damsna just by the roadside, on the bank of Suru River, with a magnificent view of the Nun Kun Peaks. We checked into the resort (that night, we were





*Nun Kun Peaks and Suru River at Damsna*



*Milkyway Galaxy photographed at Damsna*

## Days 8, 9 and 10:

the only residents) and realised that we would not have to go out of the resort to find our nightscape frames. So, we readied our gears and got ready for one last night out during the trip.

### Back to Leh



Our trip was near end; the return journey with loads of experiences to rewind started. Though we had a couple of nights more before we dispersed from Leh, we had no shoots planned for the next two days. Hence, we were in no hurry that morning. We woke up to the magnificent view of the Nun Kun Peaks lit up by the morning Sun. We sat outside on the lawns and enjoyed the view and our breakfast.

We left Damsna around 1:00 Hrs and reached Kargil by 13:00 Hrs. Checked into the resort and then lazed around the remaining part

of the day. All of us had a really good sleep that night.

### Departure from Leh

So, after 10 days of travelling through one of the most beautiful and inaccessible regions of our country, it was time to say our goodbyes. We returned home with wonderful memories, immortalised by our camera.

Geologists say the Zaskar Range is part of the Tethys Himalaya. Tethys refers to that sea that existed in this place millions of years ago, to be later the birthplace of the Himalayas due to plate-tectonic activities.

The high-altitude semi-desert evokes hope and contrasts when one lands up here.





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Georgia  
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Country

## The Javakheti Plateau in Georgia Country

The Javakheti Plateau is a highland grassland area in southern Georgia that is on the Armenian-Turkish border. Five of Georgia's eight largest lakes are located here, along with a diverse waterfowl fauna. The Madatapa (blue) lake, walled by the volcanic mountains of Javakheti and open spaces, creates a beautiful sight. This place is perfect for bird-watching enthusiasts. This is an excellent location for bird watchers. Photographers frequent the lake during the summer when numerous nesting and migrating birds congregate. Many people are drawn to the area because of the expansive views, variety of colours, and presence of rare species.







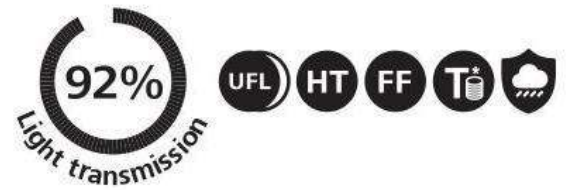
# COMPARISON OF VICTORY SF AND SFL.

		Main use		
		Outdoor/ recreational	Birding/ nature observation	Twilight/ night
Light transmission	Optical quality			
ZEISS Victory SF			SF 8×42 SF 10×42 SF 8×32 SF 10×32	
92% SF 42 90% SF 32	UFL HT FF T*			
ZEISS SFL			SFL 8×40 SFL 10×40	
90%	UHD FF T*			
ZEISS Victory HT				HT 8×54 HT 10×54
95%	HT FL T*			
ZEISS Victory Pocket		Pocket 8×25 Pocket 10×25		
91%	FL T*			
ZEISS Conquest HD		HD 8×42 HD 10×42 HD 8×32 HD 10×32	HD 8×56 HD 10×56 HD 15×56	
90%	HD T*			
ZEISS Terra ED/Pocket		ED 8×42 ED 10×42 ED 8×32 ED 10×32 Pocket 8×25 Pocket 10×25		
88%	ED T*			

\*Hydrophobic and antireflective coating.



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- Minimum object distance of 1.5 meters for exploring the smallest details.





# EXPLORING NATURE AWARDS

## FEBRUARY - MARCH 2023

### TOP ARTISTS



**Swastika Talukder  
Sarkar**  
**Winner**



**Bipad Taran Mandal**  
**1st Runner Up**



**Arun Tyagi**  
**2nd Runner Up**

### TOP CONTRIBUTORS



**Samar Jana**



**Navonil Dutta**



**Amar Baraik**





**Swastika Talukder Sarkar**  
**Winner**

*Swastika Sarkar*





**Bipad Taran Mandal**  
**1st Runner Up**





**Arun Tyagi**  
**2nd Runner UP**





# EXPLORING NATURE AWARDS

## JANUARY 2023

### TOP ARTISTS



**Manik Lal Dutta**  
**Winner**



**Swastika Talukder  
Sarkar**  
**1st Runner Up**



**Ridha Narain**  
**2nd Runner Up**

### TOP CONTRIBUTORS



**Raj Paise**



**Arun Tyagi**



**Subho Das**





**Manik Lal Dutta**  
**Winner**



Swastika Sarkar



**Swastika Talukder Sarkar**  
**1st Runner Up**





**Ridha Narain**  
**2nd Runner Up**





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