

A Sharp Eye on
wildlife
photography

CATS & DOGS ISSUE

Another twenty top
photography tips
& more topical
Groan Animals

ISSUE TWO June 2020



Southern masked weaver (*Ploceus velatus*) male
Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, November 2014
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/640 sec, F9, ISO 400



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Garden safari update



Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) female, Cumnor Hill, Oxfordshire. 1st June 2020
Canon EOS 80D, 153mm, 1/500 sec, F5, ISO 125. Composite of two images

Front cover
Cheetah and cubs
see back cover

Groan Animals

Neil and Antonia thought they could get away with slipping out for a meal



Henry wanted to do his bit during the crisis, but he was worried about getting the seal of approval



As the date to reopen the school approached, Daisy finally got her ducks in a row



top
Desert elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) and calf, Damaraland, Namibia
Canon EOS 80D, 124mm, 1/1000 sec, F5.6, ISO 400, March 2018

middle
Common seals (*Phoca vitulina*), Loch Linnhe, Argyll, Scotland
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/2000 sec, F5.6, ISO 800, August 2015

bottom
Black-bellied whistling ducks (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*), Tobago
Canon EOS 70D, 170mm, 1/1000 sec, F9, ISO 400, December 2014

A Sharp Eye on WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

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www.sharpphotography.co.uk

All photographs by Charles J Sharp except where indicated. These are all wild animals. They were not photographed in safari parks, rescue centres, zoos, butterfly houses, in captivity, or in a studio.

Most full resolution images are on
Wikipedia and on Flickr.

Previous issue on the website

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Red-veined darter dragonflies (*Sympetrum fonscolombii*) mating
 Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, November 2014
 Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/3200 sec, F11, ISO 1000
A Special Place... Tswalu is on page 34

Hello again...

Last month I suggested some tips for your time at home. One was to keep your camera near you. It gave me the chance to snap the roe deer on page 3 in my garden on the first day of June. This month I'm imagining you've been set free and can dream again. I've called this the cats and dogs issue, though there lots of other species too. Cats and dogs are in two families of carnivores. The cat-like *Felidae* and the dog-like *Canidae*. The cat-like *Felidae* include the five 'trophy' *Panthera* species: tiger, lion, jaguar, leopard and snow leopard. The snow leopard is still on my to-do list. The *Canidae* family includes dogs, wolves, foxes and jackals.

All of these mammals are hunted by photographers. They take a significant investment in time and money if you want a decent sighting and that all-important photo. Lions are the easiest by far. It's pretty difficult to come back from a safari having missed out. I've been on tiger safaris in India and Nepal and they mean many frustrating hours and days. There is less 'plains game' to look at when waiting for the tiger. Take your first big-cat safari in Africa, not the Indian subcontinent.

Allocate just a couple of days to a tiger safari in India or a jaguar safari in South America and you may well be disappointed. I recommend four days. The thrill of a sighting, perhaps because of the frustration, is worth it. But be quick in taking your photos. Within minutes, other jeeps (in India) or boats (in Brazil) will cluster round. The noise level quickly rises with undisciplined jockeying for position and shouts from the tourists. The spooked animal walks away, having had enough of us.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature maintains the (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species (see panel left). Most big cats and dogs are in the threatened categories.

Charles Sharp

... and stay safe



- Critically Endangered (CR)**
Extremely high risk of extinction
- Endangered (EN)**
Very high risk of extinction
- Vulnerable (VU)**
High risk of extinction
- Near Threatened (NT)**
Likely to qualify for a threatened category soon

Tip #21 Look for endemics

Ethiopia will not be on your top five countries to visit in Africa. No luxury lodges. No 'safari' operations. No beaches for the end-of-safari R&R that tour companies promote. There aren't any. But if you can put up with 2* accommodation (sometimes priced as 4*), it is worth a visit. We decided that we would plan our search for the Ethiopian wolf for Christmas Day 2017.

The giant mole rat is endemic to the Bale Mountains in Ethiopia (Bale is pronounced almost like the Island of Bali). Not surprisingly,

when you've seen the photo, it is also called the big-headed African mole-rat. It lives on high-altitude grassland, around 4,000m above sea level. Researchers have estimated there may be up to 2,600 per square kilometre. It is the main prey of the Ethiopian wolf, Africa's most endangered carnivore and another endemic Ethiopian mammal. More than half of the total wild population, which is about 400 animals, live in the Bale Mountains.

Don't expect to be able to photograph predator and prey at the

same time. That's for the professionals who can camp out in hides for days on end. When the wolf gets close, the mole rat disappears underground. The wolf then hangs around waiting for the mole rat to reappear. The Sanetti plateau is treeless and there's no cover. We had to drive slowly along the one tarred main road that runs through the National Park. Then turn around and drive back the other way. I took my photos from inside the car. We never even saw one wolf lying in wait.

Tip #22 Use an extender

The largest lens you can sensibly hand-hold is 400mm. The Canon 100-400mm lens weighs 1.64kg. It costs around £1,800. When I know I'm not going to hand-hold (like searching for wolves and rats in a car), I fit a 1.4x extender that turns the 400mm lens into a 560mm one. The extender weighs 228gm and costs £400. The Canon 500mm prime lens (i.e. not a zoom lens) would deliver better quality but weighs 3.19kg and costs about £8,100. It would not be easy to hide in my carry-on luggage.

There is a slight loss of quality with the extender fitted, so you don't want to leave it on all the time. The main disadvantage is that it slows down focusing speed. So it is not good on my EOS 80D body for action shots such as flying birds or insects.



Giant mole-rat (*Tachyoryctes macrocephalus*), Sanetti Plateau, Ethiopia, 23 December 2017
Canon EOS 80D, 560mm, 1/800 sec, F10, ISO 640



Ethiopian wolf (*Canis simensis citernii*), Sanetti Plateau, Ethiopia, 25 December 2017
Canon EOS 80D, 560mm, 1/800 sec, F11, ISO 800

Groan Animals

For the first Test Match behind closed doors,
Ben took his place at second slip



For his first Tinder date in three months,
George chose his colours with care



They'd had to chat on social media for
months, but when they finally met,
it was love at first bite



top
African ground squirrels (*Xerus inauris*)
Etosha National Park, Namibia
Canon EOS 80D, 560mm, 1/1000 sec, F10, ISO 400, March 2018

middle
Cape dwarf chameleon (*Bradypodion pumilum*)
young male moulting, Tokai, Cape Town, South Africa
Canon EOS 300D, 54mm, 1/500 sec, F5.6, ISO 100, December 2009

bottom
Bosc's fringe-toed lizards (*Acanthodactylus boskianus asper*)
love bite as part of courtship ritual, Dana Biosphere Reserve, Jordan
Canon EOS 80D, 371mm, 1/640 sec, F10, ISO 200, May 2018

Tip #23

Take two camera bodies

I seldom change lenses in the field. Why risk missing a shot? Why risk getting dust into the body? I use two bodies for my three lenses. In a jeep, I mount my 100-400mm lens on one and my 24-70mm on the other. I sometimes remove the 100-400mm lens to fit my 1.4x extender to give me 560mm. When walking in a butterfly meadow, I swap the 24-70mm for my 100mm macro. I carry it in a holster clip.

A tiger safari can be frustrating. When you get home there will only one question. Did you see a tiger? You need to book several nights and two safari trips each day. In Africa, miss the lions and there are lots of exciting animals to see. In India and Nepal, it's not the same. Long hours of staring between the trees.

The Central Highlands of India. It is 16.20 (4.20pm) on our first afternoon in Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh. The light is fading. We hear warning calls and our guide parks up at a crossroads. Getting dark. A test shot of an empty forest tells me to wind up to ISO 3200. Hurry up, tiger. Can I risk 1/160 sec with the monopod? She comes out onto the road 150m away. A close encounter of the third kind. She saunters towards us and keeps on coming. 400m is perfect. She keeps on coming. Unfazed, she decides to walk right past our jeep. Too close. I grab my 24-70mm which is preset for the poor light. 1/500 sec for a moving animal. Wide aperture, but it still needed ISO 1600. Thank you tiger. We can go for tea now.



Canon EOS 80D, 62mm, 1/500 sec, F4, ISO 1600. Time 16.24.49



Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) female, Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh, India, November 2017
Canon EOS 80D, 379mm, 1/160 sec, F7.1, ISO 3200. Time 16.24.21

True or false?

The ruddy duck is an illegal immigrant in the UK and is being exterminated.



Ruddy duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) male
London Wetland Centre, August 2014

Which is it?

One of these is the peacock butterfly, the other has the white markings on the forewings altered. Should there be two white spots or three?



What's going on?

Why are two different types of ladybird mating?



answers on page 33

Tip #24

Take a few risks for a kill

You can go on safari for years and never get 'a view to a kill'. Or see one on your first morning. The safari operation in the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve has a rule for its guides. Stay on the tracks. Unless... They can go cross country to follow a kill in progress.

Our guide one year was Rodger Bowren with Ben as our tracker, an awesome combination. Early one morning, Ben spotted a pack of wild dogs closing in on impala. We quickly jammed camera bag and water bottles under the seats. As the hunt kicked off, Rodger charged off the track into the bush. We clung on with both hands and tensed our legs as he swerved around stumpy trees and flattened quite sizeable bushes. We bumped and bounced

across the sandy ground. This was not for the faint-hearted.

We were lucky. Unlike the young impala. And the best bit? As we watched the pack dismember the kill, we observed an equitable division of the spoils. Then a youngster with a pronounced limp arrived late for breakfast. The others immediately gave way so that he could get his share. The photo shows what looks like a fight, but it wasn't. It was all good-natured play. No snarling. Amazing animals.

The endangered wild dogs have recently completed a rebranding campaign. You may have watched the BBC's *Dynasties* where Sir David Attenborough uses their new name: painted wolves.



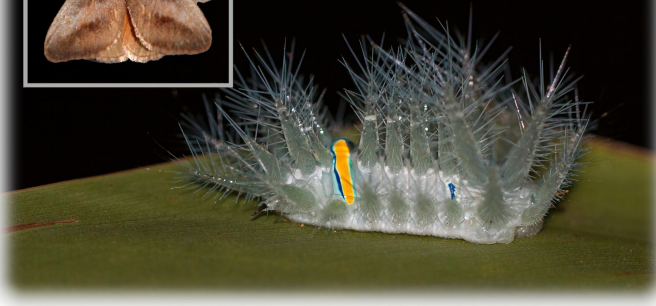
African wild dog, or painted wolf (*Lycaon pictus pictus*)
Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, November 2014
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/2000 sec, F5.6, ISO 800

400mm, 1/2000 sec, F5.6, ISO 400 opposite top
400mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1, ISO 800 opposite bottom



Groan Animals

Having seen pictures of his father,
Wilf knew that this was as good as it gets



Aristotle postulated that 'nature abhors a vacuum'.
Augustus agreed. He didn't like James Dyson



Donald was worried about the butterfly effect
but he was told that it was just an urban moth



top
Slug moth caterpillar (*Limacodidae* sp.), (inset is the adult moth)
Danum Valley Conservation Area, Sabah, Malaysia, May 2015
Canon EOS 70D, 1/50 sec with flash, F5.6, ISO 2500

middle
Marbled emperor moth (*Heniocha dyops*)
Okavango Delta, Botswana, November 2013
Canon EOS 450D, 46mm, 1/160 sec, F.18, ISO 800

bottom
Magpie moth (*Abraxas grossulariata*)
Cumnor Hill, Oxford, July 2017
Canon EOS 70D, 100mm, 1/250 sec with flash, F13, ISO 100

Tip #25

Set up a moth trap

Moths get a bad press. I blame the butterflies, who have some of the prettiest colours and get to fly around during the day. Their marketing is brilliant, with butterfly houses all around the world to show off their diversity. Poets write about butterflies and jewellers make butterfly brooches. Children draw pictures of butterflies and wear them on tee shirts. Butterflies don't eat cashmere jumpers and don't bounce off light bulbs when you are reading.

A moth can be even more beautiful than a butterfly. If there was a top 50 caterpillar beauty parade, moths would fill every place. If you ask ahead, a lodge can often put up a moth trap. Some will have Robinson moth traps, others will have white sheets with mercury vapour lamps.

The Mount Totumas Cloud Forest Lodge is in Western Panama in the province of Chiriqui. It is at 1,900m. The lodge has a white-painted wall and a bright lamp. When you wake up in the morning, there's a good variety of moths to photograph. The 11cm wingspan sphinx moths were the largest who turned up.

“ *handled carefully,
moths are not harmed
when you move them*

*If you want to be a better
photographer, stand in front of
more interesting stuff*

Jim Richardson
National Geographic photographer



Sphinx moth (*Adhemarius gannascus*), near Volcan, Chiriqui Province, Panama, May 2019. Wingspan ~110mm
Canon EOS 80D, 100mm, 1/250 sec, F.5.6, ISO 250. Hand held. Focus stack of four images

Tip #26

Move the moths

You don't want to photograph the prettiest moths on a white wall or sheet. Handled carefully, moths are not harmed when you move them. The sphinx moth was happy to be placed on a post and the little furry ermine moth was relaxed on a stick. Probably half the moths fly off when you move them, but that's the way it is. Some people like to put insects in the fridge to slow down their metabolism before photographing them, but it is not a practice that I go for.



Rosy ermine moth (*Trosia nigropunctigera*). Body size ~25mm
Canon EOS 80D, 100mm, 1/250 sec, F.5.6, ISO 250. Monopod. Focus stack of three images

True or false?

This is a red mangrove crab. It eats mangrove leaves. It lives in a hole in the mud and it can detect the vibration caused by one falling leaf. It then runs out and grabs it and takes it back underground.



Red mangrove crab (*Neosarmatium meinerti*)
iSimangaliso, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa
Canon EOS 70D, 350mm, 1/640 sec, F8, ISO 400

True or false?

Hermit crabs live in discarded shells. As they grow, they have to find a larger shell. The smaller crab is following the larger expecting it to leave its shell. These crabs are kept as pets in the USA.



Caribbean hermit crabs (*Coenobita clypeatus*)
Goldeneye, Jamaica, December 2014
Canon EOS 70D, 70mm, 1/400 sec, F9, ISO 200

answers on page 33

Tip #27

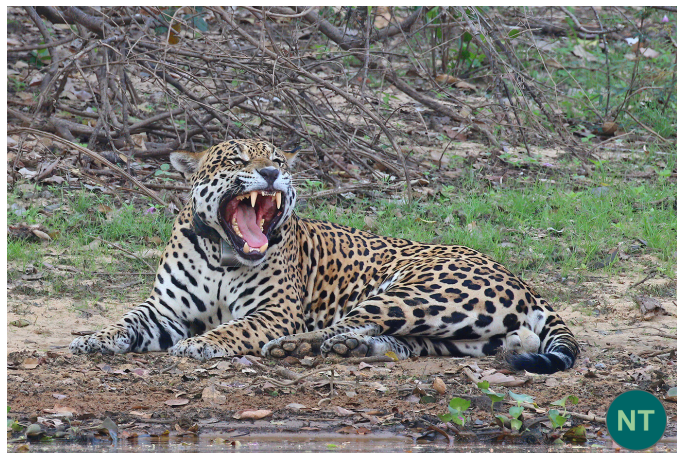
Wait for the yawn

Wouldn't you love to get a picture of a big cat or gorilla roaring? Not easy. The stand-in shot is the yawn. It needs nothing more than patience. Especially patience from everyone in your group. They want to move on. You want to stay. Having found your resting mammal, you take a few test shots and choose your camera settings. You must support the weight of the camera on whatever you have to hand because you may have to remain with your eye clamped to the viewfinder for five minutes or more.

For the lion, our guide positioned the vehicle just where I wanted it so I could use my 24-70mm lens. Luckily the old male stood up and had a good stretch.

For the Jaguar picture, our guide had to work hard to keep our boat stationary in a moving river, while keeping our distance. The jaguars of Brazil are not as common or as habituated as the lions of Botswana.

“ *it needs patience
from everyone in
your group* ”



Jaguar (*Panthera onca palustris*) male, Brazil, September 2015
He is fitted with a tracker device around his neck.
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Lion (*Panthera leo*), male, Chobe National Park, Botswana, March 2018
Canon EOS 80D, 70mm, 1/640 sec, F4, ISO 200

Tip #28 Don't waste the middle of the day

We all know that the light is better in the morning and in the hour before sunset. Animals are active early in the day. Most safari holidays offer an early morning activity and a late afternoon activity. The rest of the day they expect you to sit around the swimming pool. They promote sundowner excursions – when it is too dark to take photos. Birding tours before the sun gets up are just as useless for photographers. A wasted opportunity.

Plan ahead to use the whole day. Avoid a schedule that says 'afternoon at leisure'. Find something to do. Insects are busy all day as are many reptiles. Birds of prey are often hunting. After 10am the light becomes harsher but it is seldom too hot to be out with your camera. Like when you are searching for tree-climbing lions. A lion is not designed to climb like a leopard.

There are only two accessible populations of lions who do, one in Tanzania and one in the Ishasha sector of the Queen Elizabeth National Park in Uganda. There is a population of only 20-35 individuals.



Males from the Ugandan population are known to have mixed with a pride in the Democratic Republic of Congo and vice versa. In Ishasha, the lions climb huge sycamore fig trees. The problem is that, to protect the lions, vehicles are not allowed off the main road. So you cannot get close. Lions are the only social cats and they love to rest as a family group (see next page).



Five female tree-climbing lions (*Panthera leo*) in a sycamore fig (*Ficus sycamorus*)
Ishasha sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda, October 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 312mm, 1/640 sec, F 7.1, ISO 400. Time 10.37am





Photograph JWNB

'We were not all Coronavirus frontline heroes, you know. I just walked with my camera round and round the garden.'



Tree bumblebees (*Bombus hypnorum*) collecting pollen on *ceanothus* and *weigela*, Cumnor Hill, Oxfordshire, May 2020
Canon EOS 80D, 70mm, 1/1600 sec, F 7.1, ISO 800

Tip #29

Curate common species

One of the UK's most common damselflies is the blue-tailed damselfly. It is exactly 200 years since they were first classified as a species by Vander Linden in Belgium. They live all over the UK and fly between April and October. The females come in several morphs, usually classified into five different colour forms. There is one that looks like the male, an androchrome female. With persistence, you should be able to find them all. Immature males have a greenish tinge to their thorax.

Damselflies are not always spooked by a camera staring at them and newly-emerged damselflies won't fly away until their wings have dried off. The newly-emerged are called teneral damselflies. You will find them near water. They are the same size as adults, but have shiny wings and their colours are more muted.

If you spot one with red eyes, then (no surprise here) you've come across a red-eyed or small red-eyed damselfly. They are also common around the UK.

“ *with persistence, you should be able to find them all*



Blue-tailed damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)
Damselfly photos taken in Norfolk, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Warwickshire, 2014-2018



Teneral female form *violacea*



Teneral female form *rufescens*



Immature female form *violacea*, violet sides to the thorax



Immature female form *rufescens*, orange-pink sides to the thorax



Adult female form *infuscans*. Was form *violacea* when immature



Adult female *rufescens-obsolata*. Was form *rufescens* when immature

Tip #30 Follow one insect

When you spot one insect that you want to photograph, you watch it and wait for it to settle. When many fly together, it can be more difficult. Especially if there are several different species. You get distracted. You follow one, then another looks good, so you follow that one. This is not going to work. You have several better hunting techniques. If you are after a dragonfly or damselfly, you can stake out a twig or leaf and wait. They will often return to the same perch, especially dragonflies. Butterflies won't. If it is a low-flying species, then you can be successful by sitting down on the ground and waiting for them to come to you.

Let's assume you're in an open area. I find that a good strategy is to follow one particular butterfly. As it settles, your first task is to check it is a fresh example.

There is no point stalking an old codger with damaged wings. Walk after your chosen target till it settles again. Get in close but don't let your shadow fall on the butterfly. It flies off and you trudge after it. Get to know how it behaves just before it settles. It's a question of who gives up first. You or the butterfly. This technique doesn't work well at home. They cheekily vault over the hedge into the next door garden.



Mating, the female (on the right) is form *typica*

Groan Animals

Hunting in the wheat fields of Rajasthan, they became known as the Cereal killers of Udaipur



Tom wasn't very good at stalking, because he was always spotted



After his dinner, Leo, the next king of the jungle, needed hair conditioning



top
Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*) mother with cubs
Narlai, near Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, December 2019
Canon EOS 80D, 560mm, 1/640 sec, F8, ISO 400

middle
African leopard (*Panthera pardus pardus*) stalking
Khwai River, Okavango Delta, Botswana, November 2013
Canon EOS 450D, 300mm, 1/400 sec, F5.6, ISO 640

bottom
Kalahari lions (*Panthera leo*) female and cub
Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, November 2014
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/250 sec, F5.6, ISO 800

Tip #31

Become a self-drive tracker

My first safari was a self-drive with one of my brothers in the Kruger Park in 1973. Since then, I've been a passenger on most safaris, leaving the local guides and drivers in charge. Etosha National Park in Namibia is an amazing place for a self-drive. You haven't got the elevated seat and all-round view of the safari vehicle, but you get to do your own thing. I'm not sure it would be a good choice for a first safari, but it worked for us. We drove around all day every day, looking for action.

Circling vultures are a give-away and they led us to a zebra carcass. I took a few photos, then drove off. Five minutes later we spotted a jackal. It looked to be walking in a straight line towards the kill which was about a mile away. We did a U-turn and lay in wait. The first photo opportunity was when the jackal crossed a road. We then drove back to the zebra and watched it slowly approach. It didn't take long for the vultures to recognize who was first in line.

Tip #32

Take record shots

We photographers love to showcase our successes. We are less keen on sharing the ones that got away. The blurred, the badly lit, the partly obscured. You will usually keep them to yourself, but always take a 'record shot', whatever the challenges. It may be the only chance you get.

Everyone has heard of the big five, but in South Africa they have invented a 'shy five' – the meerkat, aardvark, porcupine, aardwolf and the bat-eared fox. It is a flawed list now as there are so many habituated meerkat colonies now that shy doesn't apply any more. Although the bat-eared fox is nocturnal in the summer, it is diurnal during the winter and they can be seen lying in the shade during the heat of the day. And no, I've not photographed the aardvark or porcupine yet. Or a pangolin.

Please don't look too closely at these three 'cats and dogs' record shots from South Africa.



Black-backed jackal (*Canis mesomelas*), Etosha National Park, Namibia, March 2018
 Canon EOS 80D, 400mm, 1/1250 sec, F10, ISO 400



White-backed vultures (*Gyps africanus*). Time 13.32



Jackal at Burchell's zebra (*Equus quagga burchellii*) carcass. Time 13.59



Aardwolf (*Proteles cristata*)



Bat-eared fox (*Otocyon megalotis*)



Side-striped jackal (*Canis adustus*)

Tip #34

Include a monument

I've been lucky enough to see all but one of the Modern Seven Wonders of the World and hope to visit *Chichen Itza* (600 AD) in December this year if it is safe for us to travel to Central America. But I've only managed to include wildlife in one image. I don't think the llamas at *Machu Picchu* count as wild.

For the photo of *Christ the Redeemer* on Corcovado, I was standing at the water's edge at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain. I was also able to take a picture of Sugarloaf from Corcovado. The egret had gone.

The Wonder that's missing is the *Colosseum* (80 AD). I am sure I took some photos, but can't find them.



Great Pyramid of Giza (2560 BC) *Travel tip:* walk (crouched) inside the Great Pyramid unless you are unfit or suffer from claustrophobia. Make sure you also visit the stepped *Pyramid of Djoser* at Saqqara (2650 BC)



Great Wall of China (700 BC) *Travel tip:* you might be lucky and visit on a low-pollution day or time of year. We failed. All the other wonders are must-sees except the Great Wall which was a huge disappointment



Petra (312 BC) *Travel tip:* get up early. Walk in through the Siq and catch the light hitting the facade of the Treasury then take a donkey ride up to the Monastery. The donkeys master the 800 steps with ease



Machu Picchu (1450 AD) *Travel tip:* stay overnight at the Sanctuary Lodge then walk up to the Sun Gate before dawn (40 minutes). Meet the knackered hikers who've done the five-hour Short Inca Trail



Taj Mahal (1643 AD) *Travel tip:* start queuing at 5.30am to be first in line, then scamper through the gardens get a people-free picture of you on the Diana bench (no people were Photoshopped from this image)



Great egret (*Ardea alba*) with *Christ the Redeemer*, Corcovado, in the background
taken from Av. João Luiz Alves, Urca, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, March 2012. Canon EOS 300D, 50mm, 1/200 sec, F11, ISO 100



Sugarloaf Mountain and Urca Hill Natural Monument
taken from in front of *Christ the Redeemer*, Corcovado

Tip #35

Take a family group photo

Unlike most birds, most swans mate for life. They are one of the most accessible family groups you can find and you can watch them grow as you take your daily exercise.

Mute swans (*Cygnus olor*) and cygnets, Wolvercote Lakes, Oxford, June 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/800 sec, F10, ISO 500





Meet a Wikipedia contributor

Basile Morin is a French artist and designer born in 1977. He has lived in Laos since 2005. He is also a designer of complex original ambigrams – a word you might not have come across. Ambigrams are words created using symmetrical calligraphy that you can read upside down or in a mirror. **stay here** and **crazy lizard** are two examples.

The proverb has it that ‘curiosity killed the cat’, but no animals were harmed in the making of this picture. It wasn’t a set-up shot, but just the moment when you are grateful you have your camera with you. Basile

thinks the lizard might have been stunned by the cat before he spotted them together, since it is strange that it didn’t try to escape. Perhaps it was dizzy. This cat does kill and eat small reptiles. I know this is a wild-life publication, but I thought an exception should be made for Basile’s special photo.

Not many people are happy to have a spider anywhere near them, so having one on your finger makes you think. It is tiny, but can you forget that it is a jumping spider? The gold ring adds to the composition. The camera was hand-held.

stay
here

CRAZY
LIZARD



Feral domestic cat with an oriental garden lizard (*Calotes versicolor*)
Don Det, Si Phan Don, Laos. Photograph Basile Morin, April 2018
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 100mm, 1/400 sec, F8, ISO 400



Jumping spider (*Plexippus petersi*) on a human finger, Don Det, Si Phan Don, Laos. Photograph Basile Morin, February 2019
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 100mm, 1/500 sec, F11, ISO 1600. Focus stacked from nine images

The golden apple snail originates in South America. It is in the list of the 100 of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species made by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The snail was introduced to Southeast Asia in 1980 as a potential gourmet export item. The market never took off and the snails escaped into the wild.

The grey squirrel, red fox and the wild boar from Issue One; the ruddy duck (page 10 of this issue) and the domestic cat also make the IUCN's Top 100.

You too can upload your images to Wikipedia through Wikimedia Commons. There are already 61 million freely-usable media files, but more wildlife images are needed. Give it a go...

Pink eggs of the golden apple snail (*Pomacea canaliculata*)
on a stem of rice, Don Det, Si Phan Don, Laos
Photograph Basile Morin, September 2019
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 100mm, 1/60 sec, F11, ISO 250
Focus stacked from nine images



Tip #37

Tell a story

Lake Naivasha is a freshwater lake at 1,884 metres above sea level in the Kenyan Rift valley. Although over 120km², the deepest spot is only about 6m. It has a large population of carp and tilapia. In 2015, the catch was over 1,000 tons of fish. The level of the lake fluctuates and this affects the fishing. The catch in 1997 was only 21 tons. There are fears that overfishing will wipe out some species. The blue-spotted tilapia is an introduced species that has already killed off the resident endemic tilapia species. When we visited in 2016, the daily catch was good.

A kingfisher we were watching grabbed a serious catch and took it back to her perch. We paddled a little bit closer. Kingfishers often toss fish into the air to reposition them and then swallow them head first. That works OK for a small fish, but a signature main course requires skilled prep work. The kingfisher has to break the tilapia's spine otherwise she cannot swallow it. It took her three smashes against the post.

Just after the kingfisher excitement, a fish eagle flew past with its catch – a tilapia of course.

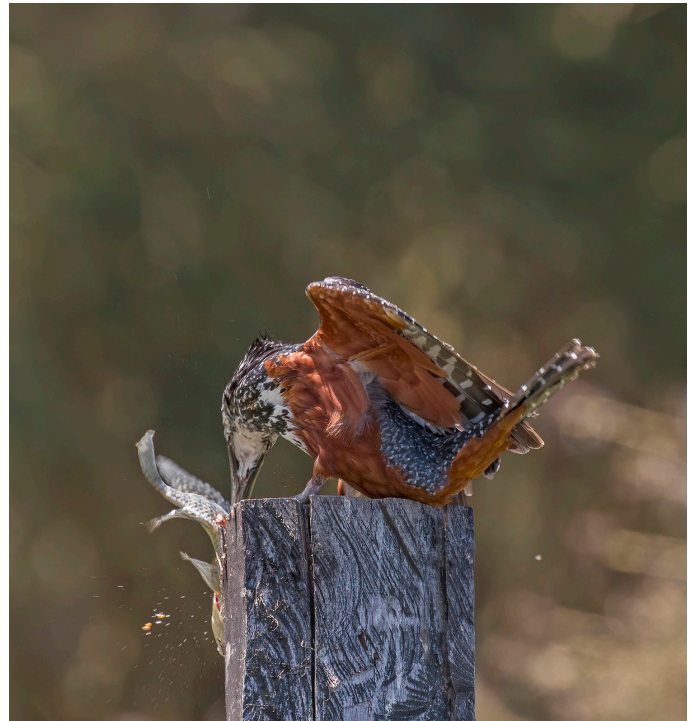


Fishing for tilapia in Lake Naivasha

“ *a signature main course requires skilled prep work* ”



The kingfisher returns to her perch with a speared tilapia



She smashes it against the post to break its spine

Giant kingfisher (*Megaceryle maxima*) male, Lake Naivasha, Kenya, November 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/800 sec, F8, ISO 800



African fish eagle (*Haliaeetus vocifer*) with tilapia, Lake Naivasha, Kenya, November 2016
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/1600 sec, F5.6, ISO 160



Job done, she is ready to toss the fish up and catch it



The fish is repositioned in her beak, with the blood dripping

Tip #38

Look for the odd one out

I love symmetry in wildlife photos, but not for every photo. The eldest sister wasn't interested in us at all.



Giraffe (*Giraffa Camelopardalis giraffa*) females
Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, November 2014
Canon EOS 70D, 120mm, 1/800 sec, F10, ISO 400



Tip #40 Take a private boat

Unless money is tight, it is worth paying for a private guide. You spend a fortune getting there, so why risk it? Everywhere we go, we come across people who stay in high-end resorts, yet do shared excursions with people they don't know. Either your companion is a lousy photographer and gets in your way. Or she's better than you and grabs the shot you just missed. Or they have kids. A shared open-top safari vehicle can be OK, as you are high

enough for everyone to have a view. But I do not recommend that you share a small boat. Someone moves and you move. You can only stand up when it is your boat. You want to approach an animal at the water's edge? Only the guy in the bow gets the shot. Our guide for our hunt for jaguars was the excellent André Moratelli of *Pantanal Jaguar Safaris*. He keeps his own speedboat at Porto Jofre on the Cuiabá River in the State of Mato Grosso in Brazil.



Jaguar (*Panthera onca palustris*) female, Piquiri River, the Pantanal, Brazil, September 2015
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1, ISO 3200

10 True



The ruddy duck was imported by (Sir) Peter Scott from America to add to his collection at Slimbridge. Some birds escaped. They were then reported to have interbred with their Spanish cousins, the white-headed ducks, and all hell broke loose. The UK Government had to start an eradication programme in 2003 with the backing of the RSPB. There are now fewer than twenty birds left in the UK, with the birding community keeping their whereabouts a secret.

10 True



The peacock butterfly only has two white spots on its forewings.

10



These are the same species; two of the many variants of the harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*).

answers

14 True



The mangrove crab is about 150mm in size and has an amazing ability to detect tiny vibrations. We had great fun dropping smaller and smaller leaves on the mud and watching the crabs compete.

14 False



OK, so you were suspicious. This is a photo of two flame-worked glass models by renowned Venetian glass sculptor, Vittorio Costantini. They are in our sandpit with a piece of artificial plant.

We acquired these sculptures at Vittorio's workshop in Venice. They came from his personal collection.

I never have taken a picture I've intended. They're always better or worse.

Diane Arbus (1923-1971)

What is its name?

(answers at the foot of the page)

A fly from England?



- A. The Lobster Fly, because it uses its tail as a defensive weapon
- B. The Concorde Fly, because of the shape of its wings
- C. The Scorpion Fly, because the genitals of the male look like a scorpion's tail

A butterfly from Indonesia?



- A. The Krakatoa. The underside of the wings has the pattern of an erupting volcano
- B. Autumn leaf. The underside looks like a dead leaf
- C. The Golden beauty

Bats from Costa Rica?



- A. Tent-making bats who tie leaves together to make a rain-proof house
- B. Hairy-legged vampire bats who feed on blood
- C. Cricket-bats who mainly feed on linseed oil

ANSWERS C, B, A

A special place...

Tswalu

Kalahari Reserve, South Africa

There are so many places to visit, we seldom go back to the same place, never mind the same lodge. We made one exception and have been twice to the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve. Nicky Oppenheimer, former chairman of De Beers, has owned the reserve since 1998. Tswalu is the largest private game reserve in South Africa and you have to fly in. It is one of the quickest ways we have found to spend the children's inheritance.

Allow me to share an extreme example of customer service. As the manager said goodbye on our last day,

he asked for feedback and what he could improve. An honest answer would have been. 'Nothing, this place is immaculate, the service impeccable, the food yummy and the wildlife outstanding.' I did say that and then, struggling for some helpful comment, added, 'I suppose it would be nice to have a telescope to look at the wildlife in the distance when we're in our room.'

We returned for three nights the following year. We were greeted by the same manager. After a welcome drink, we were shown to our room. There on the veranda was the largest telescope you could wish for.



Rodger and Ben (see page 10 for story)



Afternoon at leisure



“ *immaculate, the service impeccable, the food yummy and the wildlife outstanding* ”



Meerkats (*Suricata suricatta*), Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, November 2014
Canon EOS 70D, 250mm, 1/500sec, F8, ISO 400

A Sharp Eye on
wildlife
photography

Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) female with two cubs (front cover), cub (back cover)
Phinda Private Game Reserve, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, October 2014
Canon EOS 70D, 220mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 800 (front cover)
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1, ISO 400 (back cover)

