

**Africa Inspired Images**  
**The Stories Behind the Images**

**This is not a book of photography. It is  
a book of stories about photographs I  
have taken on my African Wanderings**

**Stories and Images by Leigh Kemp  
Africa Wanderings**

## **Stories of the Images that are Inspired by Africa**

I have had an interest in photography since my childhood years, an interest which was centred initially around photojournalism. I was fascinated by news photography and still have images in my mind from certain events in history. War photographers were some of my early icons – and I did have a seldom-mentioned dream to win a Pulitzer Prize for news photography.

Brief stints with country newspapers gave me a small taste of news photography, although retirement home mayoral tea parties and kids Xmas parties were not quite what excited a Pulitzer-dreaming news photographer.

My dream of travelling through Africa came to fruition when I started guiding wilderness safaris in Botswana. From my initial days in Botswana I have since been privileged to have spent time in many other countries in Africa.

During my guiding years I carried a camera with me whenever possible. My intentions were two-fold, to get great images but also to record as many species and behaviours as possible. Most of the photographs I took pre-digital were packed away to be sorted on a rainy day.

**Lockdown 2020:** The Covid lockdown brought about a total shutdown of my guiding work. Initially I thought that it would last a few months at the most and then I would be back on the road. Now a year down the line, I am still no closer to going back to what I was doing.

What the lockdown did was allow me time to go through all the boxes that were stored away, boxes that contained records of a great part of my life, in writings and in images [much of it pre digital].

Slowly but surely I worked my way through the boxes, reminiscing, yearning and finally deciding to start putting a story together. As a side to the story I began to write anecdotes of some of the photos I had taken – and not taken. These anecdotes were not to showcase my best images but to tell stories of some of the more memorable moments in getting some of my photos.

**There are many very talented natural history photographers out there and it was never my intention to compete with them. The stories that follow are not about prize winning photographs – rather they are stories of some of my favourite photography moments.**

I could do a whole publication of images with blood and gore, big game and beautiful birds, but I want to showcase stories of images that meant more to me than just another animal photo.

**Note: As with life in the wilderness the pages are not numbered and the stories are in no particular order!**

## Snake-eating snakes

Snakes are often avoided on African safaris as many travellers have a deep-seated fear of them but there are times when they cannot be avoided.

I was sitting in the office at Nxabega in the Okavango Delta one day when a very flustered guest burst in through the door and very animatedly told a story about two snakes eating each other. One was black and he was certain it was a black mamba.

Not too sure what he was talking about but concerned about the mamba in the area I asked him to show me where the incident happened. He pointed to the pond in the car park in front of the office. 'They are still there', he said.

I picked up my camera and walked over to the pond. Slowly I walked around the edge until I saw one of the snakes. It did look black in the dappled light. After a few seconds I noticed what looked like another bright green snake – coming from the mouth of the dark snake. I took some photographs as the green snake was disappearing into the brown/black snake.

I knew, through research, that there were snakes that ate other snakes, but this was a first sighting of this behaviour for me. The incident involved an olive grass snake eating an Angolan green snake – an apparently not too uncommon occurrence.

Two days later the guest was still disagreeing with me re the identification. He really wanted it to be a mamba. 'Olive grass snake' did not sound dangerous enough!



### **The mane silhouette**

The sun had set and the sky was turning all colours of fire. The male lion was facing away from me so I manoeuvred the vehicle into a position where I could climb out the one side and take a picture from underneath the car of his mane against the darkening sky.

I was still sorting out my lens, in a half squat/lie under the Landy when a roar shook the vehicle and reverberated along the ground. Instinctively I looked up and bumped my head hard against the edge of the open Landover door.

In my metal-induced pain I glimpsed a movement. The lion was walking past the vehicle, literally two meters from where I was still cussing the door. Another roar split the evening, a male lion roaring two meters from me; it was an incredible moment – despite the piercing pain in my head.



**A lion roaring two meters from where you are half squatting is an incredible experience**

## Baboons and Water

A troop of baboons in the Okavango was the subject of my fascination for nearly two years. One of my favourite pastimes was to watch them crossing the flooded channels. They employed several ways of doing this – from screaming and running through the water to popping up on two legs in the deeper spots.



**And then one day one stood up and strode across with attitude**



## Marbled Emperor Moth

One species of moth on my bucket list was the emperor moth – any species would do, but I really wanted the picture of a marbled emperor. There were enough other moths around, however, to have allowed me to put the emperor yearning to the back of my mind.

Then one moth-photographing night, while checking the settings on my camera, I felt a flutter, or flitter, around my toes, and there, almost as if fantasized, was a marbled emperor moth – on my foot.

Later that night I saw another one – laying eggs.

I will not go into some deeply spiritual description of how, because of my patience and deep desire, the moth was calling me to witness the birth [of its eggs].

**Quite incredible I must say!**



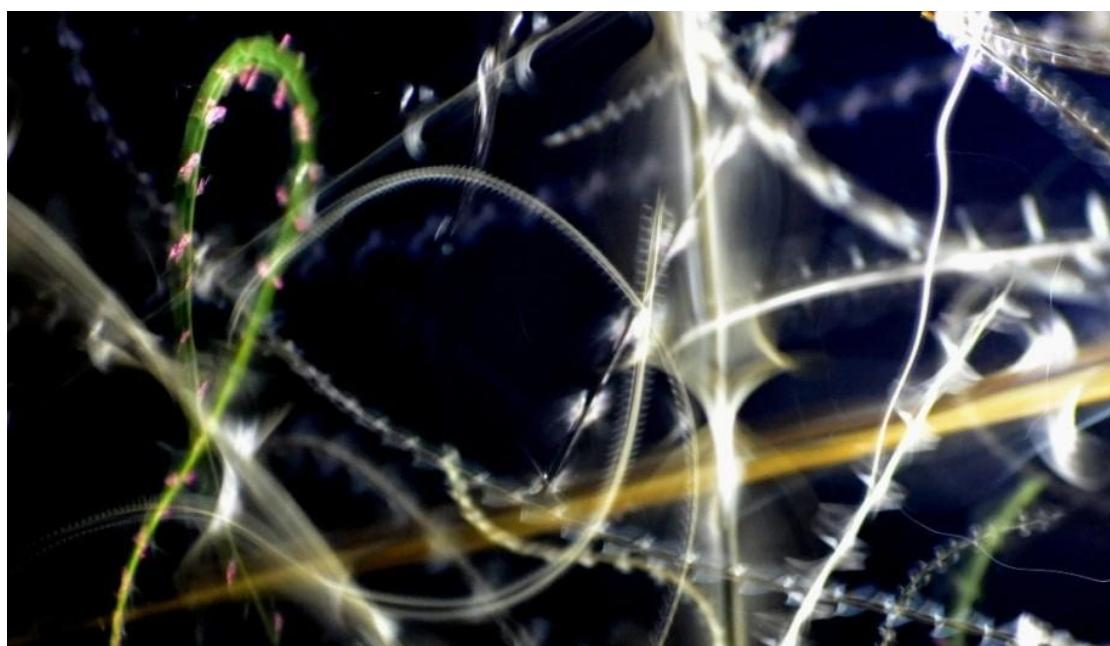
## Plume moth and cold coffee

My fascination with moths enabled me to spend hours in research and photography. For a long time, however, one group of moths eluded me, the plume moths. I became desperate to get a picture of any species of plume moth. It became an obsession that grew with each moth hunting foray.

And then one morning I woke up and my coffee was cold – and a plume moth was posing beautifully – albeit dead – floating in the left-over liquid.



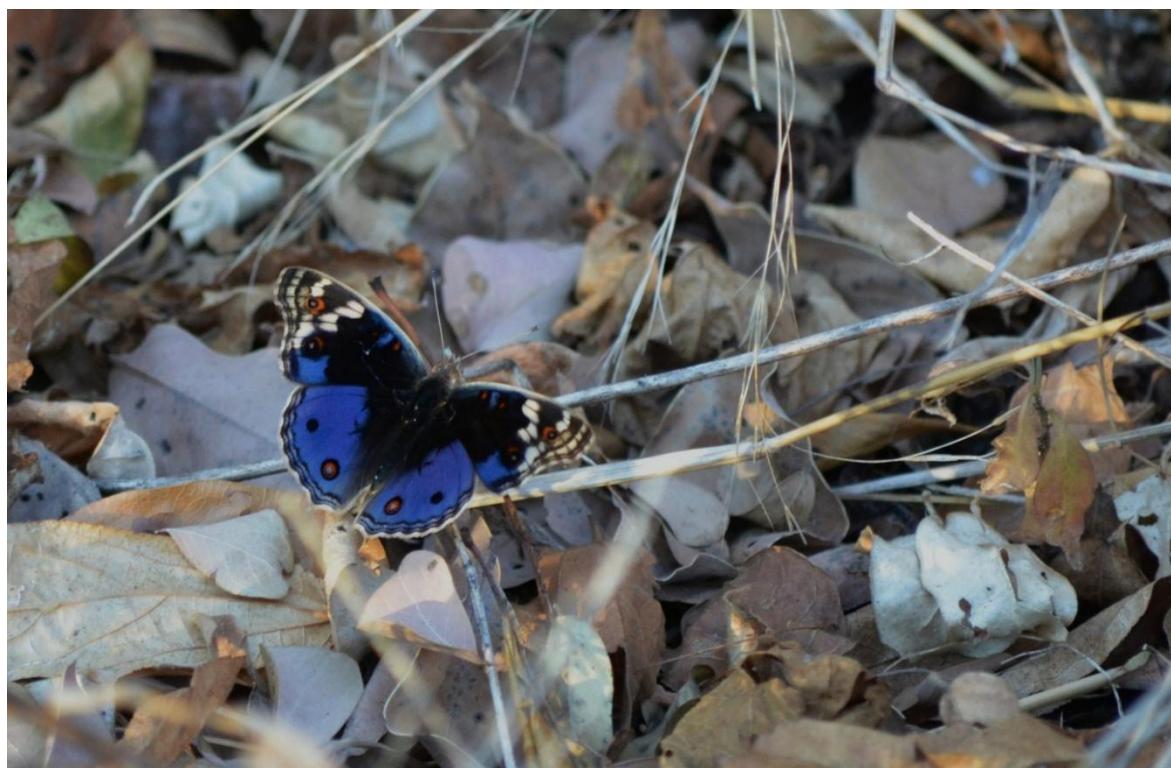
Capturing moth flight patterns – another pastime

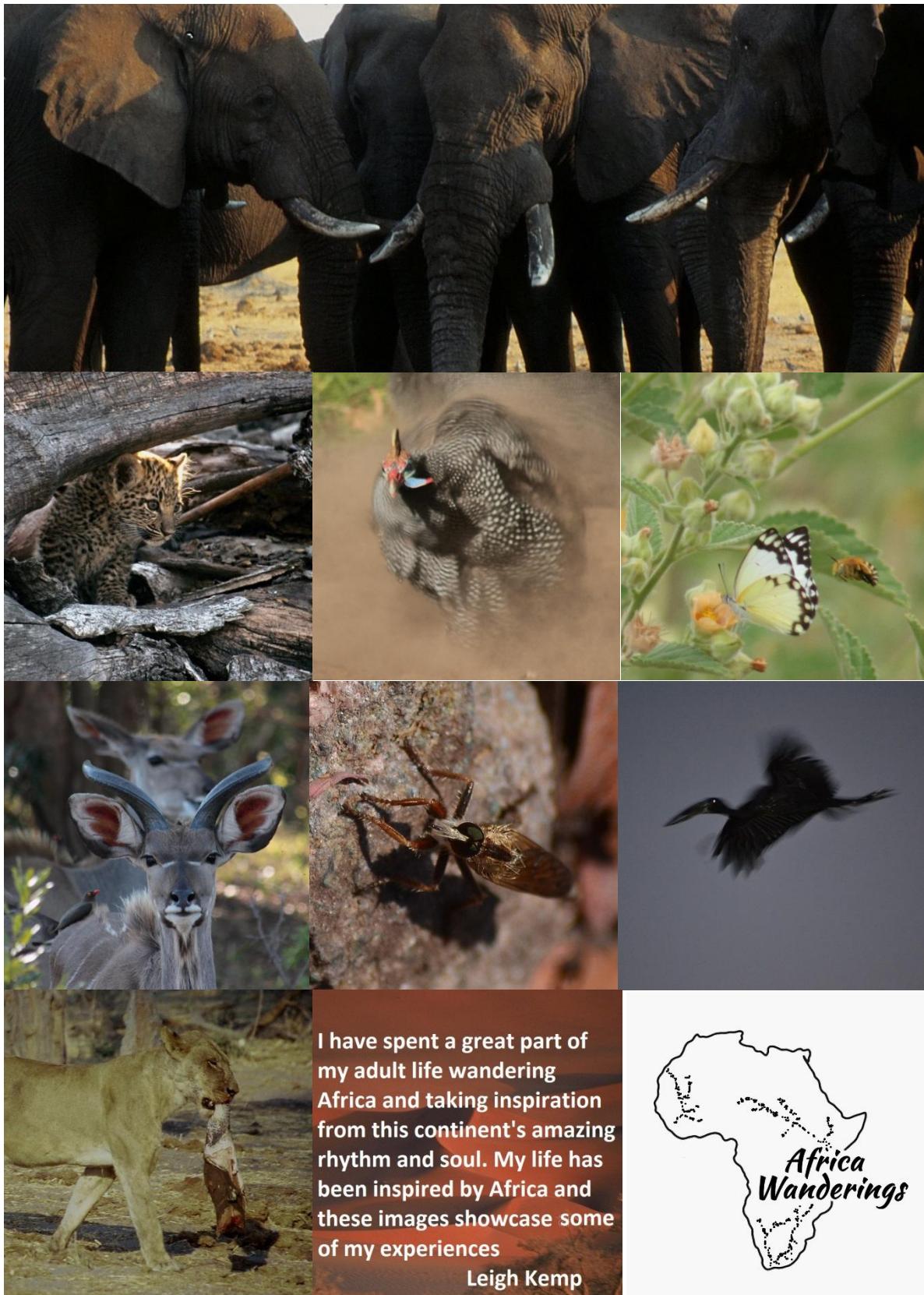


## Colours beyond the camouflage



I spent nearly an hour following this butterfly [*Junonia sp*] to get an image of it with its wings open. I took an image of its camouflage in the dry leaves – and then it happened!





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