

TOURIOSITY®

T R A V E L M A G

Forest
Touriosity

Into the
W.I.L.D.

Photo feature of birds from around the world
Avian species around the world
Looking for Rudyard Kipling's Bagheera in Rabini
Following the elusive Jaguar in Guyana

West Bengal



Karnataka



Madhya Pradesh



Guyana



Kenya



Tanzania

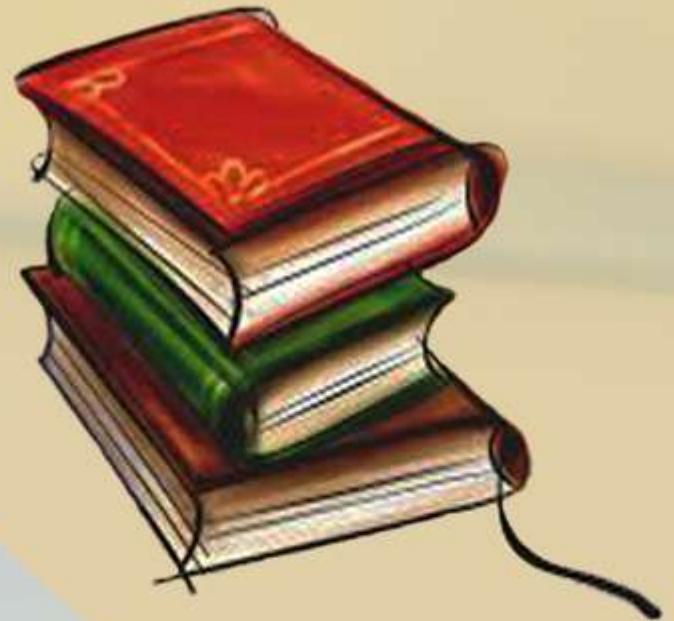


■ Artist's Impression of Guilin

■ A unique travel horoscope



www.penandinkpublishers.com

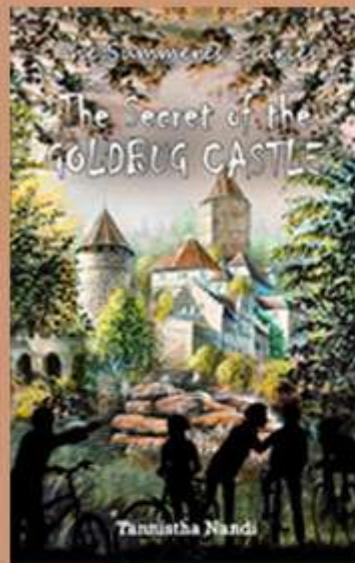


Publish with the Premier Book Publishing house in Kolkata!

Books Published:

**The Summares Diaries
The Secret of the
Goldbug Castle**

by *Tannistha Nandi*



Send your proposal to
editorialpenandink@gmail.com
and we will reply you within 24 hours.

Phone: +91-9836511995



Indian Art & Dolls Gallery

www.indianartanddollsgallery.com



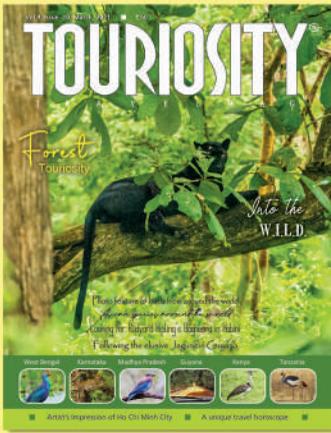
ARTISTS CAN REGISTER THEIR ART INTO OUR WEBSITE

FOR REGISTRATION CLICK

[Artist Login](#)

ALSO FOLLOW US ON





**Touriosity Travelmag
March 2021 Issue**

Dear Reader,

If you would like to share your memorable experiences with us, please feel free to contact us with your write ups, articles, anecdotes, photos and others. Good pictures will be acknowledged and published in the Reader's Click section. For the Travel Humour section, you can send us any travel related funny photos or sketches.

For more about us, visit our website: www.touriositytravel.com and www.thetouriosity.com

Send us your feedback at: touriosity2012@gmail.com or ttmag.english@gmail.com

Photo Contributors:

- Grete Howard, UK;
- Soma Dattagupta, UAE;
- Amartya Mukherjee, Bangalore;
- Anindita Datta, Kolkata;
- Dr. Ranajit De, Kolkata;
- Sanghamitra, Kolkata;
- Rupanjana De, Kolkata;

Illustrations By:

Joaquin Gonzalez Dora, Spain;

COVER PHOTO:

The Black Panther of Kabini, Karnataka

Photo by

Amartya Mukherjee, Bangalore

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are solely those of the writers and contributors. Touriosity Travelmag is not responsible for any personal views expressed by the authors or contributors.



We are back with yet another Forest issue this time. But this is not just an issue focusing on some national parks and wildlife sanctuaries as our readers might expect, this issue brings alive the legendary Bagheera, the black panther from Rudyard Kipling's 'The Jungle Book'. There is also an article about a road trip across Guyana in search of the elusive Jaguar. These two stories apart, the rest of the issue is dedicated to colourful avian species from around the world. The issue also includes an article about an artist's impression of Guilin in China.

WTN

4 nights 5 days

Malaysia
far-east Asia...

Phn : +91-8420108693 ; E-mail : womentravelnetwork@gmail.com
Website : www.womentravelnetwork.com

Getting Highlands KS Chinese Temple Batu Caves Putrajaya



'Amazing world, beckoning places' – so is the slogan of Touriosity! In this context, many would agree that no natural treasure can be more beckoning than the forests and their flora and fauna. We all love animals but more than that we love watching them in their natural habitats. For city dwellers an escape from the monotonicity of routine city life is also essential from time to time. The flora and fauna of the wilderness beckon us and we often seek refuge under the starry sky. Hence the popularity of wildlife tourism keeps increasing.

In this Forest themed issue we have some amazing spectacles from forests around the world. There is a story of the elusive Jaguar in Guyana and the oft-sighted black panther of Kabini. Then there is a detailed article on birds of Kenya and a photo feature on birds of Tanzania. An article on a less known birding paradise of West Bengal is also included.

Each forest has its own charisma, a character of its own, something very unique to itself. And this is not with respect only to its physical characteristics, but in terms of the very soul of it. The sounds, smells, whisper, the air and the overall feel of each forest is different. So is true for its residents. Unfortunately, the forest cover of the world is declining every day, thanks to technology advancements, urbanization, increased mining and agriculture. Also to a large extent this is attributable to tourism.

We at Touriosity always urge our readers to go for sustainable tourism. Forests often suffer the negative impacts of tourism in the form of deforestation caused by fuel wood collection and land clearing by trekkers. Throwing of garbage is another evil and so is the enhanced pressure on endangered species and increased chances of forest fires. Wildlife Tourism can cause hindrance in the peaceful living of animals at their natural homes. The construction of lodges and jungle resorts can harm the environment as well. Safaris are invariably accompanied by noise created by over-excited tourists chasing wild animals with their cameras. This puts a lot of pressure on animal habits and results in their behavioural changes. Safari vehicles looking for the bigger animals also often hurt the smaller species.

India is home to around 100 National Parks and 441 Wildlife Sanctuaries that give visitors the chance to unravel the wildlife treasures in the form of a variety of wild animals and birds in their natural habitat. Wildlife tourism is a popular and profitable industry for India's growth as a nation. In so much as we do not disturb the activities and natural habitats of wild animals, there is absolutely no harm in forest tourism. What is important is a balanced approach towards the conservation of the wildlife side by side with wildlife tourism.

As for our COVID19 update, we have completed a year of reporting and while until the last month the statistics were very encouraging with a downward trend, this month there has been a steep rise both in number of cases and deaths. This is indeed a bad news. Second wave of the corona virus is being reported from all around the world including India. Vaccination is going on almost in every corner of the world. But it seems that people have generally become a little relaxed and increasing cases may be a result of not following the COVID 19 protocols. It is important to remember that the battle against the virus is not won yet. A fresh lockdown seems to be imminent in India as well, and that's the last thing we want. So we have to maintain extreme level of carefulness and prioritise health and safety over travel, leisure, festivals and gatherings.

We pray for a fast recovery of the world. We once again thank the governments for their initiatives and all the frontline COVID warriors for their selfless dedication towards fighting the pandemic.

Here's presenting our colourful Holi platter, with a variety of articles chosen from the very best of writers and photographers.

Your feedback and advices encourage us. So, keep sending them to at ttmag.english@gmail.com

Rupanjana De
Rupanjana De

INDIAN COVID STATISTICS

March 2021:	1,20,40,000+ cases & 1,62,000+ deaths	[cases up by 8.5% & Deaths up by 3.18%]
Feb 2021:	1,11,00,000+ cases & 1,57,000+ deaths	[cases up by 3.3% & Deaths up by 1.95%]
Jan 2021:	1,07,46,000+ cases & 1,54,000+ deaths	[cases up by 5.4% & Deaths up by 4.8%]
Dec 2020:	1,02,00,000+ cases & 1,47,000+ deaths	[cases up by 9.6% & Deaths up by 8.9%]
Nov 2020:	93,00,000+ cases & 1,35,000+ deaths	[cases up by 16% & Deaths up by 12.5%]
October 2020:	80,00,000+ cases & 1,20,000+ deaths	[cases up by 26% & Deaths up by 28%]
Sept 2020:	60,00,000+ cases & 94,000+ deaths	[cases up by 91% & Deaths up by 47%]
August 2020:	35,00,000+ cases & 64,000+ deaths	[cases up by 133% & Deaths up by 100%]
July 2020:	15,00,000+ cases & 32,000+ deaths	[cases up by 200% & Deaths up by 113%]
June 2020:	5,00,000+ cases & 15,000+ deaths	[cases up by 100% & Deaths up by 87.5%]
May 2020:	2,50,000+ cases & 8,000+ death	[cases up by 1150% & Deaths up by 1150%]
April 2020:	20,000+ cases & 640+ deaths	[cases up by 1900% & Deaths up by 3100%]
March 2020:	1,000+ cases & 20+ deaths	

AN APPEAL TO TOURISTS

For the conservation of the endangered species and for preservation of forest areas, sustainable tourism practices are essential. In that manner we can also avoid a number of other associated evils. For tourists, travelling is a chance to broaden the mind, explore the world, meet new people and see the unseen. In order that we continue to get the chances to do so, a sustainable practice in forest tourism is the need of the hour. LET'S BE RESPONSIBLE TOURISTS.

GUIDE TO THE MAG

To make your reading through **TOURIOSITY TRAVELMAG** better, here's presenting a quick glance at the various sections and features in the magazine.



DESTINATION

It introduces the readers to various destinations in India with an emphasis on at least one destination from each region. It provides an in-depth information on the locations. In addition, there is also handy tourist information to help our readers plan ahead of trips.



AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

A travelling artist makes it to faraway lands and brings memories in the form of impressive water colour paintings. This section is a visual treat and interesting to read at the same time.



FEATURE

Here we bring to our readers an article based on the theme of the issue not necessarily focusing on travelling or travel information.



MEMOIRS OF A BACKPACKER

A new adventure every time in an entirely new place across the globe by a solo female backpacker. We follow the locals she meets, the unusual things she comes across, the surprises she gets and the problems she faces in her journeys with a backpack across the world.



TRAVELOGUE

In this section we bring travel experiences of one of our readers from popular places around the world.



GLOBETROTTER'S DIARY

This section explores the world of a globetrotter, whose passion is to travel, travel and travel more. It brings to readers unique facts and information from remote corners of the world.



COUNTRYSCAPE / CITYSCAPE

Here we introduce a new country / city each time. We bring to our readers facts and photos of people, culture, locales, tourist places, food and traditions of a country / city. Our aim is to take our readers on a magical journey of an unseen land.



PHOTO TRAVELOGUE

Here we bring to our readers a travelogue in photos.



PHOTO FEATURE

In photo feature, we cover the theme of a particular issue in photographs from one of our readers.



SNAPSHOT

This section is an ideal one for quick browsing. It provides interesting information from across the globe with a focus on the theme of the issue.



AT A GLANCE

A quick look at a destination. Here, we bring to our readers locations from the lesser beaten paths in otherwise popular touristy regions.



POINT OF VIEW

Here we bring to our readers useful articles with offbeat content. The idea is to give you the stimulus for thinking. It covers important issues that are in some way connected to travel and tourism.



ADVENTURE

We present here stories of unique adventures undertaken by our readers in some part of the world with a focus on the issue theme.



MOUNTAINEERING / TREKKING

This section focuses solely on trekking and mountaineering adventures across the world.

CONTENTS



Bagheera of Kabini

One is reminded of the legendary character of *Bagheera*, the black panther, from Rudyard Kiplings famous novel 'The Jungle Book' during a visit to the interiors of Kabini in Karnataka. This article by Amartya Mukherjee aptly describes his numerous visits to this region and the various species, including the black panther, that he came across and was lucky to capture in his camera.

Birds of Kenya

The fact that Kenya is a hub of wildlife tourism and is known for the Big Five and many other species of wildlife is known to all of us. The avian variety found in the country is often neglected. In this article Soma Dattagupta has beautifully listed the various types of birds that one might see during safaris in the wilderness of the country.



Birding in Chupi

Chupi Kasthashali Pakhiralay located in the East Bardhaman district of West Bengal is a haven of birds and a veritable heaven for bird lovers. During the winter months this place abodes many varieties of migratory birds. In this informative article by Dr. Ranajit De, he has beautifully captured the magic of the place in his camera and vividly described the experience.

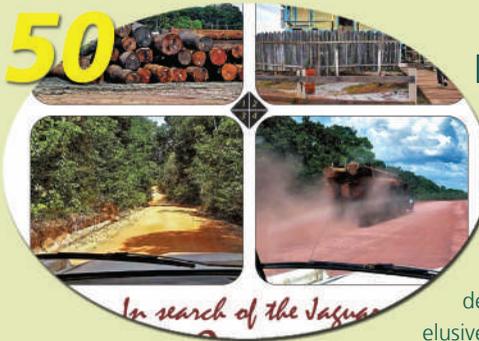
Birds of Tanzania

Beyond any doubt Tanzania is one of the best birding destinations in Africa. It is home to almost 800 species of resident birds, about 70 endemic and near-endemic species and 200 varieties of migratory birds that are seen between November and April. This photo feature presents some beautiful images of birds of Tanzania clicked by Grete Howard.



Birds of Pench

The national park of Madhya Pradesh that served as the setting for Rudyard Kipling's 'The Jungle Book' is mainly known for its tiger population today. But it is also home to many species of birds. This article provides some important information in this regard to birders. Photos have been clicked by Grete Howard and Anindita Datta.



In search of the elusive Jaguar in Guyana

Jaguars inhabit the rainforests of Guyana but are difficult to spot due to their elusive nature. This is an article by Grete Howard wherein she describes her experience of following the elusive Jaguar during a road trip across the length of the country in 2004.

Other articles

Touroscope, travel horoscope	32
An Artist's Impression	44

EDITOR Rupanjana De
CONTENT WRITER Sanghamitra
DESIGN DIRECTION Rupanjana De
ADMINISTRATION Dr. Paritosh Nandi
MARKETING Himanshu Biswas
PUBLIC RELATION Piya Banerjee
CIRCULATION MANAGER Piya Banerjee
TEAM TOURIOSITY Dr. Paritosh Nandi
Sanghamitra
Tannistha Nandi
LOGISTIC Muktinath Shil
ASSISTANCE Prashanta Deb
Soumen Nandi

Owner, Publisher & Printer
Afield Tourosity Pvt. Ltd
#E, B/6, Bapujinagar,
Kolkata - 700092, India

E-mail : ttmag.english@gmail.com

Distributor
K.K. Puri News Distributors Pvt.Ltd.
9, Decares Lane, Kolkata - 700069

DESTINATIONS IN THIS ISSUE





Women Travel Network

ADVERTORIAL

Women have many roles to play in various arenas. Her place in society is punctuated with many tasks. While accomplishing such tasks she compromises with her love to explore the unknown. Kayaking through seas, relishing exquisite delicacies of various countries, experiencing deep water snorkelling or just seeing the world can be any woman's dream waiting to be fulfilled. Making such dreams come true for many women are the new era all-women travel services.

Why Women Travel Network?

Many a times, when your skin thirsts for a touch of mist or dew drops and your heart yearns for an escape far from the daily life routine or the load of work in your respective jobs, you start seeking for people eager to accompany you. You try convincing your husband or children to take some time out of their busy schedules, but many times in vain. At those difficult times, the Women Travel Network (WTN) gives you the grand idea to set out alone to evaluate the passion of you. Personal safety is of great concern to some of these women, maybe fearing to set sail for your

maiden venture all by yourselves. WTN takes this into account and enables you to indulge in thrilling vacations with a group of spirited women tourists of all ages all geared with the same vigour. Things can be made easy and trouble-free yet well organised by WTN as it reduces the prime inconveniences like buying tickets, booking for lodging and drawing up itinerary.

What exactly WTN does?

With WTN you have the option of getting the best possible accommodation that would not harm your budget and the discretion of staying alone in rooms or sharing with someone. WTN also ensures that a suitable poise is maintained between seeing around and resting not making someone too fatigued with consistent tours. This network looks after all the formalities giving you a chance to pack your belongings without any hesitation. The organised travel plans will help gather fruitful travelling experiences in the company of like-minded women. WTN gives you the scope of bonding, and at the same time helps you make new friends. So if you are looking for a getaway, an escapade and your husband's/son's/father's/boyfriend's/friend's dates are bothering, Woman Travel





Like

Like us on facebook and get to know our latest exciting trip details.

Network is the best solution for you.

So what's so special about WTN?

Imagine meeting college friends after a huge gap of time, or getting chance to spend some quality time with kids or elders or just escaping the daily hustle and bustle of life in the company of colleagues or friends.

WTN offers to make those unfulfilled travel wishes come true for many women. With a number of national and international tour packages of WTN you can travel the world, alone, with your son (below 8 years) or your daughter (no age bar) and make unforgettable journeys. Whether you travel alone, or with a kid, friends, neighbours or relations, Women Travel Network can give you memorable trips. Absolutely hassle-free and comfortable, yet adventurous and safe fun trips are what this Network has in bag for you. A real boon for a n y woman!

If you have your own group of women

It is also possible to make your own preferred groups and Women Travel Network will take care of all the formalities of booking, ticketing and managing the tour. You just need to enjoy your trip and forget about everything else. So get geared up ladies and make your dream come true.

How to go about it?

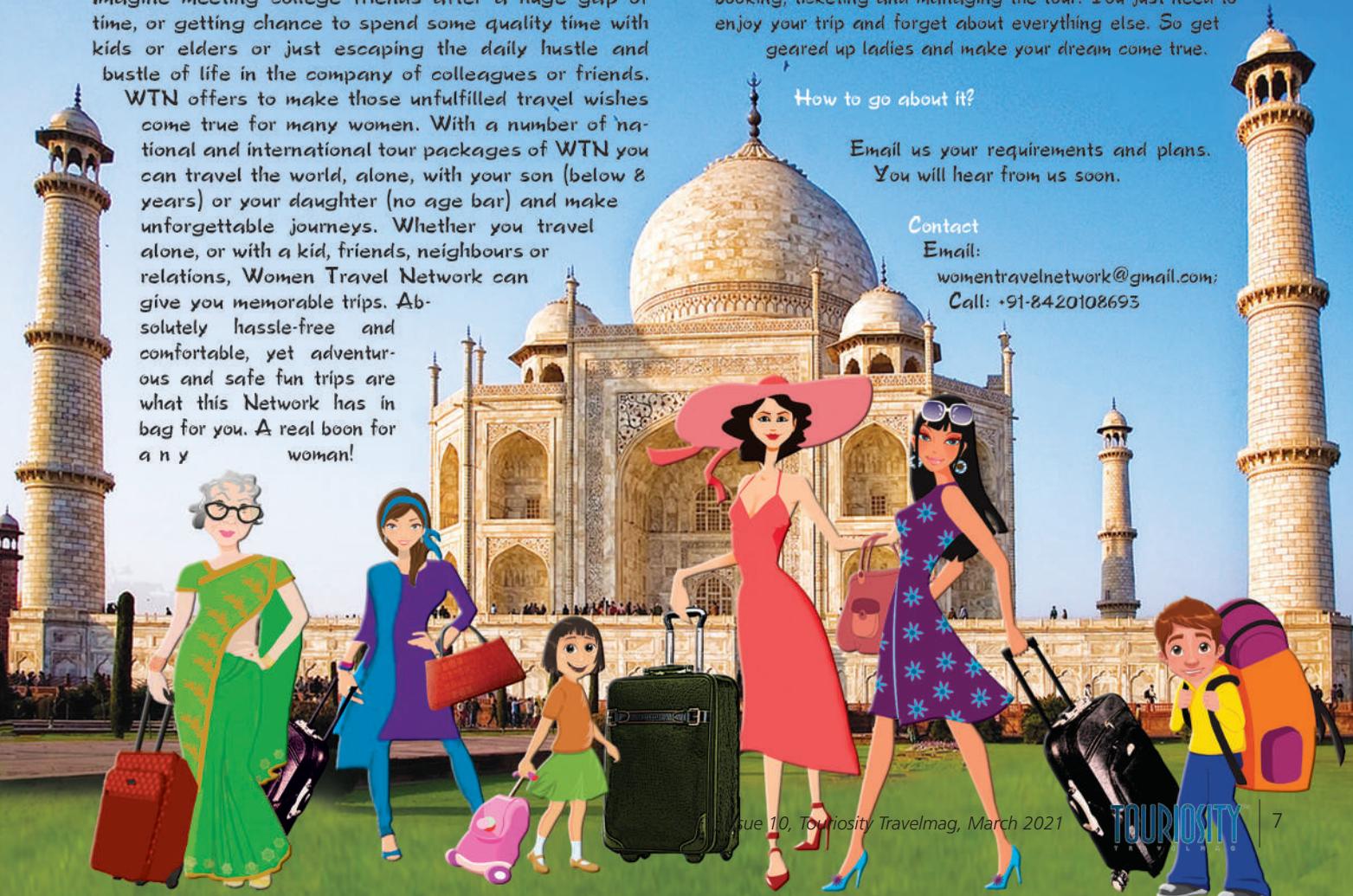
Email us your requirements and plans. You will hear from us soon.

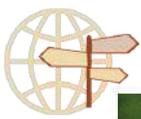
Contact

Email:

womentravelnetwork@gmail.com;

Call: +91-8420108693





The real Jungle Book

Black Panther of **KABINI**



*Article and photos by
Amartya Mukherjee, Bangalore*

THE START

The early morning sunlight hesitantly trickled through the canopy of trees and the swirling veil of the mist. Faint, fleeting patterns of light and shade were appearing and disappearing on the dappled roads and meadows, surrounded by the silhouettes of trees that gradually became more clearly visible as the light increased.

The verdant forests of southern Karnataka, lush green and cooled after the June monsoon showers, felt alive with possibilities. The rain had brought down the mercury a few notches and the damp, chilly breeze in the open safari jeep ensured that collars were turned up and hands were safely tucked into jacket pockets. As our safari jeep lurched across the jungle tracks of the Sunkadakatte Tourism Zone in the Nagarhole National Park, the exciting memories of many a fascinating wildlife sighting from earlier trips got reignited. This part of the Nagarhole National Park is generally referred to as Kabini, and since this area

is especially well known for its regular big cat sightings over the past several years, the expectations are always high whenever one starts a safari here.

Immediately upon entering the forest, herds of chital and troops of grey langur were spotted in each other's company. But all the guests on this morning safari were regular visitors to Kabini and our driver therefore did not need to stop for these relatively more commonly seen denizens. As we delved deeper into the dark woods, past swaying bamboo and tall, dense deciduous trees, everyone's eyes strained to try and spot something more interesting. Someone mistook a gaur in the distant shade for a sloth bear and all of us came close to thinking we had managed to discern that special dark ghost of Kabini concealed amidst the very blackest shadows in the biggest trees. Alas, a closer look with the binoculars dispelled our initial thoughts but on that moody, misty morning at times it seemed that if we only prayed hard enough to the sighting gods, something extra-special would be conjured up right around the next corner.



Bird calls, some known and several unknown, were heard aplenty but the much-awaited deer and langur alarm calls were not heard. The constant peering into the branches in search of that dark and handsome black panther who rules the shadows of the Kabini forest, resulted instead in a clutch of decent avi-fauna shots - a magnificent changeable hawk eagle willingly posed as did a crested serpent eagle. A Malabar Giant Squirrel, nowadays referred to as the Indian Giant Squirrel, went about its business on the tree branches as, unlike the more commonly found Indian or Three-striped palm squirrel, the giant squirrel is almost exclusively arboreal. Somewhere a peacock strutted around, begging for attention. A quick glimpse of a mongoose led to a quiet discussion amongst some of us as to the different types of mongoose that are found in these parts.

A WILD OBSESSION

This was my final safari drive during a weekend tour to Kabini, a reasonably smooth five-hour road trip from our north Bangalore home near the airport. Kabini is at a distance of about 250 km on mostly decent roads, and sometimes when I get a free Saturday, I try and drive down for a one-night safari with the state government owned Jungle Lodges and Resorts, who operate all the jeep safaris into the national park and provide decent accommodation at their fabulous resort-like property – the Kabini River Lodge, which is situated at a lovely locale at the fringes of the national



The verdant forests of southern Karnataka, lush green and cooled after the June monsoon showers, felt alive with possibilities. The rain had brought down the mercury a few notches and the damp, chilly breeze in the open safari jeep ensured that collars were turned up and hands were safely tucked into jacket pockets. As our safari jeep lurched across the jungle tracks of the Sunkadakatte Tourism Zone in the Nagarhole National Park, the exciting memories of many a fascinating wildlife sighting from earlier trips got reignited.



park, right next to the tranquil backwaters of the River Kabini.

My son was with me on this trip and we were both equally keen to take another shot at getting a ‘darshan’ of the most famous denizen of the Nagarhole National Park, also known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park. The object of our desire was of course the obstinately elusive and much sought after black panther of Kabini. This was yet another father-son jaunt into the wilderness. The women of the house - my mother, wife and daughter – did accompany us on some of these weekend wildlife trips but not on this one. They were suffering from Kabini fatigue, I guess! For although I have driven around with my camera gear to many of the havens of nature that Bangalore is fortunate to be located amidst – interesting destinations such as Coorg, Nagarhole, Bandipur, Bhadra or Wayanad – the forests around the Kabini region with their rich wildlife have been my personal favourite ever since I moved from Kolkata to the nation’s IT capital.

Over the years, staying connected with nature and therefore with my inner self has almost become my raison d’être. It allows me to live in the moment and thereby connect with eternity, far away from the so-called hustle and bustle of our 24x7 urban existence. It allows me to appreciate how superfluous our transient triumphs and disasters are. Being in the wilderness and photographing wildlife and sharing my visual interpretations along with my writings, initially through newspapers and magazines, and more recently through social media, has been my passion over the past two decades. In fact, I do not know for sure how this dimension evolved within me silently from a creative hobby to a passion to almost an obsession.

And that obsession had already led to my son Aurko and I having visited the Jungle Lodges and Resorts’ property at Kabini four times in the previous year before this safari in June, 2019. And although the melanistic leopard had kept eluding us on all our earlier Kabini trips, I had photographed many of the other stars of this luxuriant

south Indian jungle - from the charismatic tigers, elephants, leopards and dholes to a variety of other mammals that symbolize the Indian jungles - from gaur, sambar, chital and barking deer to wild pigs, langurs, bonnet macaques, mongoose, black-naped hare and squirrels. And the icing on the cake was certainly the bewitching birdlife, which includes different types of raptors and a plentitude of water-birds found regularly in the Kabini backwaters, along with the otters and marsh crocodiles. It’s not for nothing that this region was once the Mysore Maharajas’ favourite hunting ground and fittingly perhaps, the room where we were put up, the Maharaja Bungalow, was once owned by the royals.

The jungles of Kabini form part of the vast Nilgiri Biosphere, which at a size of over 5,500 sq km, is one of the largest protected wilderness regions of India. While the Nilgiri Biosphere, spread across the three southern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, is now well known for having the highest numbers of wild tigers in the world, its traditional attractions had been the gatherings of humongous herds of Asiatic elephants in the summer months around Kabini River’s backwaters and loads of leopard sightings. But the Biosphere’s true value to our planet’s natural capital also derives from the rich range of endemic flora and fauna, big and small, that are found there. Indeed,



2



4



3



5

some of my most meaningful wildlife experiences from Bangalore have come from other nearby regions such as the Anamalais in Tamil Nadu, south of the Nilgiri Mountains, where I had photographed regional endemics such as the Nilgiri Tahr, Nilgiri Langur and Lion Tailed Macaque.

SIGHTINGS GALORE

Ten minutes into that day's game drive at Kabini, our driver suddenly stopped the jeep. The early morning mist had started clearing, to reveal a pack of rusty-red coloured Indian wild dogs (dhole) blocking our jeep's path.

- 1. Blacky - melanistic leopard - walking across the clearing near the road;
- 2. Male tiger wading out of the Kabini backwaters;
- 3. Elephant eating grass, next to one a waterhole;
- 4. Indian wild dog, or dhole;
- 5. Leopard on a tree, surrounded by lush green foliage during the monsoon season;
- 6. Blacky, the melanistic leopard is sniffing flowers!
- 7. A leopard walking through the early morning mist;
- 8. Face to face with the big male leopard, Torn Ears;
- 9. A Malabar Giant Squirrel.

The dholes looked as endearing and playful as ever, belying their reputation as the Indian wilderness' most relentless and ruthless hunters, capable of treeing leopards, who generally gave them a wide berth in Kabini.

Dholes are classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as 'Endangered', and watching the pack interact made for a very instructive wildlife watching session for us.

But we did not spend too much time that morning with the Indian wild dogs, as we met another safari jeep and they excitedly informed us that they had just spotted the dominant leopard of that neighborhood, a big fellow referred to as Torn Ears, as well as that elusive denizen of Kabini – the world-famous Black Panther, referred to as Bagheera or Saya or Blacky or the Black Prince or by whatever name a star struck admirer called it! But both cats had moved out of the clearances near the road and moved into the thick bush – behind the obstinate curtain of invasive lantana which plagues so many of our sanctuaries these days. We seemed to have missed both the male leopards by just two minutes, much to our chagrin!

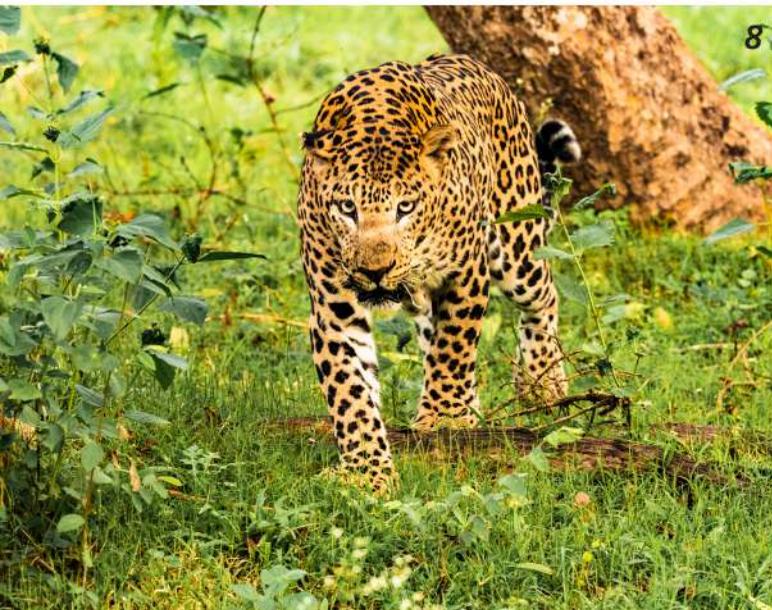
Ten years earlier, I would have ranted and raved at the proverbial 'missed by a whisker' situation but now I can deal with these disappointments with more equanimity. We decided to wait patiently. Soon we spotted a herd of spotted deer, who were very alert and signaled lurking danger with their loud warning cries, which were reciprocated by the raucous langur alarm calls. One could sense a predator was on the move. The exciting waiting game was on. For those who love this sport, they will tell you that the excitement of tracking



6



7



8



9

and then waiting for a big cat to give a clear view, sometimes generates as much joy as actually watching the beasts after tracking them down. Perhaps it has to be with the forms of life that modern humans evolved from... when pre-historic man had to hunt for food and was sometimes hunted himself. Or perhaps, at least in my case, it has to do with reading too much Jim Corbett when growing up! But whatever be the cause there is very little to beat the high of successfully tracking a big cat in the wild and then relishing spending some special time with it.

Our wait that morning was certainly worth it as within another thirty to forty minutes, Reva, our keen-eyed naturalist, pointed out the barely perceptible form of a spotted feline as it silently moved out of the dense undergrowth.

It was a confident and massive male

leopard, with his ears famously shredded in the battles it had to win over the years to have become the apex leopard of his range. My son and I were soon face-to-face with the legendary Torn Ears, the very epitome of a dominant male big cat. I had photographed him on several earlier occasions as well and true to his status and reputation as the then leading leopard of a prime part of the Kabini real-estate, he boldly swaggered down the open clearing right next to the road, marking trees with his scent, and sometimes vocalising loudly in that characteristic saw-like manner unique to leopards.

The unflinching stare from this apex animal, as he nonchalantly strode directly to within a few metres of the jeep, added an extra edge to that special, show-stopping monsoon moment amidst the lush green background of this beautiful South Indian jungle. As Aurko and I were digesting that

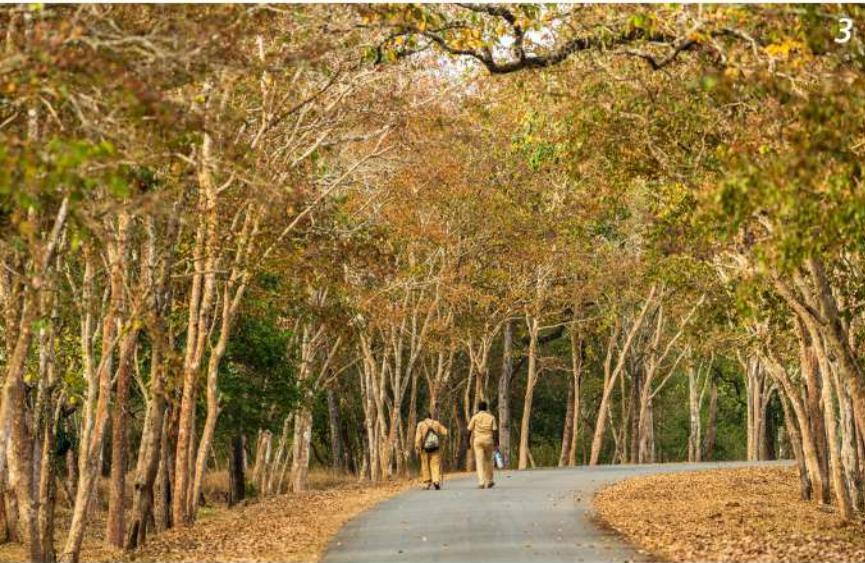
One could sense a predator was on the move. The exciting waiting game was on. For those who love this sport, they will tell you that the excitement of tracking and then waiting for a big cat to give a clear view, sometimes generates as much joy as actually watching the beasts after tracking them down.



1



2



3



4

heavenly ten minute show by Torn Ears and debating whether he had come within six feet or ten feet of where we were sitting at the back row of the jeep, I thought of the string of words I would gladly associate with this champion amongst the Kabini leopards of his day: gutsy ... glossy ... gleaming ... golden ... graceful ... guileful. In fact, such sightings of leopards swaggering past photographer-packed vehicles without a care in the world, reminds me that Kabini is a pretty unique reserve in the sense that some of the leopards here are rather bold and at times will walk, tiger-like, along a forest track for minutes despite a high density of tigers, which are a mortal threat to their smaller spotted cousins.

Certain rules of nature are constant and immutable. Every creature that is born, no matter how powerful in its prime, has to die. A year after this special 'up close and personal' sighting of Torn Ears in June, 2019, I heard that he had not been seen in months. When I revisited Kabini after the forests opened up post the corona lockdown towards the end of 2020, I was told that Torn Ears does not rule that region any more, and is presumed dead. New males have taken over the territory of this former alpha male.

1. Early morning shot of a sambar deer;
2. Kabini forest safari;
3. Forest guards, the unsung saviour of our forests;
4. Local people using a coracle on the Kabini River. Elephants in the backdrop;
5. A herd of Chital deer next to the Kabini backwaters.

And now in 2021 a similar play is being enacted in the territory of another big and beautiful male leopard of Kabini, the much-photographed Scarface. It becomes obvious then that the lives of even dominant leopards are not a bed of roses, as they have to ward off the brutal existential challenges posed by untamed nature. I was told that the facial scar carried by Scarface is allegedly due to a combat injury he had picked up when fighting a turf war as a young adult with his own father. And now Scarface, past his prime, is facing pressures at the end of his reign from younger, stronger males including the black panther.

Leopards are the most adaptable of all big cats and are found in a variety of landscapes across Asia and Africa. Within India, without a doubt, Kabini is among the very best places to see these magnificent but stealthy spotted predators and I have many a memory and many a picture of leopards walking through meadows or lounging in trees at Kabini, with my favourite ones being from the monsoon season, when the yellow and black feline relaxes amidst the lush green monsoon drenched jungle. Indeed, Kabini has a knack of disproving the justified reputation leopards have elsewhere, of being the most secretive and elusive of the big cats.

BLACK PANTHER

No matter the charm of the leopards, tigers or elephants, the real reason without any doubt as to why Kabini is nowadays on

top of many global wildlife aficionados list of must-visit wildlife sanctuaries, is due to the presence of that one special animal – the Prince of Darkness. This black beauty is a male leopard that was first seen as a young adult around five years back in the 2014-2015 season. The guides at Kabini tell me that unlike in some other destinations such as the nearby Mudumalai forest in the Nilgiris or in the forests of Dandeli, there have been no previous records of black panthers from Kabini. And therefore the sudden appearance of Blacky initially left most people sceptical about its existence till the first blurry images surfaced and experts confirmed that a male melanistic leopard had made its home at Kabini. And that took the social media by storm and eventually led to the global popularity of this forest. Kabini got marketed as the so-called ‘real jungle book’ with the ‘real black panther’ – a chance for tourists to rendezvous with Rudyard Kipling’s *Bagheera* in flesh and blood!



Immediately upon entering the forest, herds of chital and troops of grey langur were spotted in each other’s company. But all the guests on this morning safari were regular visitors to Kabini and our driver therefore did not need to stop for these relatively more commonly seen denizens.

Now even in 2021 this particular animal remains the only black big cat in the approximately 640 sq km Nagarhole Tiger Reserve. Luckily for visitors and the local travel industry, over the years the black panther has become more habituated to the car movements of the tourism zone thereby providing the occasional, but delightfully unpredictable, photo-op – a contrast to the fleeting black panther sightings one would have heard from Manas National Park in Assam, for example. It is probably the only habituated melanistic leopard anywhere in the world. And the allure of finding this dark lord of the shadows while on safari in the A Zone of the Kabini reserve, even if the sighting lasts a few seconds, is what draws droves of nature buffs and wildlife photographers and filmmakers from across the world.

Black leopards are, of course, not a different species from the usual tawny leopards. They only differ from other leopards in the colour of their coat, a genetic variation that’s recessive and known as ‘melanism’. Melanism in leopards comes from a mutation that knocks out a gene that regulates the production of melanin. This causes an overproduction of pigment which turns the coat black.



Black leopards are found more often in densely forested habitats. Most confirmed sightings come from Southeast Asia. The concentration of these is in the Malay Peninsula, where it is said that a majority of leopards are black. In India, in the densely wooded parts of the Nilgiri biosphere as well as in the Himalayan foothills, such as the Dooars in North Bengal, there have been sporadic sightings of melanistic leopards or black panthers as they are more commonly called.

While the black colouration may be an aberration - a genetic imperfection, what makes the Kabini cat special is the fact that it is perfectly imperfect – a rich jet-black all over. That look makes this magnificent animal look very handsome and the rosettes are visible only when there is adequate light. This is in contrast to some other black panthers such as the one sometimes photographed in Tadoba, Maharashtra, where the black colour is not so deep, rich and velvety.

After our sighting of Torn Ears, our naturalist Reva predicted that we have a decent chance of seeing the black panther, as it had been sighted near Torn Ears earlier in the morning. Perhaps those two leopards were gearing up for a fight over this real estate. But we would need to wait very quietly for the next hour and a half or so and could not move around and look for anything else in that period. Were we all willing to do so? Of course, everyone in the car voted yes!

Normally, the black panther is notoriously difficult to track but Reva knew exactly where to look. We started waiting, along with a couple of other cars, for the dark lord to reveal himself. After half an hour or so, there was a movement inside the dense forest. The cause of the noise soon revealed itself – a majestic tusker. Normally, seeing one of these big bulls would have made us very happy but now we were concerned that the presence of this giant pachyderm would drive the black panther further away from us.



Luckily, the elephant soon moved off in another direction and we continued our wait, while wondering whether we will finally be lucky on this trip or will we have to revisit yet again for getting blessed with a sighting of this south Indian 'Bagheera'. I was very impressed with Aurko, then barely seven years old, as he kept totally still and quiet in eager anticipation.

Another half an hour passed since the elephant had left the area and all seemed quiet in the jungle, except the occasional call from a bird or the voice of a tourist in another vehicle asking their guide whether they should still wait or now perhaps move on to look for other animals? Suddenly, Reva pointed towards the bushes, and hissed 'Black panther'!! I could not see anything

-
1. Raptor or bird of prey – changeable hawk-eagle or crested hawk-eagle;
 2. Backwater female tiger mother of three sub-adult cubs currently – up close and personal;
 3. Langur with baby;
 4. Raptor or bird of prey – crested serpent eagle.

at first but then followed the direction indicated by our guide's pointing index finger and then faintly discerned the big cat's unobtrusive movements behind the bushes, well hidden from a casual gaze.

After noiselessly walking amidst the undergrowth in parallel to the road for perhaps fifty metres, Bagheera answered our prayers. Instead of veering back into the thick bushes from where he had come, he peered towards the road, from a gap in the bushes next to a tree. His velvety black pelage looked like glossy satin coat set in relief against the lush green background of the timeless forest; his mesmerizing eyes were a hypnotic yellow-green that burnt right through to my soul; his every movement wove an enigmatic aura that was real and surreal at the same time. He sized up the placement of the four or five vehicles that had been waiting for this very moment, and then unhesitatingly stepped out into the clearing and walked towards the road in manner that was brisk yet unworried. Blacky crossed the road without being perturbed by the presence of the human-laden vehicles and then stopped for a moment next to some bushes on the other side of the road. Without further ado, this most well-known of the world's leopards, disappeared into the thick undergrowth. Saaya, the shadow, had disappeared once again into its preferred world of shadows but left me with a special

light that still glows inside.

No doubt, Blacky and Torn Ears would have other encounters to determine their right over the land and the female leopards that went with it. But although we waited there right till the end of the stipulated morning safari time, we did not get another glimpse of these leopards. But what we had seen that morning had been very, very special.

It is for a highly coveted sighting such as this that wildlife loving friends, I have known from across the world, both enthusiasts as well as professionals, keep coming to Kabini – sometimes they stay for weeks or months on end, hoping to film or photograph this unique animal.

Living in Bangalore near natural splendours such as Bandipur and Kabini has its advantages and I have again had chances to see our real life Bagheera. Most recently, on one of my quickly executed one-night weekend trips to Kabini. This time he was lounging on a tree quite a bit away from the road, and we could see him only because another vehicle ahead of us, being used by the wildlife film maker Sandesh Kadur, had spotted the melanistic leopard and were filming him for an upcoming documentary. And the icing on the cake was that everyone in my family – wife Koel, son Aurko and daughter Amrita - were also able to observe this rare melanistic leopard this time.

TIGER TALES

Kabini is not just about leopards of course, yellow or black. Indeed, over the past couple of years the number of tiger sightings at Kabini seem to have sky rocketed, although some old-timers regret that this has led to a corresponding decrease in the once legendary leopard encounters. Whatever be the actual merits of such theories, at a personal level I still find the overall big cat visibility over there to be pretty amazing!

I have indeed been fortunate to see many of the striped cats that rule Kabini and recently my family could again enjoy some time with the reigning diva of Kabini, the backwater female as she is often called.



Certain rules of nature are constant and immutable. Every creature that is born, no matter how powerful in its prime, has to die. A year after this special 'up close and personal' sighting of Torn Ears in June, 2019, I heard that he had not been seen in months. When I revisited Kabini after the forests opened up post the corona lockdown in end 2020, I was told that Torn Ears does not rule that region any more, and is presumed dead. New males have taken over the territory of this former alpha male.



In fact, she was the last tiger I saw in 2020, and the first in 2021! Kabini's magic has mysteriously expanded sightings of India's national animal to almost rival those of the traditional tiger havens like Ranthambhore or Kanha. In the past few years at Kabini, apart from up-close and personal experiences of the majestic black and gold predator crossing a road or walking head on towards me, I have seen a tigress taking care of her three energetic cubs who had a mind of their own; witnessed a young male tiger leaping across ditches; observed a tigress making a dash for a sambhar deer only to narrowly miss; and watched with bated breath as a dominant male waded and walked through the Kabini backwaters and then silently tried to stalk some cattle - fortunately unsuccessfully!

THE END

The various stories I am accumulating from Kabini could one day well be written into a book but for now I hope my essays and images inspire more and more people to get interested in and care about our country's remarkable wild spaces and their magnificent denizens. For it is only when voting citizens care about our precious natural heritage, will the authorities feel genuinely concerned to create an enabling eco-system for protecting these beautiful wild creatures, and the magical yet increasingly fragmented and threatened habitats they call home.



BORN FREE

At school, I had learnt the simile 'as free as a bird' and heard it used often, and very casually. Never did I have an inkling about what it actually felt like.

When we got transferred to Kenya, almost on the heels of the 2013 massacre at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, we happily packed our bags to prepare ourselves for the adventure we were sure lay ahead of us. Like most Bengalis, who had grown up reading Chaander Paahar, we had always been fascinated by Africa. It was never the Dark Continent but instead, a mysterious and magical place. So much so that even before finalizing a school for our daughter or looking for a house, we set off for Masai Mara right after landing in Nairobi!

The first thing that struck me when I landed on the Mara

airstrip was the vastness of the landscape. As we were driven through the reserve by Edward, my first African wild life guide and teacher, I looked around me in wonder. The endless rolling plains, with its sun-bathed red soil, seemed to be painted in myriad shades of brown, red, green and yellow... with the mesmerising play of light and shadow on the greens and yellows of the savannah, and the sudden odd appearance of a lone acacia that is so typical of the Mara landscape.

And THEN I saw the birds... swallows, weavers, babblers, canaries, chats, cisticolas, doves, larks, longclaws, robins, rollers, pigeons, chirping happily and flying, gliding, sailing, whirring, soaring, flitting, skimming, drifting, circling, hanging, lazing... Birds of prey like eagles, buzzards and kites hovering, swooping, plunging... And the scavengers watching and waiting ever so patiently.

How beautifully the little birds cruised through the air, sometimes doing a figure of 8, without a care in the world! No con-

Birds of Kenya

Article and photos by
Soma Dattagupta, Dubai



crete structures to be terrified of crashing into, no pesky kids to be wary of, no electric wires or poles to be cautious of, no obstructions or traps as far as eyes could see. Till then, I was somewhat disinterested in birds. They were just little feathered creatures who made some noise and flew around us. My knowledge was limited to mostly crows and sparrows. I did know that the dodo was extinct, and the kiwi was a flightless bird. My trip to Mara changed it all.

In a flash, I comprehended the joy of being born free and squirmed to think of all living creatures kept in zoo enclosures or caged as pets and of the wonderfully social dolphins trapped in marine parks. If only people could make one trip to Africa to witness their unbound joy in their natural habitats, they would learn a real lesson in conservation. And realize what a crime it is to keep them captive for our own selfish voyeuristic pleasures. That day I discovered what it truly feels to be as free as a bird. And I continue to learn every day...

The following is an account of all the birds I was lucky to have seen so far in Kenya. Some of these are endemic birds, found only in Kenya.

Lilac Breasted Roller

The roller or kambu is Kenya's national bird. Its wide array of 8 colours - green, white, black, yellow, turquoise, dark blue, reddish-brown and lilac - represent the different tribes making up Kenya's community. It is truly a rainbow in the African skies, especially in flight, and hypnotises the viewers. Its aerial acrobatics and sideways rolling during courtship or territorial flights gives rollers their name. If the courtship is successful, they mate in the air! They are not dimorphic – that is, both the male and female are equally flamboyant in their colouring.

In African culture, this bird is considered the bird of peace, often sacrificed by kings declaring peace in their land. It was known as 'the bird of the sun' and was instrumental in keeping harmony between ancient communities. In Zulu tradition, a couple was tied together with the feathers of a lilac-breasted roller, before they got married. If the feathers come undone, the marriage could not happen. In Afrikaans

Culture, the feathers were used in their wedding dresses - the Afrikaans word for this bird is trouphant, which means a 'wedding band'. The lilac-breasted roller is a monogamous bird, mating with its partner for life. It is not clearly known whether this is the connection between marriage and the bird in many African traditions.

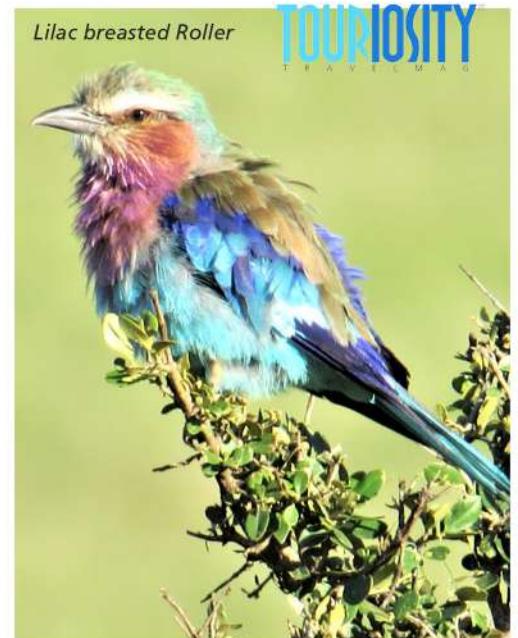
Superb Starling

This superbly striking looking bird is such a common one that it is said that you need to keep your eyes closed to avoid seeing it! It is very similar to Hildebrandt's Starling which has red eyes unlike the cream-coloured ones of the superb starling. This bird feeds mainly on the ground or on acacia trees. It prefers eating insects, but also consumes berries and fruits, and nectar of some plants. Both sexes are similar. They have glossy green upperparts, with darker blue tinge on the nape. Upperwing is glossy metallic green. The tail is relatively short and glossy blue-green in colour. Head is bronzy-black on crown.

The other kinds of starlings seen in Kenya include Rüppell's glossy starling, Greater blue eared starling (smaller in size and has a shorter tail), Red winged starling and the exquisite Violet-backed starling.

African Grey Hornbill

This bird prefers open woodland and savannah. The female lays 2 to 4 white eggs in the hollow of a tree, which is blocked off during incubation with a wall made of mud, droppings and fruit pulp. There is only one narrow aperture, just big enough for the male to transfer food to the mother and the chicks. When the chicks and female outgrow the nest, the mother breaks out and rebuilds the wall, after which both parents feed the chicks. It is one of the smaller hornbills and has mainly grey plumage, but the head, flight feathers and long tail are a darker shade. The male has a black bill, whereas the female has red on the mandibles. The plumage of the male and female is similar. The flight is undulating. The African grey hornbill is omnivorous, taking insects, fruit and reptiles. It feeds mainly in trees.





DESTINATION KENYA



Superb Starling



Greater blue eared starling



Hildebrandt's Starling



Ruppell's Starling



White-backed Starling



African gray hornbill Female

Southern Ground Hornbill

This is a very easily recognizable, sociable, ground-loving, enormous hornbill. The adult male has an extensive brilliant red face and throat wattles, while the adult female has purple-blue skin in the center of the red throat patch. The immature is scruffy with yellowish facial skin. Family groups walk slowly through bushy savanna and grassland, foraging for large invertebrates and small vertebrates. In the early morning, dominant pairs duet with a deep-bass booming, "oooh.. oooh.. ooh-oh", which can be heard several kilometers away.

Marabou Storks

These are big birds of the savannah in East Africa, standing close to 5 feet tall, often visiting carcasses of large mammals where they feed with the vultures. African lore says that this species was created from scraps of other birds, and is uglier than anything one can imagine. Their habit of eating carrion resulted in them being known as the 'Undertaker Bird', and they are often part of the death folklore. These are social birds, though, nesting in large colonies, and often found together at feeding sites. Some people mistake them for vultures when seen high overhead because of how effortlessly they soar. But their silhouette — the long legs and big heads — helps separate them from the vultures.

Bare Faced Go Away Bird

It is an unusual gray turaco with a bushy crest and a mostly white head and breast, found in moist savanna, woodland, shrubby cultivation, and gardens. They usually stay in small groups and are very loud and vocal. It is named after its distinctive "go-away" call which sounds like a single hollow "khweow" and a maniacal series of cackles and whines given by multiple birds in chorus. It is similar in shape to White-bellied Go-away-bird and Eastern Plantain-eater, but it

is easily separated by the white collar and lack of white in the wings and tail.

Red Collared Widowbird

It is a small widowbird. The breeding male is jet black and develops a 20-centimeter floppy graduated tail and, in some areas, a crimson collar and/or crown. The female and non-breeding males have dark streaked upper-parts, pale unstreaked under-parts, and a yellowish eyebrow and face, and lack the long tail. Pairs breed in open grassland, savanna, scrub, and cultivated areas. The species may flock, often with other seedeaters, and move locally when breeding is over.

Yellow Mantled Widowbird

Also called the yellow bishop it is a stocky 15 cm long bird. The breeding male is black apart from his bright yellow lower back, rump, and shoulder patches, and brown edging to the wing feathers. He has a short crest, thick conical black bill, and a relatively short tail. His bill size varies dramatically between races. In non-breeding plumage, the black plumage is replaced by heavily streaked buffy-brown, and the bill is pale. The yellow shoulders and rump remain, and are a distinction from the female which lacks the contrasting colour patches.

Bustards

The *Kori bustard* is a member of the bustard family, and is restricted in distribution to the Old World. They are found in open, semi-arid or seasonally dry habitats and move mostly by walking and running on the ground. It hunts for small prey like lizards and grasshoppers, but also eats seeds and shoots. The Kori bustard is the largest and heaviest in the bustard family and the largest flying bird in Africa. It is relatively uncommon in Kenya and much of Africa.

The *Black-bellied bustard* or the black-bellied korhaan, is another ground-dwelling bird in the bustard family. It is found in woodlands and tall open grasslands in sub-Saharan Africa and prefers higher rainfall.

Gray Crowned Crane

The striking gray crowned crane with its crown of stiff golden feathers is the nation-

al bird of Uganda. It has two subspecies, the Eastern African and Southern African gray crowned crane. They live in mixed wetlands / grasslands habitats and feed on grass seeds, small toads, insects, and other invertebrates. Gray crowned cranes are also known to eat farm produce like millet, potatoes, and soya beans near their habitats. They are monogamous and highly territorial during the breeding season. The rich consider them to be status symbols and keep them as pets to show off, while some believe their eggs and feathers to have medicinal properties. The IUCN has listed it as Endangered due to the various threats from widespread poaching and illegal trade in large numbers. The largest remaining populations of the bird are found in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and South Africa.

Hamerkops

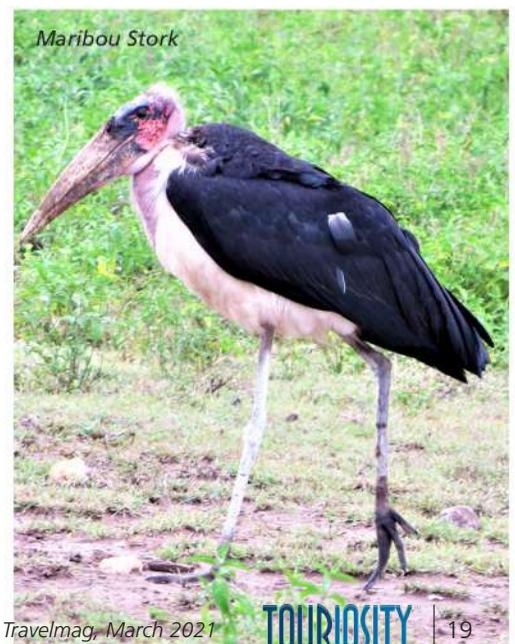
These are diurnal and usually feed alone or in pairs. Their diet consists of mainly aquatic invertebrates but they also eat fish, insects, shrimp and rodents. They have a very strange courtship behaviour, where several or more of the birds get together and perform rituals or courtship displays that involve running around each other in circles, fluttering their wings, raising their crests and calling loudly. Another unusual feature is 'false mounting' which involves one bird standing on top of another and appearing to copulate. However, neither are mates and copulation does not actually take place.

The most unique feature of a hamerkop is their nest - these medium-sized birds build nests measuring over 2m in depth and width and weigh up to 50 kgs. These nests - made from thousands of sticks, twigs, reeds, grasses and stems held together by mud - are so strong that they can hold the weight of a man. The pair takes around 3 to 6 weeks to complete the nest, preferably over a water source. Nest walls are built on a sturdy platform and topped with a domed roof. A mud-plastered entrance 13 to 18 cm wide in the bottom, leads through a tunnel up to 60 cm long to a nesting chamber large enough for the parents and their young. The outside of the nests are decorated with bright objects that the birds collect. Hamerkops are so obsessed with build-



Southern Ground Hornbill

Till then, I was somewhat disinterested about birds. They were just little feathered creatures who made some noise and flew around us. My knowledge was limited to mostly crows and sparrows. I did know that the dodo was extinct, and the kiwi was a flightless bird. My trip to Mara changed all that.



Maribou Stork



Bare-faced go away bird



Red-collared widowbird

ing nests that they construct 3 to 5 nests per year in their territory, even if they are not breeding. The nests are so big that they are often used by leopards to give birth to their cubs.

African Spoonbill

This is a distinctive pale water bird with long pink-red legs, a bare bright pink-red face, and an odd and distinctive spoon-shaped bill that is obvious even in flight. The African Spoonbill prefers large, quiet, shallow water bodies where it forages by swinging its head from side-to-side, slicing its bill through the water, searching for small fish and aquatic invertebrates. It is mostly nomadic, wandering in response to local rainfall.



Yellow-mantled widowbird



Gray-crowned crane

Raptors

Raptors, or birds of prey, (eagles, vultures, hawks, falcons and their relatives) are among the most awe-inspiring birds on the planet. They are the top avian predators and play a crucial role in maintaining the health and balance of ecosystems, from forests to wetlands to grasslands and deserts. Kenya is well-endowed with raptors and in fact has the second-highest number of raptor species on the planet, with at least 81 species recorded in the country. With 22 recorded species, Kenya also tops the eagle charts in the world.



Hamerkop

Secretary Bird

One of Africa's weirdest and at the same time most distinctive birds, this long-legged raptor struts about the open grasslands and savannah with its eagle-like body on crane-like legs, which raises its height to 1.3m. Its unique quill-like plumes on its head and bright-red facial skin set it apart from other birds so much so that it has a family all to itself - sagittarius. Their snake-killing prowess is the legendary - they use the thickened soles of their feet to bludgeon their prey (reptiles, small

mammals, and insects) and then swallow it whole! Secretary birds generally roost in acacia trees.

There are different theories about the origins of the secretary bird's name. One holds that the feathers behind the bird's head resembled the quill pens that secretaries tucked behind their ears. Our guide told us that their faces look heavily made up and their walk resembled a stereotypical secretary's walk on high heels – highly politically incorrect terminology. However, it is more likely that the name derives from the Arabic saqr-et-tair or 'hunter bird'.

Augur Buzzard

It is strikingly plumaged. It is almost black above with a rufous tail. It is resident and non-migratory throughout its range. Pairs of augur buzzards usually mate for life but some polygamy has been reported in the species. The diet of the augur buzzard is quite varied and opportunistic. It catches most of its prey on the ground, usually by still-hunting from perch or swooping down from a soaring flight. They may also forage on the ground for both insects and small vertebrates. The primary foods for augur buzzards seem to include either small, terrestrial mammals or reptiles, chiefly snakes and lizards. Other prey may include small ground birds (and sometimes the nestlings, fledglings or unwary adults of varied birds), insects, and road-kill.

Martial Eagle

It is a very large eagle, with an average length of 78–96 cm. The adult's plumage consists of dark grey-brown coloration on the upper-parts, head and upper chest, with slightly lighter edging to these feathers. The body under parts are white with blackish-brown spotting. The female is usually larger and more spotted than the male. Martial eagles have a short erectile crest, which is often not prominent.

Tawny Eagle

It is of the most commonly spotted eagles in the savannah and open bush habitats. They tend to avoid dense forests as these may restrict their movement. It has tawny upperparts and blackish flight feathers and tail. This species is smaller and paler than

the very similar looking Steppe eagle. They are diurnal and eat almost any small animal they can catch and sometimes even scavenge with the vultures on carcasses. Tawny Eagles tend to occupy the same territory for many years, sometimes even decades, in pairs. Tawny Eagles are monogamous and pair for life and are currently listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN list of Threatened species.

Black Chested Snake Eagle

It is a large African bird of prey and can be found throughout southern and East Africa, from Ethiopia and Sudan in the north to South in the south, ranging as far west as the southern Democratic Republic of the Congo and southeastern Gabon. The species inhabits a variety of different habitats, including open acacia and miombo woodlands, grasslands and thorny bush savannas, and even semi-arid savanna and desert areas. It avoids mountainous and forested areas. The species is also known to make use of anthropogenic habitats such as farmland and electricity pylons or telephone poles. It is sympatric with the brown snake eagle in much of its range, and the two species have been reported to nest in neighbouring or even the same pylon without apparent animosity.

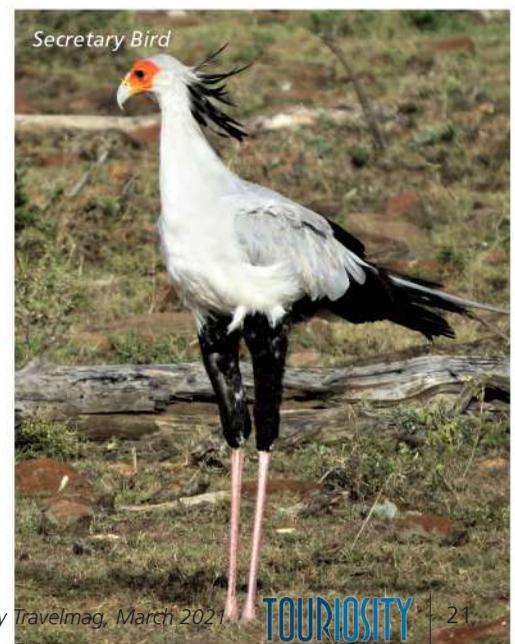
It feeds mostly on snakes (particularly venomous snakes up to 80 cm. in length), but will also prey on lizards, insects, small mammals and frogs. It mainly hunts from a perch or by hovering or searching the ground, stalking prey on the wing and then parachuting slowly to the ground to capture its prey.

Brown Snake Eagle

It is somewhat larger and more powerful than other snake eagles and found in West, East and southern Africa. A very solitary bird, it is a committed predator of a variety of snakes. Alternate prey is known to have included monitor lizards, toads, francolins, guinea fowl and chickens as well as rats and perhaps other mammals. Typical lifespan in this species is around 7–10 years, fairly short for an eagle. This species is somewhat scarce and is possibly declining overall as per the IUCN but it is persisting fairly strongly



In a flash, I comprehended the joy of being born free and squirmed to think of all living creatures kept in zoo enclosures or caged as pets and of the wonderful social dolphins trapped in marine parks. If only people could make one trip to Africa to witness their unbound joy in their natural habitats, they would learn a real lesson in conservation. And realize what a crime it is to keep them captive for our own selfish voyeuristic pleasures.





DESTINATION KENYA



Augur Buzzard



Tawny Eagle

over a large range that includes 23.3 thousand square kilometers. It is therefore considered Least Concern status by IUCN.

Long Crested Eagle

The long-crested eagle lives around forest edges and moist woodland, particularly if that habitat is near to grassland, marsh, a river or a stream. It can also be found in drier woodland, mixed farmland, grazing land, the edges of sugarcane plantations and orchards. They range in altitude from sea level to 3,000m, but it is unusual to find them above 2,000m.



Martial Eagle



Black chested snake eagle

It is territorial and the male performs steep dives and also uses a rocking, level display flight, during courtship. Both sexes build the nest, constructing a stick platform with a bowl-shaped depression in the centre, which is lined with green leaves. The nest is normally situated in the mid-canopy and very close to the trunk of a tree near the forest edge.

Up to 98% of the diet of the long-crested eagle consists of rodents. The long-crested eagle is a "sit and wait" hunter which waits on a perch, scanning the ground and swoops on prey with a gliding flight when it comes to the bird's notice. (Wikipedia)

African Fish Eagle



Brown Snake Eagle



Long Crested Eagle

It is a large, distinctive, and mostly chestnut brown bird with a white head and large, powerful, black wings has the honour of being the national bird of three nations: Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Sudan. It is conspicuously visible on perches near rivers, lakes, and other water bodies. It catches fish with a shallow plunge to the water's surface, but also eats birds, reptiles, and carrion. Its loud, penetrating cry is one of the most distinctive bird sounds of Africa. The African fish eagle displays a behaviour known as klepto-parasitism – a pirate-like nature of stealing the catch of other birds like goliath herons and saddle billed storks. It also feeds on

water birds such as ducks, greater and lesser flamingos, small turtles and terrapins, baby crocodiles, lizards, frogs, and carrion. Sometimes, it may even carry off mammalian prey, such as hyraxes and monkeys.

Bateleur Eagle

It is a medium-sized, solitary, tree-nesting eagle with a large home range. 'Bateleur' is French for 'street performer'. They are hunters and scavengers, and will attack other species for food and will scavenge carrion. The bird is an expert at finding smaller carcasses before most other scavengers. The Bateleur will hunt birds and their eggs (mainly doves and pigeons), small reptiles, small mammals (like rodents, genets and mongooses) and insects. Its prey is often stolen by the tawny eagle, and then the Bateleur may attempt klepto-parasitism of white-backed vultures.

They stand upright, holding their wings straight out to the sides and tipped vertically, in a classic 'phoenix' pose as they turn to follow the sun. Bateleurs are sometimes seen 'praying' - allowing ants to crawl over the wings and feathers, collecting bits of food, dead feather and skin material. When covered in ants, the Bateleur then ruffles its feathers, startling the ants, which react by secreting formic acid as self-defense. This in turn kills the ticks and fleas, ridding the host of its parasites.

Vultures

Probably having the worst branding amongst scavengers, their hunched posture, bald heads and wide usage in the English language as agents of greed, do not help their cause. They are also hated and deviled due to their association with death. Yet, without their participation in freeing habitats of carcasses and waste, the animal kingdom would be filled with disease and infection. A large number of vultures indicate a healthy ecosystem. Food poisoning does not affect a vulture because its stomach acids are very acidic, with a pH of nearly zero. The acids prevent the spread of disease.

White-backed Vultures

These are the most common African vultures although it now listed by IUCN as Critically Endangered. They are highly

social, diurnal and pair for life. The main threats to the White-backed vulture are: the conversion and loss of their habitat for agriculture, less available carrion due to declining wild ungulate populations, being hunted for traditional medicine use, illegal capture for the live trade, drowning in farm reservoirs, electrocution from electricity pylons, persecution and poisoning.

Lappet-faced Vulture

It is the largest vulture in Africa and dominates other vultures during feeding. It is powerful enough to drive off a jackal. This imposing, broad-winged bird has a large, powerful beak which is capable of tearing the hides, tendons and any other coarse tissue from its prey, which may be too tough for other scavengers. This species is easily recognized due its large size, bare pink head and the fleshy folds of skin, called lappets, on each side of its neck, which give the bird its common name.

Verreaux's Eagle-owl

Also called the Giant Eagle-owl or the Milky Eagle-owl it is named after Jules Verreaux - a botanist and ornithologist from France. It is the only owl in the world with pink eyelids. It is quite a common bird in Kenya and seems to be an inhabitant of forest edges near open country, especially riverine acacia forests. Pairs of the species are nearly always to be found roosting close together, sometimes sitting on the same branch. When they start to hunt in the early hours of the night they move further apart, but keep in touch by calls, which make them easy to locate. The voice of one sex, probably the female, is deeper than that of the other.

The author would like to acknowledge the help she received in writing this article from the following sources:

<https://www.wildlifeofkenya.com/categories/birds-of-prey/>

<https://animalcorner.co.uk/animals/hamerkop-bird/>

<http://thomasbancroft.org/the-undertaker-bird/>

https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/content/part/EANHS/XXV_No.2_111__101_1965_Brown.pdf

Wikipedia, Animalia and iNaturalist



Raptors, or birds of prey, (eagles, vultures, hawks, falcons and their relatives) are among the most awe-inspiring birds on the planet. They are the top avian predators and play a crucial role in maintaining the health and balance of ecosystems, from forests to wetlands to grasslands and deserts. Kenya is well-endowed with raptors and in fact has the second-highest number of raptor species on the planet, with at least 81 species recorded in the country. With 22 recorded species, Kenya also tops the eagle charts in the world.



Birding

IN CHUPI



Article and photos by
Dr. Ranajit De, Kolkata

Thanks to travel groups in Facebook, Chupi Chor has over the last few years become a craze as a birder's paradise. Come January and my mind yearns to visit Chupi, but for some reason or other, for the last few years my visit to Chupi never materialised. This year on an invitation by a friend to visit the famous Krishi Mela (Agriculture Fair) in Serampore of Bardhaman District, I took the opportunity to visit Chupi as well. We stayed overnight at Nabadwip, famous for being the birthplace of Lord Chait-

anya Mahaprabhu.

At 6.15 am when the car arrived, darkness of the chilly winter morning was enveloped in thick fog. It took half an hour to traverse 14km distance from Nabadwip. At the river bank we boarded a country boat whose *Majhibhai* (the boatman) would not only be a good boatman but also would be able to double up as a bird guide. As the boat moved forward to our utter surprise we found the river full of water hyacinth.

Chupi Chor is formed from the mighty Bhagirathi-Hooghly River which takes the shape of a ox-bow as it caresses past villages like Chupi and Kasthashali to become home to thousands of migratory birds. The crystal clear waters of the 9 km long lake covers of an area of 3.5 square kilometers. The rich alluvial soil of river basin and abundance of rainfall and regular tides has endowed the Purbasthali region with an overdose of greenery. Hence an intense agriculture is practiced here

with crops, vegetables, fruits and flowers growing throughout the year. We saw farmers cultivating along the river bank. Moreover, there are no currents in this river due to its cylindrical shape. So the water of this river is full of water hyacinths. For all these reasons this place is a paradise for migratory birds. Every winter, a large number of birds come here from different regions like Central Asia, Siberia, Tibet, the Himalayas, Turkmenistan, Africa and also from different parts of India.



Ruddy Kingfisher



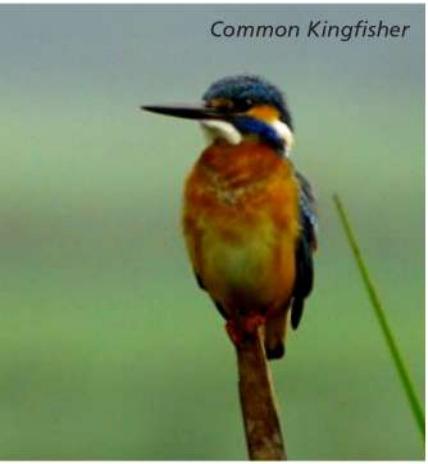
Western Swamphehen



Pheasant-tailed Jacana



Common Greenshank



Common Kingfisher

Our boat coasted through the water hyacinth. Often it felt that the boat would get stuck in the mesh of hyacinths but it didn't. The water of the river is so clear that aquatic vegetation and

fish swimming about under the water can be clearly seen.

We proceeded to see the birds. A flock of birds flew away breaking the silence of the winter morning by their shrill calls. Lots of other boats were passing by, some with photographers, others with people who had come for picnic. Just then *Majhibhai* pointed out at a Blue Kingfisher sitting patiently on a bamboo pole and waiting expectantly for an op-

portune moment to dive for fish. At a distance were photographers in three boats with their cameras aimed also waiting for the moment when the Kingfisher would dive in. I could see Cormorants spreading their wings. *Majhibhai* showed us pheasant-tailed Jacanas camouflaged among the water hyacinth. Nearby we could see Western Swamphehen, also known as sultana bird easily recognizable by the bright purple plummage.

In front of the egret there was a sandpiper, frequently lowering its head to have a peck on the aquatic insects.

In the distance was a flock of black-headed Ibis with their long legs, moving slowly and steadily through mud and often dipping their long curved bills into water to look for food.

I saw a lot of migratory birds like Ruddy kingfisher, Asian openbill, purple heron, common red shank, wagtail, etc. It is really admirable that our boatman guided us so well and identified them. He had an extraordinary talent of spotting birds within the shrubs which our inexperienced eyes surely would have missed. What astonished me was his sense of backlight which is so critical for photography and

I saw a lot of migratory birds like Ruddy kingfisher, Asian openbill, purple heron, common red shank, wagtail, etc. It is really admirable that our boatman guided us so well and identified them. He had an extraordinary talent of spotting birds within the shrubs which our inexperienced eyes surely would have missed. What astonished me was his sense of backlight which is so critical for photography and he navigated his boat accordingly.

he navigated his boat accordingly. It was then that we met the majestic Red Crested Pochards lazily floating through the water. There were herds of them, some flying in delight. We had a feast of time clicking them from very close quarters.

Time flew like magic; it was 9 am but there was hardly any sunlight due to the misty weather. *Majhibhai* said that this weather was ideal for viewing birds as



White-throated Kingfisher



Pheasant-tailed Jacana



Ibis



Purple Heron



Red-crested pochard



Nankeen Night Heron

The boat moved forward but to our utter surprise we found the river full of water hyacinth. Chupi Chor is formed from the mighty Bhagirathi-Hooghly River which takes the shape of a ox-bow as it caresses past villages like Chupi and Kasthashali to become home to thousands of migratory birds.

birds rest in trees in harsh sunlight. Our minds were filled with bliss. He then steered his boat towards deeper waters to view an Osprey. But we didn't have time to travel for an hour and back. So we decided to return, thus taking with us memories of the beautiful creations of nature. Back at the shore we paid *Majhibhai* 150 rupees and proceeded towards our car, pledging to return next year for the Osprey and other birds which we may have missed this time.

How to Reach

By train: The easiest way to reach Purbasthali is to board the Katwa local from Howrah Station. The journey takes about three hours to reach Purbasthali Station. From Station area you will get Totos (Battery Operated Rickshaws) to Chupi Chor. It's not more than 10/15 minutes from the station.

By Road: One can drive from Kolkata via Barrackpore, Kalyani Kalna, and Nabdwp (133 km approx.).

TRAVEL TIPS

- Do carry binoculars and cameras with long zoom lenses.
- Do not make noise or play music while on the boat. This will disturb the birds. Mobile phone is best kept in silent mode.
- Do not wear any bright coloured clothing.
- Do not make sudden movements on the boat in the excitement of spotting a bird. This may destabilize the boat.
- Do not drop anything on the lake water.
- Do carry a torch, candle and matchbox with you. Though power cuts are scarce, it's always good to be prepared.
- Do carry dry foods and mineral water. This area is arsenic prone, hence avoid drinking water from tube wells.

TOURIOSITY®

T R A V E L M A G

Know. Plan. Tour

Visit us at:

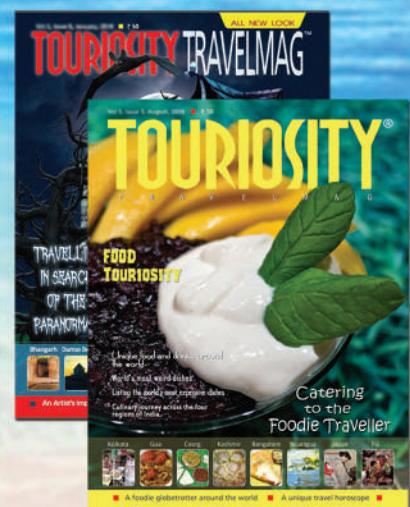
www.thetouriosity.com

& www.touriositytravel.com

Download our Mobile App from Google Play Store



Touriosity Travelmag



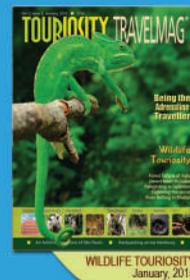
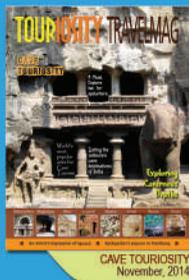
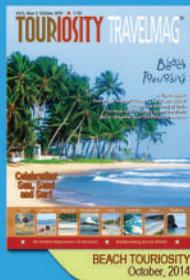
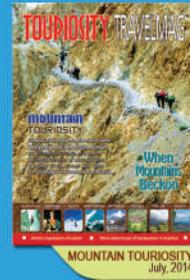
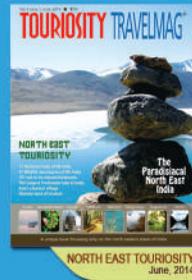
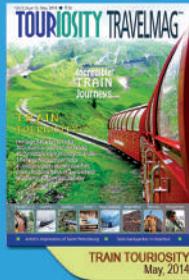
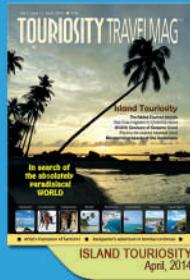
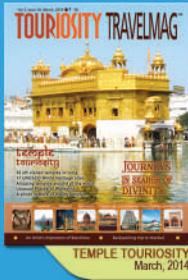
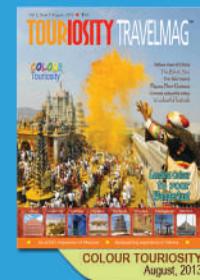
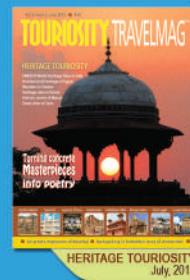
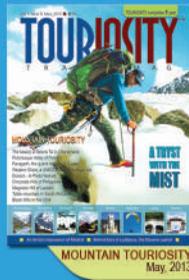
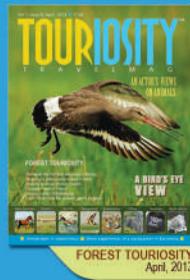
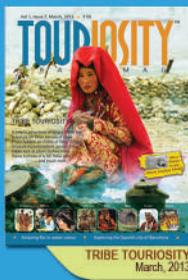
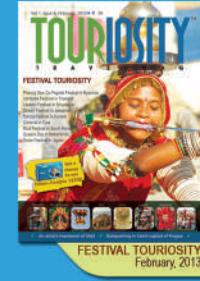
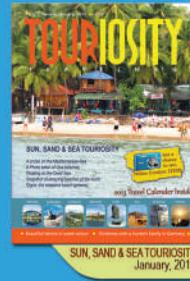
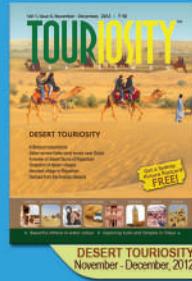
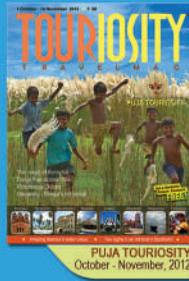
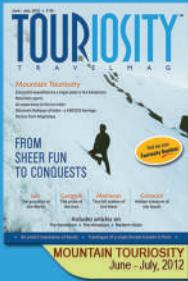
+91-9836511995

ttmag.english@gmail.com

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

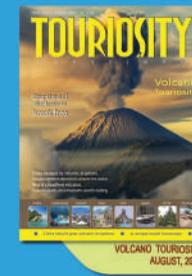
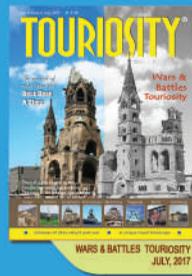
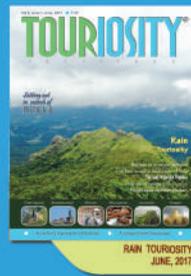
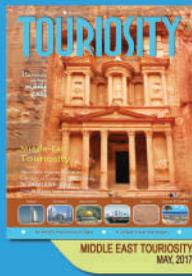
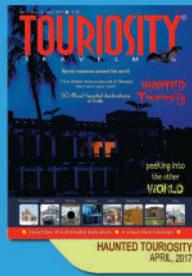
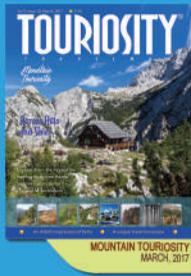
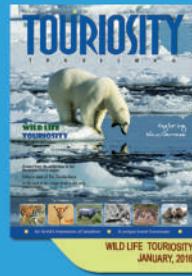
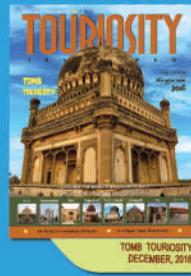
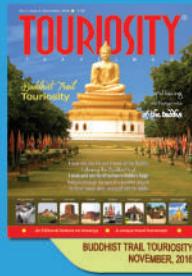
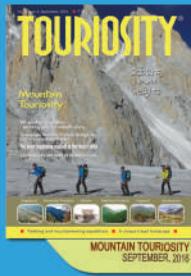
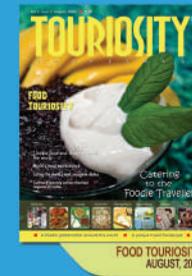
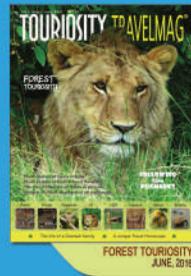
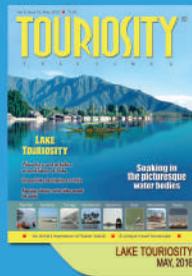
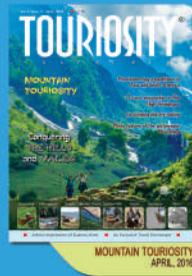
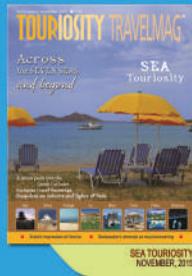
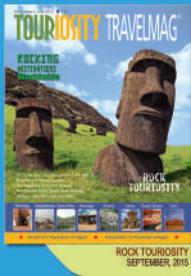
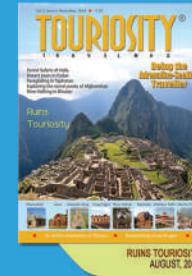
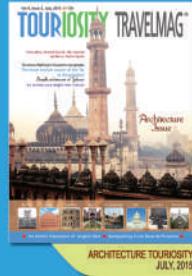
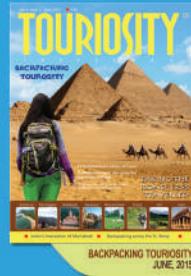
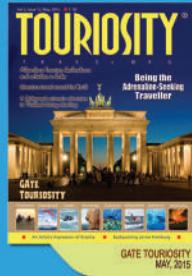
Touriosity Travelmag brings to you

Order Back Issues

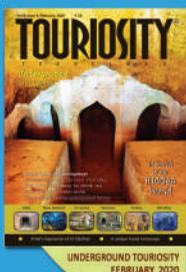
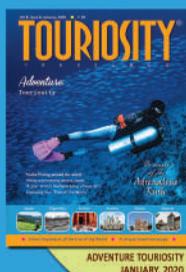
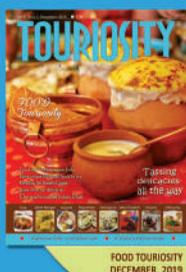
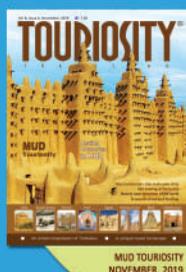
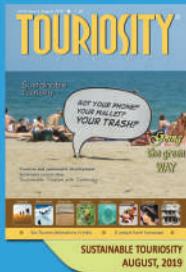
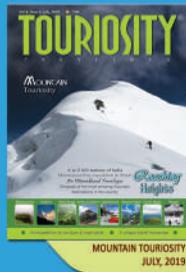
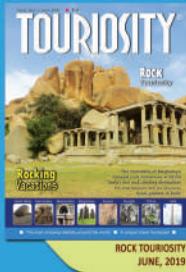
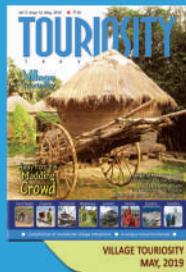
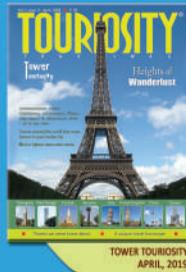
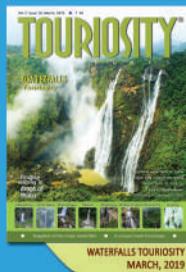
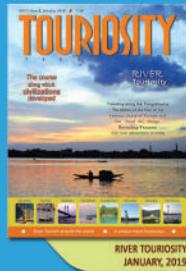
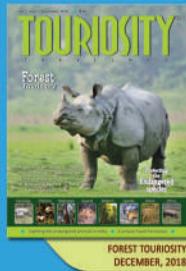
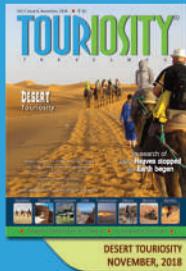
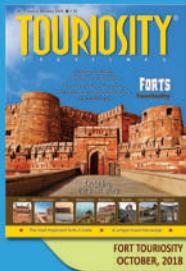
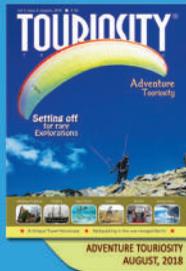
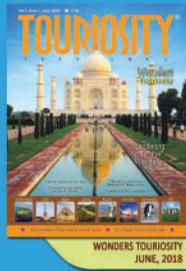
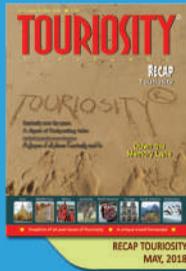
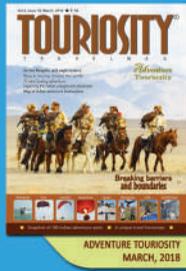
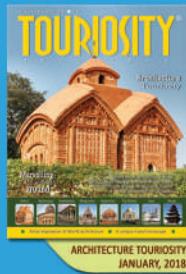
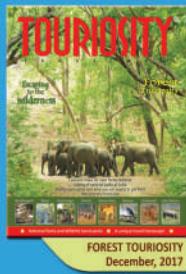
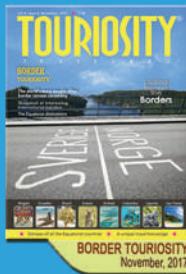
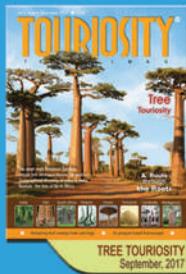


a **UNIQUE THEME** every issue

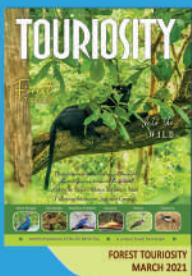
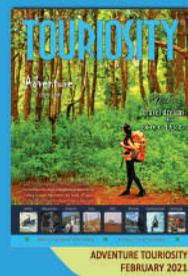
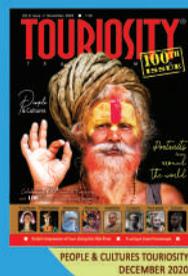
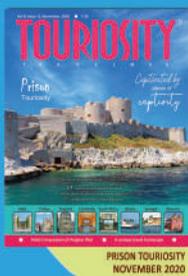
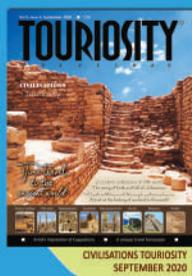
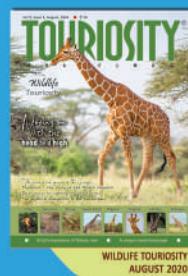
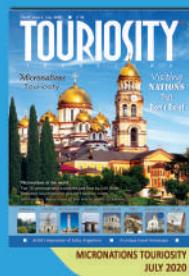
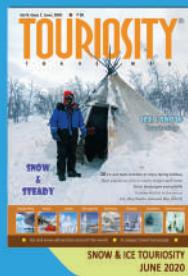
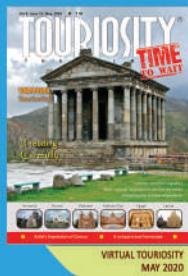
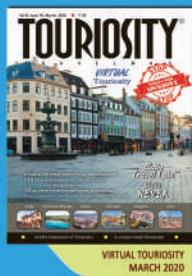
of **TOURIOSITY**
T R A V E L M A G



WE ARE 103 ISSUES



OLD THIS MONTH



Complete your collection

For the back issues of TOURIOSITY TRAVELMAG write to us at : ttmag.english@gmail.com

Back issues are available at a discount of 20%
Rs. 40 only (each issue) **Postage charges payable extra

and get
regular
updates

For online
subscription click



Subscribe

in the page of Touriosity website
www.touriositytravel.com/contact.aspx

Visit our new website

www.thetouriosity.com

to read many more interesting stories and stay updated
about our latest activities, news and events



Aries
(21 March – 19 April)

You might become more intellectually curious now, and academic pursuits are likely to benefit you and run smoothly during this cycle. Business dealings, particularly long-distance ones and those involving publicity and promotion, are likely to be profitable now. You are more attracted to relationships in which you share a common goal or vision.

Places to visit: Istanbul, Turkey - Istanbul has all the bustling Byzantine romance of the past and all the chaotic charm of the present.

Venkateswara Temples: The temples are dedicated to the Hindu deity Shiva and are remarkable examples of Dravidian architecture.

Favorable Dates: April 2, 3, 11, 20, 21, 30 Favorable Colors: White & Yellow

Your creative abilities are reflected in your outlook on life and love and romance are life experiences you strongly identify with. You beautify your surroundings and pay particular attention to your appearance.

Places to visit: Prague - The Czech Republic capital offers visitors great beer, partying, and oodles of sightseeing for the more tame traveller.

Cave Temples, Badami - Located in Badami, Karnataka the cave temples were built during the 6th and the 8th centuries by the Badami Chalukyas. These are dedicated to the Hindu holy trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and the 4th cave is dedicated to Jain tradition.

Favorable Dates: April 7, 9, 16, 27, 25, 28 Favorable Colors: Grey & Yellow



Taurus
(20 April – 20 May)



Gemini
(21 May – 20 June)

This is a great time to network and make personal contact with people in positions of authority, as it can contribute good things to your career and image. Love seems to come to you without the need for your pursuing it.

Places to visit: Buenos Aires, Argentina -The capital of Argentina is bursting with Spanish architectural influence and is a modern day hub for business in South America.

Cooch Behar Palace, Cooch Behar - Modelled after the Buckingham Palace of London, the Cooch Behar Palace is located in Cooch Behar, West Bengal. It is known for its elaborate renaissance style architecture.

Favorable Dates: April 3, 8, 12, 17, 21, 28 Favorable Colors: Red & Yellow

This is an excellent time to work on financial planning and strategy. This month brings a responsibility to mind and you're anxious to take care of business. It's also an important time for exchanging ideas with others.

Places to visit: Cape Town, South Africa - Cape Town is fondly regarded as the world's prettiest city – all because of that iconic blend of where the city meets the sea, and nature plays a key part in the lives of locals.

Belur Math, Belur - Marvellously combining artistic elements from Hindu, Islamic and European traditions, Belur Math is also the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Favorable Dates: April 1, 9, 10, 18, 19, 27 Favorable Colors: Blue & Red



Cancer
(21 June – 22 July)



Leo
(23 July – 22 August)

This is not a time to push yourself or to be involved in activities that require intense competition or a great expenditure of energy. Cooperative, harmonious personal and professional relationships are more important to you at this time.

Places to visit: Barcelona, Spain -The capital of Catalonia is also the capital of GREAT food and captivating architecture. Gaudi's legacy is to be seen throughout the city.

The Roman Catholic Basilica - It is located in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu and is also nicknamed the 'Lourdes of the East'. Several reports of supposed miracles have been attributed to this place.

Favorable Dates: April 1, 9, 10, 18, 19, 27 Favorable Colors: Red & Blue

This a quest to develop your inner strength. You want to be productive now. Your own values or way of expressing love and affection may differ from someone you encounter now, but all is likely to turn out well.

Places to visit: Bangkok, Thailand - The Thai capital makes it to the list thanks to its' chaotic charm. Bursting with colour and neon signs.

The Sariska Tiger Reserve - It is famous for its population of the Bengal Tiger and other wildlife species. It is also home to the Sariska Palace, which was used as a hunting lodge by the Maharaja of Alwar.

Favorable Dates: April 2, 6, 11, 15, 20, 24 Favorable Colors: Green & White



Virgo
(23 August – 22 Sept)

Manish Kumar Arora is a renowned KP Astrologer, Numerologist, Tarot Reader and Vastu Consultant. He will be with Touriosity Travelmag to bring to our readers monthly predictions based on zodiac signs with special emphasis on travel predictions. Our readers can plan their tours accordingly. He can be reached at manish@manishastrologer.com



This is a time to settle down and think about your own desires and needs. This calmer period will awaken you to the value of the simple pleasures in your life. You want to give to your loved ones and may spend generously in order to make them happy.

Places to visit: Queenstown, New Zealand - New Zealand's adventure capital has a lot to offer travellers: bungee jumping, sky diving, mountain biking, hiking, and kayaking are just a few.

Munnar Hills - The hill town in the state of Kerala is known for its sprawling green hills, covered with tea and spice plantations.

Favorable Dates: April 1, 9, 10, 18, 19, 27 Favorable Colors: Green & Blue

This month may not be the ideal time to make long-term commitments, but it has all the potential to be a spirit-feeding, pleasurable time in your life. A romance begun now might be characterized by sensitivity, concern, and care on the positive side.

Places to visit: Ubud Indonesia - Travellers have been flocking from near and far to experience the fantastic organic foods, spiritual experience and colourful sunsets on offer.

Dharamshala - The town contains several monasteries, scenic views of the Himalayas and various other tourist attractions.

Favorable Dates: April 3, 5, 12, 14, 21, 23 Favorable Colors: Purple & Red



Your desires are loud, and you're ready to pursue them directly. You exude even more strength, dynamism, and dominance than usual. You're growing and improving your relationships, love life, and creative life.

Places to visit: Ladakh - With its location between India and Tibet, is a popular destination. Pangong Lake is an enchanting saltwater lake located in the Himalayas in Ladakh.

The Marine National Park in Gulf of Kutch - It is known for its abundant coral reefs that surround the 42 islands that form the protected area. Apart from the corals, one can also witness several other marine species in the crystal clear waters.

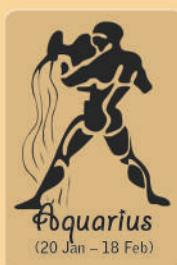
Favorable Dates: April 4, 7, 13, 16, 22, 25 Favorable Colors: White & Red

Your desire for pleasure, ease, and affection is brought to the fore and may interfere with work or complicated situations in which you need to be acting assertively and on your own behalf.

Places to visit: Hanoi, Vietnam : There is an abundance of culture to be found in the distinct blend of influences over the years: particularly the Southeast Asian, Chinese and French influences.

Monuments at Mandu, Dhar - Mandu or Mandavgarh is located in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh. The monuments contain several Jain temples, mosques and royal palaces that provide a great view of the varied cultural influences in India.

Favorable Dates: April 2, 3, 11, 12, 20, 21 Favorable Colors: Yellow & White



This month brings a newfound identity and a realistic understanding of your own limitations, and your capabilities as well. In terms of career and projects, outward signs of progress may not be as forthcoming, yet the work that you do during this transit will lay a foundation for future success and progress!

Places to visit: Buenos Aires, Argentina - The capital of Argentina is bursting with Spanish architectural influence and is a modern day hub for business in South America.

Silent Valley National Park, Palakkad - These forests are a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and are famous for its vast collection of flora and fauna.

Favorable Dates: April 3, 7, 12, 16, 21, 26 Favorable Colors: Purple & Yellow

There is a need to nourish both the inner and outer life now, and you tend to see people as the means to feed your well. You may be giving generously of yourself or your services, and this boosts your reputation and appeal.

Places to visit: The Kremlin - It is both a cultural sight, as well as the centre of the Russian state, and the residence of the President of Russia.

The valley of flowers in Nainital - It is covered with snow from October till March, but as the summer arrives, the valley is turned into a palette of colorful flowers that covers the entire landscape.

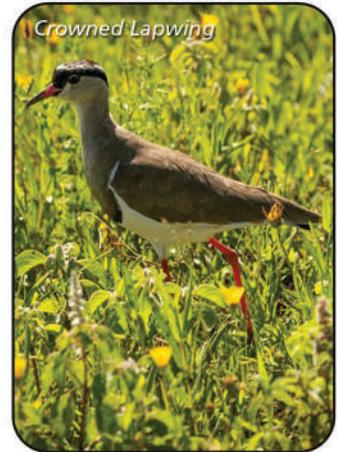
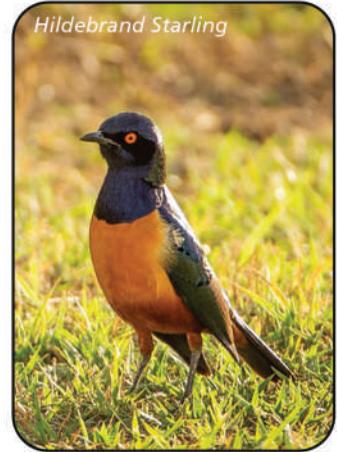
Favorable Dates: April 2, 6, 11, 15, 20, 24 Favorable Colors: Red & Purple





Avi-faunal variety of **Tanzania**

Photos by Grete Howard, Bristok, UK







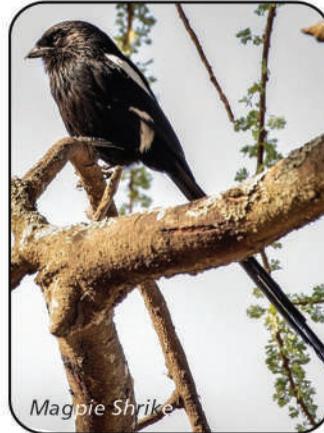
DESTINATION TANZANIA



D'Arnaud's Barbet



Wattled Starling (Male)



Magpie Shrike



Levaillant's Cisticola



Lesser Kestrel



Greater Spotted Thick Knee



Eurasian Avocet



Grey-breasted Francolin



Crested Lark



Coqui Francolin



Augur Buzzard



Common Kestrel



Blue-eared Glossy Starling



Secretary Bird



White-backed vulture



Lappet-faced Vulture



DESTINATION **TANZANIA**



African spoonbill



Southern Ground Hornbill



Grey Hornbill



Shoebill



Von der Decken's Hornbill



Red billed Hornbill



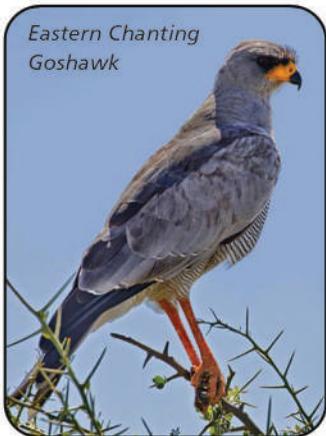
Black Kite



Pale Tawny Eagle



Steppe Eagle



Eastern Chanting Goshawk



Black Breasted Snake Eagle



Gabar Goshawk



Black-bellied Bustard



Kori Bustard



Bare-faced Go Away Bird



Black-headed Heron



Shop Now

Step out with Style!!

Refresh your wardrobe with our latest collections

Visit us at: www.atmaja.in

atmajatraditions@gmail.com

Whatsapp:7699362012



EnVERT[®]

E - VEHICLES

The 100% Electric EnVERT[®] E-Vehicle



EnVERT Duex-PM



EnVERT Mono-PN



EnVERT Trois-PP

Think Global, Drive EnVERT[®] E-Vehicle

Visit us at:

www.ev.envertgroup.com

Call: +91-7003942199

E-mail: envertev@gmail.com



Located in the very heart of India in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Pench National Park is famous for its tiger population. It even found mention in the famous work 'The Jungle Book' by Rudyard Kipling published way back in the 19th century. This helped draw world-wide attention to this home of the tiger. Ever since its declaration as a National Park, it has been a favourite destination for tourists from across India as well as abroad.

The Pench National Park sprawls over an area of more than 750 square kilometres and it is a part of the Pench Tiger Reserve. The latter comprises of the Pench National Park, Pench Sanctuary and a buffer zone spread over a total of 1,168 sq.km. It is named after the Pench River that flows through it. While the majestic Royal Bengal Tiger remains its biggest claim to fame, a little known fact about this national park is that it is also an abode of innumerable birds. It gives shelter to a wide variety of avifaunal species. Located in the southern part of the Satpura Range, the park is home to almost 325 varieties of migratory and resident birds.

The most popular bird species found in Pench National Park are: Peafowl, Crow Pheasant, Indian Scops Owl, Jungle fowl, Indian pitta, Parakeet, Treepies, Red-vented bulbul, Indian roller, Racket-tailed drongo, Crimson-breasted barbet, Magpie Robin, Pintail, Lesser whistling Teal, Shoveller, Herons, Egrets, Minivet, Oriole, Wagtail, Munia, Myna, Waterfowl and Common kingfisher. These birds are the pulling force behind the scores of photographers who keep coming to Pench. Some birds that are known to exist but are rarely spotted here are: Black Shouldered Kite, Jacobin Cuckoo, Indian Grey Hornbill, Yellow Crowned Woodpecker and a variety of Kites and Eagles. However, the most commonly sighted birds here are: Spotted Dove, Laughing Doves, Flame-backed Woodpecker, Chestnut-tailed Starling, White-throated Kingfisher, Red-wattled Lapwing, Oriental Magpie Robin, Black Dongo, Bay Backed Shrike, Asian Pied Starling, Asian Openbill, Asian Koel and Indian Black Ibis.



Rufous Treepie



Black Drongo



Indian Roller



A pair of spotted owlets



Brown Fish Owl



Jungle Owlet



Large Egret



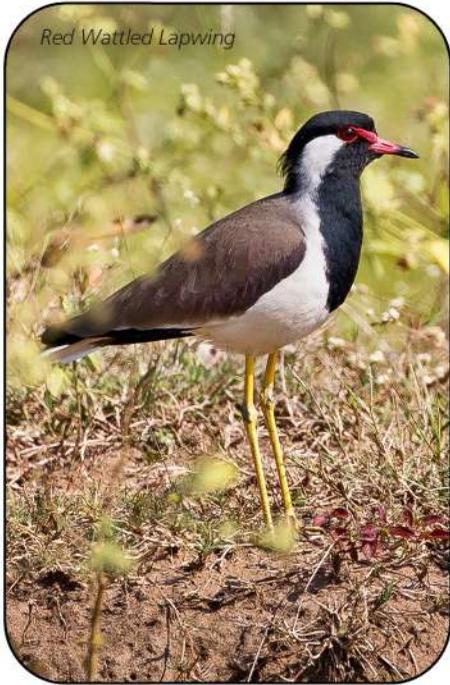
Jungle Fowl



Oriental Honey Buzzard

How to Reach: From Pench the nearest Airport and Rail station is Nagpur (80 km).

Best Season and time for Birding: Resident birds can be seen round the year. To see the migratory birds, the winter months between October and March are the best. Early mornings and late evenings are the best time to sight birds.



Red Wattled Lapwing



Flame back woodpecker



Changeable Hawk Eagle



Spotted Dove



Eurasian Thick Knee



Hoopoe



Indian Pond Heron



Indian Grey Hornbill



Yellow Footed Pigeon



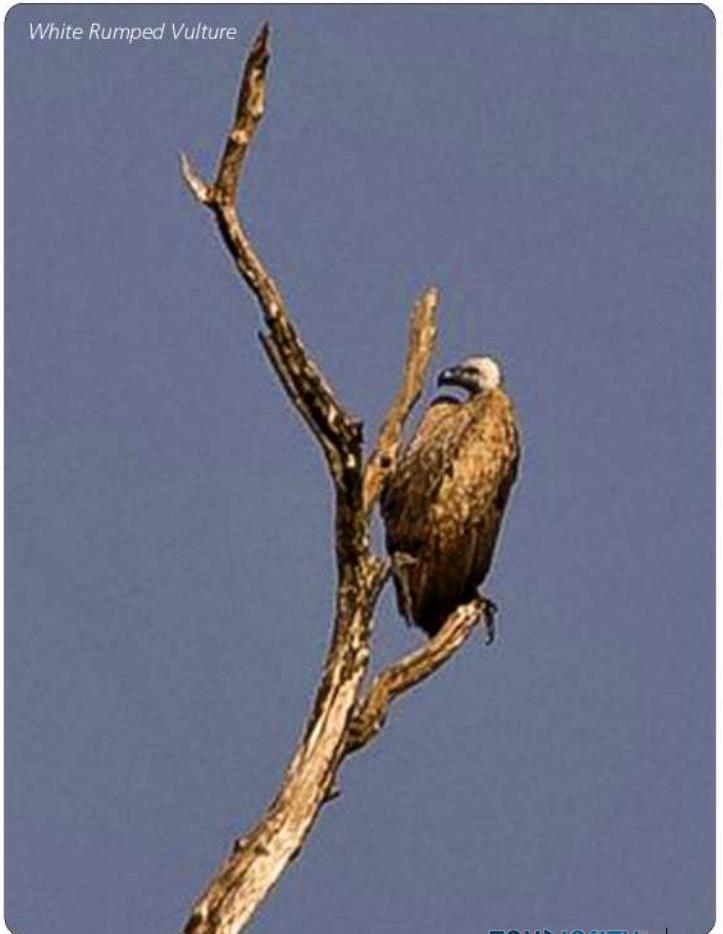
Green Sandpiper



Indian Cormorant



Bonelli's Eagle



White Rumped Vulture

MY TRIP TO

GUILIN

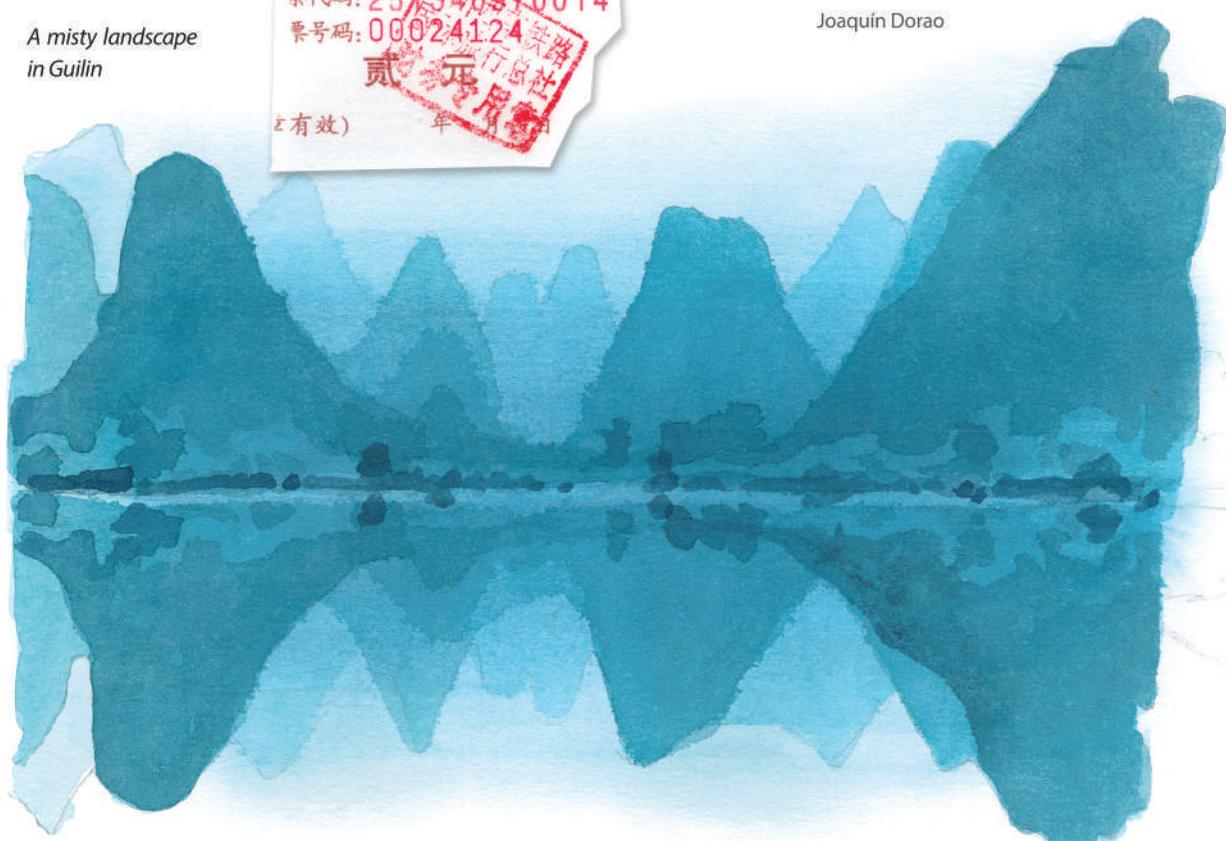
A misty landscape in Guilin



TRAVEL JOURNAL

This is the journal of the trip I did to Guilin (China). It doesn't intend to be a complete guide of the place, but an extract of my personal impressions in this unique place.

Text & illustrations:
Joaquín Dorao



中國



Guilin is one of the most touristy cities in the south of China; this is largely due to its landscape of karst mountains, which form a very characteristic undulating horizon in this area. I arrived at Guilin airport, but didn't stay in this large modern area. Instead, I moved to a nearby village called Yangshuo, located at the riverbank of the Li River and surrounded by magnificent mountains. At the airport I took a minibus to the center of Guilin. There I took a local bus to Yangshuo.

Situated at the confluence of the Lijiang (also called Li) and Yulong rivers, with 3,00,000 inhabitants, Yangshuo has the largest population in this area of the Li River, and in its surroundings the best landscapes in the region are concentrated. Almost all groups of tourists arriving in Guilin travel by boat for several hours to Yangshuo, but the truth is that the most spectacular views are between Xingping and Yangdi, near Yangshuo. So I decided to settle here and take short excursions.



After having lunch, I walked around a little and realized that, although there were quite a few foreigners, most of the tourists only roam the streets of Yangshuo.

From Xingping I took a trip along the Li River by a raft. On the river bank there is a pier with relatively large boats (which go to Yucun, to the south) and bamboo rafts (which go to Yangdi, to the north) with capacity for six people. But as I was alone, I was forced to hire a whole one for myself. The raft operates by hand, and there are hundreds of them making the two-hour journey to Yangdi. I enjoyed the landscapes here, like the one printed on the back of the 20 yuan banknotes, a beautiful panorama, surrounded by towering mountains with rounded shapes and covered with vegetation. At sunset I went to a place on the river where you can see fishermen who still fish with the help of cormorants, the primitive way. I assume this scene was somehow



AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

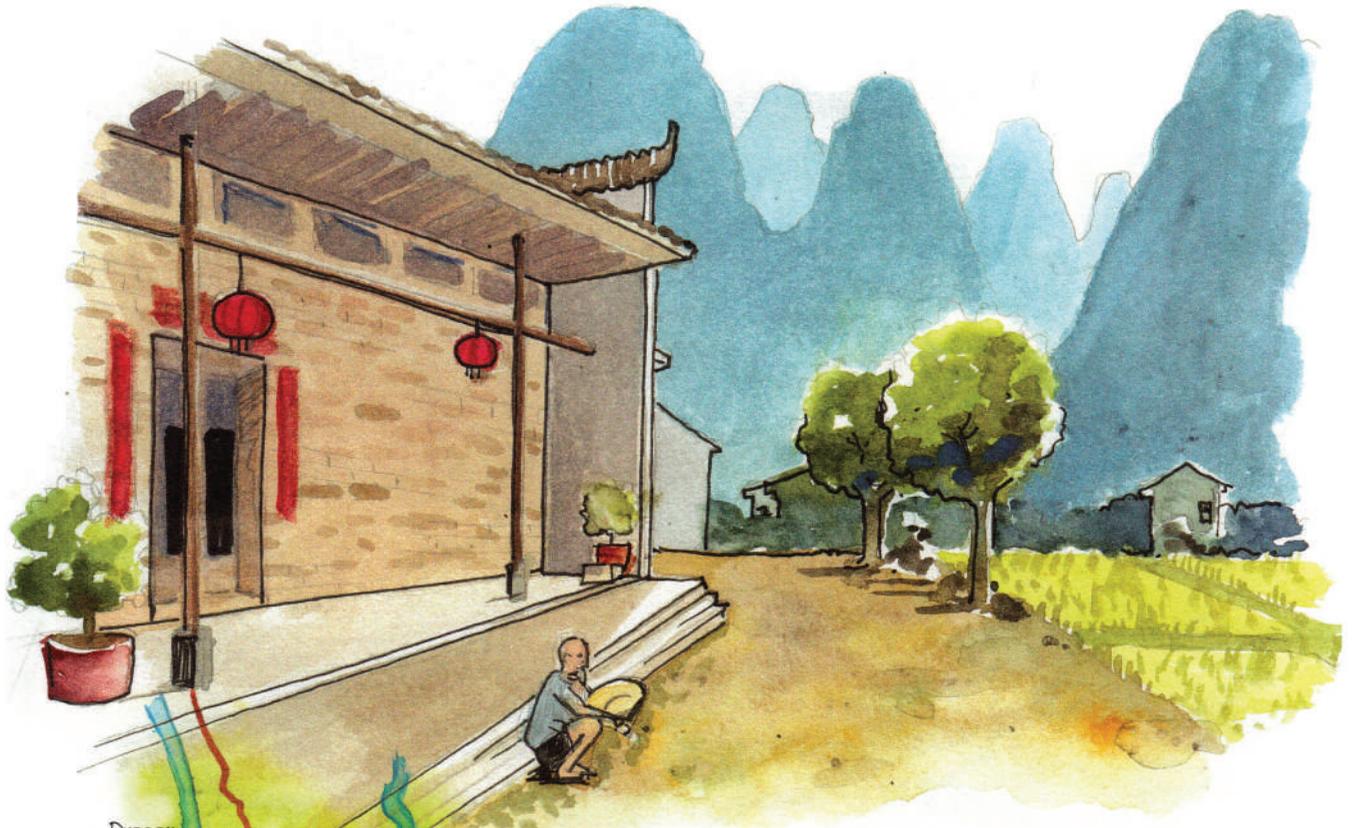
Cormorant fishing at sunset



prepared for the tourists, but it's nice anyway. On the next day I went to Jiuxian, a traditional small village with cobbled streets and very old houses, the largest of which has a large patio where the kitchens are and where the neighbours gather for common activities. There were few people, since most were working in

Bamboo boats are very popular at the Li River, many families come here to spend the day





Jiuxian is a traditional rural village in the valley of the River Li. You can still feel here the traditional Chinese way of life.

the rice fields. It is very similar to the hamlets of northern Spain, with several constructions around the main building, which facilitate community life. All the houses have on the frame of the entrance door small red signs that they place during the New Year with wishes of prosperity and good luck for the coming year; the signs must remain there until the following year to bring good fortune to the inhabitants of the home.

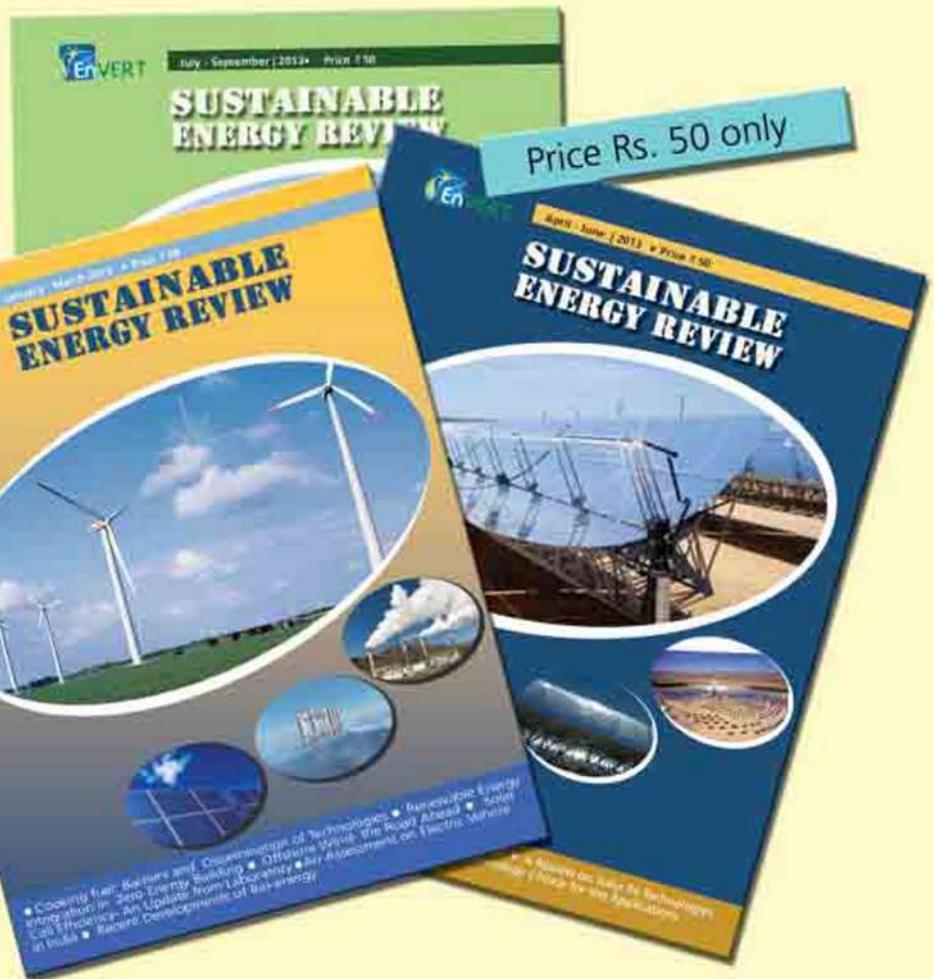
After visiting Jiuxian I returned by bike to Yangshuo. To end my visit I had dinner at a nice terrace in the center while admiring the surrounding mountains, illuminated at night.



SUSTAINABLE ENERGY REVIEW

Sustainable Energy Review is a one-of-a-kind magazine covering technology, industry, policy and finance for the entire spectrum of renewable energy technologies. The Magazine is targeted at companies involved directly in renewables, owners and managers of renewable energy sites, manufacturers of complete renewable energy systems, research and training establishments, consultants in renewable energy sector, decision makers in power generating utilities, local or central governments, energy advisory or planning agencies, aid agencies, small and large energy users and so on. The publishing frequency is 4 times per year.

The magazine seeks to disseminate the knowledge of renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency and is therefore aimed at publicizing the major technical and non technical issues of these technologies in a simplified manner. It is aimed at reaching a large number of people – the commoners, those from the Industry and the Institutes wherein people are somehow facing the challenges of energy. The **trans-disciplinary magazine** has a long way to go.



Publisher Details:

Nandi Resources Generation Technology Pvt. Ltd.
Flat E, B/6 Bapujinagar
PO-Regent Estate
Kolkata 7000 92
Tel: +91-33-32613664;
Website : www.nrgindia.com

For Advertisement Contact:
Tel: +91-33-32613664;
Mob : +91 8420046475
Email: ser.english@gmail.com

For subscription Call us at +91-33-32613664
or write to us at ser.english@gmail.com

TOURIOSITY[®]

T R A V E L M A G



SUBSCRIBE TO

12 ISSUES AND SAVE UPTO 5% ON THE COVER PRICE

24 ISSUES AND SAVE UPTO 7.5% ON THE COVER PRICE.

No. of issues	Normal Price	Discount	Actual Price	Subscription price (incl. Courier cost)	
				Kolkata	Outside Kolkata
12	₹ 600	5%	₹ 570	₹ 695	₹ 910
24	₹ 1200	7.5%	₹ 1110	₹ 1350	₹ 1815

Please fill the form in CAPITAL letters.

I am enclosing the cheque/DD number Dated / /

Drawn on (specify bank)

Favouring Afield Touriosity Pvt. Ltd. for Rupees Only ₹

Title Mr. Mrs. Ms. Dr. Full Name

D.O.B / /

Address

Pin Code

STD Code Phone (off.)

(Resi.)

Mobile No.

E-mail

Signature

Date

Please fill in the form and mail it along with your cheque/draft to

Afield Touriosity Private Limited
Flat E, B/6, Bapujinagar,
P.O. Regent Estate, Kolkata - 700092

Terms and Conditions: 1. The offer is for a limited period only. 2. Afield Touriosity Private Limited will not be responsible for loss or mutilation of the magazine during transit or of any postal delay. 3. Payments are subject to realization. 4. Cash payments will not be accepted. 5. Cheques must be payable in Kolkata. 6. Any disputes arising will be subjected to Indian laws. 7. Above rates relate to ordinary postal delivery only. For express/courier delivery extra charges to be added.

Phone no.- 033- 3261-3664 Mob. no.- 9836511995



In search of the Jaguar in Guyana

Article and Photos by Grete Howard, UK

The country of Guyana in the continent of South America has an abundance of wildlife of all types. As per statistics, there are about 225 species of mammals, approximately 880 species of reptiles, more than 900 species of birds and over 6,500 different varieties of floral species. Such abundance has earned the country the name of being one of the best destinations for wildlife tourism in South America. Guyana has dense forests and wide network of rivers which creates the perfect habitat for wildlife.

Of all the animals found in Guyana, the elusive Jaguar arouses the maximum curiosity amongst visitors. The Jaguar is the national animal of the country. The animal inhabits in the rainforests in the central part of the country. This King of the Jungle is one of the largest cats in the world and the greatest predator in the region. Tourists from all over the world come here with a desire to spot a wild Jaguar in Guyana. There are local people providing eco-lodging facilities and safaris with trained local guides.

Guyana has other attractions for tourists, especially the wildlife enthusiasts. It is home to the Harpy Eagle, a majestic bird found mainly in this country. It is often claimed to be the most powerful bird of prey in the world. The country also abode Arapaima (the World's largest Freshwater fish), the Giant Anteater (which is the world's largest Anteater) and the Giant River Otter (being the world's largest and rarest otter). The following article is from the diary entry of Grete Howard which she made during her 2004 road trip in Guyana with the desire of sighting the Jaguar. The journey in reality turned out to be quite different from what was expected.



They say getting there is half the fun. This is an extract from the journal I wrote during our road trip from Surama to Shanklands in Guyana, South America in 2004.

Having spent some time at a research station on the river, our group of twelve travellers from the UK and Netherlands is now making our way to the coast, journeying in three vehicles.

From our camp to the 'main road', is around 20 miles or so, but it takes quite a while to negotiate all the potholes and puddles along the way. We are grateful when we reach the main road, blissfully unaware of the adventure that lies ahead.

The road leading from Kurupukari to Georgetown (not that we are going that far), is mainly red dirt, surrounded by virgin rainforest. We drive on for miles and

miles and miles without seeing another vehicle. This place really is remote!

This area is said to be one of the best places in the world to spot jaguar. I am desperate to see one! I try so hard to stay awake to look for this beautiful, but elusive, animal. And although I do manage to keep from nodding off, the jaguar remains elusive!

The road into the interior of Guyana and further across the border into Brazil, has been built to carry logging traffic. Brazil apparently offered to pay for a proper road to be built, on the understanding that they would get a one mile stretch of land either side of the road! That is an awful lot of land! The Guyanese government did not agree!

Another great worry to environmentalists

is that logging companies from Asia, having devastated their own tropical forests, are now searching for new sources of timber.

We get out of the truck to take photos of the timber, and an official comes over to tell us off. No photos! Too late!

When we reach the small settlement of Mabura, we have to stop to refill the water in the radiator - again - as we have a small (?) leak. This is rather worrying.

As we did on the journey into the interior, we stop at the Restaurant 58 near Mabura on the way back. I quite like this place; it's a small and friendly truckers café!

The menu looks inviting - I like the sound

of the Wild Cow Pepperpot. Paul, our local guide, explains that 'wild cow' is in fact Tapir! I wish I could try some.

Although Iwokrama Field Station has provided us with a packed lunch, we decide to buy a couple of snacks here. The caramel wafers would have benefited from being stored in a fridge - at 37 degrees they become a rather messy pulp. We leave the chocolate biscuits for later.

We are in the luggage truck again today, me in the front, David, Marissa and Janet in the back. We like this truck; the only problem is the lack of air conditioning. Every time a lorry approaches (or overtakes), we have to quickly wind up the windows!

Occasionally we miss the fact that there is a truck coming, either because we are asleep, or too busy chatting. It is amazing how much dirt and dust one of those vehicles kick up!

A couple of different places we have to stop to pay a toll in order to pass through the next section of road. At one of these toll stations, a member of staff comes over to us with his little "friend". I don't know if this is in order to make sure we pay the toll - "pay up, or I'll let him loose in your truck". Eeek!! We pay!

As we are travelling in a convoy of three vehicles, this poor man has to walk to each side of all vehicles for us all to take a photo of his



Photos: Extremely difficult route filled with sandy, muddy and water-clogged roads and places that required clearing of fallen trees



little (?) companion! He is amused initially, but eventually complains that he has work to do!

At the junction of the Linden to Georgetown Road and the road to Rockstone, we stop and change vehicles. We are met by the vehicles from Shanklands, who will take us from here to the hotel, leaving the main logging track and taking us cross country through the jungle.

There are meant to be three vehicles meeting us, but only two have turned up. Those two have come from Georgetown along the "good" road, the one we have been travelling on so far. The missing one set out through the jungle from Shanklands at six this morning, making the route we will be taking clear. I don't understand the significance of this at the time.

It is now 1 pm. What do we do? After much discussion between the drivers and guide, it is agreed that one of the original vehicles from Iwokrama will carry on for now, and the passengers will just swap from one to the other as soon as we meet the last Shanklands truck somewhere in the jungle! Easy!

While the luggage is being swapped from one vehicle to the other, and the onward



travelling logistics are being discussed, we eat the picnic provided by Iwokrama!

Boy, am I glad that we bought some snacks at the 58 restaurant! The picnic lunch the lodge provided consists of cold beans, rice, (a very tough) beef stew and half a cucumber. I eat the beans. The rest is wasted. I am not the only one;

most other people are also very disappointed about the contents of our lunch pack!

As we are “enjoying” our packed lunch, everyone tries to get out of the fierce midday sun, which is proving to be a little difficult, as there is no shade to speak of! A few of us move away from the road under the trees, while minding the sharp grasses in the undergrowth. Others crowd under a half built shelter. Len skulks away behind the building.

Just as we are finishing the lunch, a rather hasty exit happens. “Everyone to their vehicles!” we are instructed. David and I choose the new luggage truck along with Malissa and Mark – me in the front and the other three in the back. Everything happens so fast, and the first truck (then only one with some space in it) goes off before it is noticed that we have forgotten Len!

There is no room for him in the last truck, so Carolyn moves out of that and squeezes into the back seat of ours, so Len can have her place! There really is not enough room for four in our back seat, despite Carolyn and Mark being very slim people!

We try to catch up the first truck, and flash them to get them to stop, but it takes ages before they

notice! Eventually, they stop and Mark gets out of our vehicle and sits on the back of the first truck!

After half an hour or so, we meet up with the vehicle which came along this road from Shanklands, and the original truck can get rid of its passengers and continue on its journey to Georgetown.

Two of the trucks are open sided vehicles, one with a seat across the back for three people, and one with benches along the sides at the back (as in photo). These seats are very slippery and bounce well!

The first part of the journey is along a track of soft sand. The vehicles travel at an amazing speed, and slide from side to side along the track. This really is great fun, especially following the other trucks, seeing them waltz along the track, like little ballerinas on ice.

In the next section the track is made from sticky brown mud, and again we slide about all over the place. The drivers blame the logging company for ruining the track with their enormous trucks. There are many large puddles to negotiate too, and it is quite amazing the angle the vehicles can go at without tipping over!

Of course we get stuck in the mud! The other two trucks, who are in front of us, manage to drive through, whereas we get stuck on a log that has been put in the track to ‘help’. We rev the engine, and all that it does is dig us a deeper hole. We spin on the log. We splatter mud everywhere. And again all it does is



Of course we get stuck in the mud! The other two trucks, who are in front of us, manage to drive through, whereas we get stuck on a log that has been put in the track to 'help'. We rev the engine, and all that it does is dig us a deeper hole. We spin on the log. We splatter mud everywhere. And again all it does is further dig us in, deeper and deeper!



further dig us in, deeper and deeper!

The tow rope comes out, and one of the other trucks pulls us out. Or at least, that is the idea. What actually happens in real life is that the tow rope breaks! We try again. New tow rope. The other truck pulls, we rev the engine. The same thing happens again. Now we have two broken tow ropes!

What do we do now?

Out comes the chain saw! The drivers cut up the offending log in the track (under the wheel) and remove it. They then have another go at towing us out of the hole again and hey presto! We’re out! Just like that! It’s easy when you know how.

We continue on our way. The reason the one truck came this way from Shanklands this morning, was to ensure that the track was free of obstacles and passable to us!

At one place, a tree had fallen across the road, so the crew from Shanklands had cleared a way through the jungle around it! This is why they took so long and weren’t there at the junction to meet us at 1pm.

Unfortunately, the other two trucks are slightly larger than the one that came from Shanklands,

As we are "enjoying" our packed lunch, everyone tries to get out of the fierce midday sun, which is proving to be a little difficult, as there is no shade to speak of! A few of us move away from the road under the trees, while minding the sharp grasses in the undergrowth. Others crowd under a half built shelter. Len skulks away behind the building.

Just as we are finishing the lunch, a rather hasty exit happens. "Everyone to their vehicles!" we are instructed. David and I choose the new luggage truck along with Malissa and Mark - me in the front and the other three in the back. Everything happens so fast, and the first truck (then only one with some space in it) goes off before it is noticed that we have forgotten Len!

and subsequently can't get round in the area that has been cleared!

The lads literally just pick up smaller trees with their bare hands and move them! The top soil is so thin here (about six inches maximum), that their root system doesn't go very deep.

One of the trees that have been moved, topples over again, and lands on the truck. Fortunately, no damage is done.

After a bit of tree moving, and a short burst with the chain saw, we manage to get round in a sort of five point turn!

This truly is a single track road, but it doesn't matter, as there is no traffic here! Isn't there? We are unfortunate enough to meet a logging truck full of wallaba wood which they use to make telegraph poles.

OK! Where do we go?

Either side of the track there is dense forest! We reverse for a while, to see if there is a clearing. The first vehicle finds somewhere to move off the track for the truck to pass. So does the second. What about us?

Eventually we give in, and just push our way into the undergrowth, felling a few thinner trees on the way! We literally just drive over them! Quite remarkable!

At last we're on our way again, after getting back onto the track again from the undergrowth.

But we're not out of the woods yet, so to speak! There is another tree blocking the road ahead. This one must have been brought down by the truck we met earlier, as apparently it was not there a few hours ago when the vehicle from Shanklands came through.

Out come the chain saws again. This time it really does look like an impossible task, or at best will take an eternity to move! It is a huge tree, with very many branches - how are they going to approach this one? All the lads get going, two chain saws and a few machetes. It is amazing how relatively quickly they can move such a beast! I'm very impressed!

Later we encounter more mud. This time it is a thick gooey clay substance and the track looks completely and totally impassable. I would personally NEVER have attempted to drive along this track, even in a 4x4. It really is too much!

Guess what? We get stuck!

I take my hat off to four wheel drive vehicles in general and in particular to these drivers!



someone who knows how to use this equipment!

The last stretch of the journey to Shanklands is made of white clay, and again it has turned into a quagmire. The drivers blame it on the army! There is a military camp at Makouria, where the French and English come for jungle training. These tracks should not really be used during the rainy season, but the military still do!



Again, we get stuck.

This is becoming old hat now.

Back and forth, a bit of cursing, rev the engine. Get out and check the situation. Try again.

We're out! No need to get towed this time, we make it on our own! I have so much admiration for these drivers and vehicles, they really do work hard!

Next stop: Shanklands.

The drive here was scheduled to take four hours, in the end we spend seven hours on the journey! I wouldn't have changed it for the world though; it really has been one of the highlights of this trip, and one which none of us will forget in a hurry!



After a few nervous minutes of sliding back and forth, slipping deeper into this mushy sludge, we finally manage to get out of the muddy grave we have dug ourselves. Incredible! I really didn't think we'd make it this time! This is turning out to be a very adventurous journey indeed!

It really can't be much further now, surely? Things are going really quite well for a while - until we encounter another large tree across the road.

The last two days they've had heavy winds and rain in this area, which has loosened the soil and brought many trees down. The lads who came from Shanklands cleared away five trees on their way to meet us!

When we got into the Shanklands vehicles at the junction, Jim made a comment about having to share the back of the van with all that logging equipment! Now we are all extremely glad for it!

You really couldn't do this journey without a chain saw or two, an axe a couple of machetes. A few strong men helps too, and



Photos: More pictures of difficult roads

Renewable Energy Solution from



Nandi Resources Generation Technology Pvt. Ltd.

OUR SERVICES

Grid Connected & Off-grid Solar Systems

- Pre feasibility study for Solar PV projects and Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) Projects
- Preparation of bankable DPR for Solar PV and CSP Projects.
- Site Assessment and Solar radiation Assessment.
- Detailed Financial Analysis with Sensitivity Analysis.
- Assisting in competitive tariff based bidding for Solar PV and CSP projects.
- Pre feasibility study for setting up Solar PV projects under Renewable Energy Certificate mechanism
- System Design Engineering
- Project Management.
- Issuing Due-diligence reports to Owners and Lenders
- Owners Engineering and Lenders Engineering

Solar PV and Solar Thermal System Products

- Solar Lantern
- Solar Garden Lighting System
- Solar Street Lights
- Solar Water Heater
- Solar Pump

Environment-friendly Advertising Products

- PVC Panner and Flex for large billboards with solar system
- Solar flood light

OTHER SERVICES

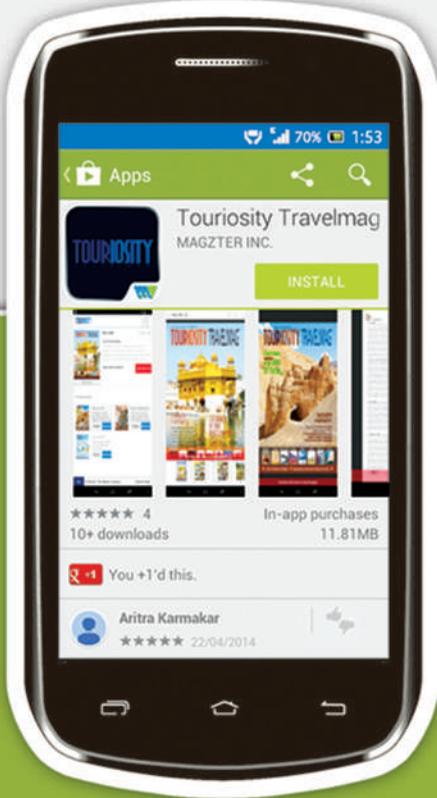
- Energy Audit & Energy Management
- Carbon Advisory Services
- Intellectual Property (IP) Services
- Quality Management Services
- Green Building Solution
- Export Import

For details please contact:

Nandi Resources Generation Technology Pvt. Ltd.

Phn.: +91-8420046473

Email : nrg.tpl@gmail.com ; Website : www.nrgindia.com



TOURIOSITY™
T R A V E L M A G

now available on
 Google play

Download your **BRANDED** application
on your android device



TOURIOSITY™
T R A V E L M A G

now available on

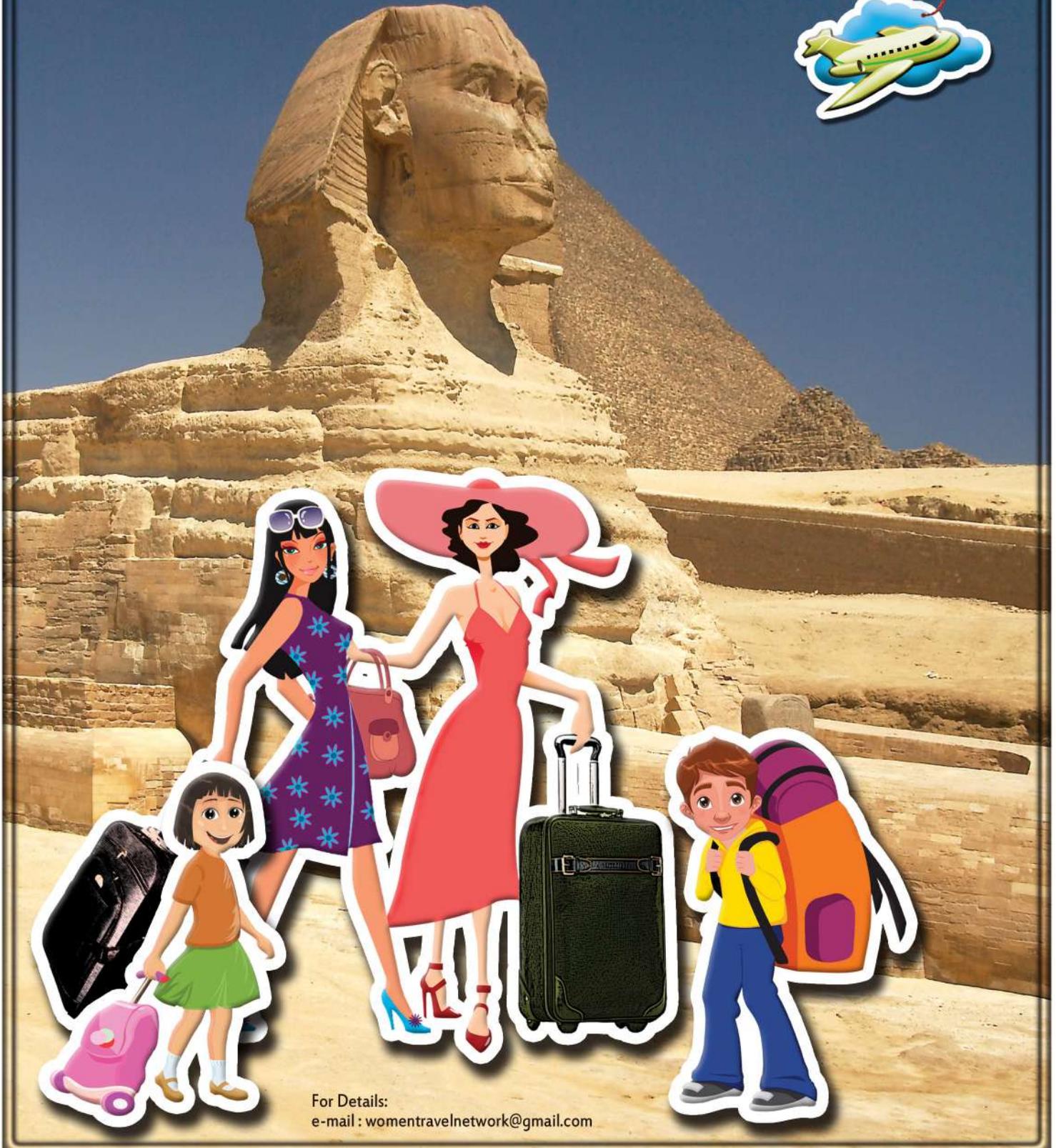
 iTunes

Download your **BRANDED** application
on your iPads and iPhones



Women Travel Network

Not getting the scope to see the world? Here's your chance. Join us for exotic all women holidays worldwide



For Details:
e-mail : womentravelnetwork@gmail.com