

India Wilds®

Newsletter

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Cover Page Photograph:

Jungle Cat
by Sabyasachi Patra

Virus, Wildlife & Introspection:

The world is facing unprecedented challenges. Over Ten thousand people have died in a span of few months across the globe as the COVID 19 virus has spread like wildfire. A study has predicted half a million people to die in UK and a million in USA. Businesses have been shut down. Entire country and various provinces around the world have been locked down or under curfew. Flights, train and road travel has been stopped. This is unprecedented in the modern times. While it is for the scientists to find a vaccine for the virus and the various Governments to find a way to fight the disease, it is also time for mankind to introspect.

Why EGO?

We the human race attribute a lot of importance to conquer nature and hence are often in a race to be the first to set foot on a mountain top, in unexplored regions, on the deepest trench in ocean and even in outer space. Our ego often drives us in this mad race. We fail to appreciate that before us, there are other species which are already there in many of those places on earth. And often we ignore the fact that tribals and other indigenous people are often the ones who have set foot in many so called unconquered places. Initially it was from the eyes of the “white man” and hence the race to be the first to set foot in a place. So Christopher Columbus is known as the person who discovered America, even though there were many native tribes who have been living there since time immemorial.

Decimation of forests:

We humans have developed a false ego that we are the masters of the Universe. We decide the fate of other species based on our own narrow perspectives. We view other species as being



Forest decimation



there only to satisfy our wants and needs. So a more than 100 year old tree can easily be cut off so that we get some timber for making our furniture. We don't realise the ecological functions of the tree and for that matter other species. We don't realise that each tree is a mini-ecosystem in itself and lives of many species depend on such old trees. There is a complex web of interdependencies among various species. Modern science is yet to unravel the various mysteries of these dependencies. Nevertheless, without understanding what we are going to lose, we still go ahead and kill a species or clear an entire landscape to make way for our industries, mines, dams, canals, cities etc.

As we move into unexplored territories and start decimating pristine forests and other ecosystems, the delicate balance between the various species is lost. Whereas the large species like deers, leopards, tigers, elephants are killed and locally exterminated, we often don't focus on the smaller species. And beyond the small sized animals, birds and herpetofauna are the various microscopic organisms that live in these animals and birds and often go undetected. Some of these microorganisms and viruses too fight a battle for survival. They jump from one species to other and adapt themselves to the new species. So as we are changing the face of the earth by clearing up wild landscapes, some viruses jump into humans and adapt themselves.

Humans as hosts of deadly virus:

Some people believe that the current novel corona virus Covid-19 is an act of bioterrorism and escaped from a lab in Wuhan, China and some others believe that the virus came from wild animals slaughtered and consumed in the market in Wuhan. We will perhaps never be able to know the actual origin of the novel corona virus given the blame game going on between China and the USA. Nevertheless, Ebola is believed to have come when a few people killed a gorilla and consumed bush meat. Various kinds of bird flu, Mad cow disease, Nipah etc are other examples of transmission to humans. While we are quick to blame china about the trade in wildlife parts for food, there are many places in India where wildlife trafficking is still taking place. Turtles, pangolin, monitor lizard are openly sold in many markets in North east and clandestinely in many states. Meat of wildlife caught in snares continues to be sold in various places. Many years ago, I was told that persons from a zoo sell deer meat. On questioning I was told that spotted deers are prolific breeders and hence slaughtering a few goes unnoticed. Similarly there is trade in owls due to superstition. Migratory birds are often poisoned by pesticides and sold to restaurants. Unless, India completely clamps down on the wildlife trade, there are always chances of transmission of pathogens from the wild.

We are a species, which is numerous, and we often live in conditions where it is easier for viruses to proliferate. Perhaps human beings need to watch wildlife to understand the special care they take to clean their feathers, fur and their body. They also take special care to clean

their food before consuming it.

Certain viruses can remain dormant in a particular species. And when they transmit to humans, they mutate and take a deadly avatar. Our scientists don't understand why a particular virus moves from an animal host to humans, modify itself and then causes havoc with our health. There was a time when wildlife were numerous and had good genetic diversity. Today with reduced numbers of various wildlife species, reduction in the species richness in our forests, the overall health of our ecosystem is not great. Modern science is yet to unravel the linkages. However, all we know that all is not well and this imbalance in our various ecosystems in Planet Earth is solely due to our deleterious impact.

Reduced wildlife roadkills:

Due to lack of understanding and appreciation of our wilderness areas by our authorities, many roads are built cutting open forests. This results in lot of roadkills. The covid 19 virus induced indoor stay is going to reduce the number of vehicles plying on the roads so our wilderness areas will feel the change. Smaller herpetofauna, hares, mongoose etc who routinely get smashed under speeding vehicles will get a respite. A month or two is a big time in the life cycle of smaller species. If the Government mandates no entry into our forests for the next few months including the rainy season, then many tiny species will multiply in number and provide more food for larger species. Every frog smashed is one lunch less for a snake and other birds. And for every snake that gets killed in the road there is one less lunch for an eagle or mongoose. For every rodent or hare that becomes a road kill there is one snack or lunch less for a leopard. And if there is a deer road kill then it means a weeks food lost for a leopard. The health of our wilderness areas can become better if we can continue to avoid our wilderness areas for some time.



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Species reconnecting in fragmented habitat:

Roads passing through our forests not only result in killing our wildlife but more importantly act as a boundary for many species. Their habitat gets divided. Hence it impacts the genetic diversity of various species. Due to stopping of traffic or very less traffic, it is expected that once again various species will start crossing the road and mate with the ones on the other side of the road. Hence this will result in improved health of the gene pool of many species.

Tourist overcrowding in forests:

With the advent of digital cameras and social media, many people travel to different places and share the selfies in their social media handles. This trend has been changing the places forever, often for the worse. Many of the pristine wilderness places are too fragile and don't have carrying capacity. However, neither the Ministry, nor the forest department are ready to listen to the fact that some of our premier places are way too crowded. The forest department officials point to the fact that the ministry had some years ago come out with Ecotourism guidelines. Unfortunately the guidelines was drafted in a very ham-handed manner. (<https://www.indiawilds.com/diary/indiawilds-newsletter-vol-3-issue-vi/>). It is said that the work was completely offloaded to some interns. Nevertheless, the guidelines talk about vehicles maintaining distance between themselves and moving in a procession. The dictat to maintain minimum distance between vehicles was to reduce overcrowding in an area where tiger is sighted. Unfortunately, this doesn't solve the core issue of too many vehicles entering into the forest.

The priority of the forest department is to earn revenue. Hence they allow way too many vehicles. When a lot of vehicles enter into a forest, all a tourist sees is vehicles in front and behind and feels as if he/she is in a city road. The idea of going into forest is relaxation and rejuvenation. If a tourist can't soak in the feeling of wilderness, then it becomes like being in a zoo. In such conditions can a tourist develop love for nature? If one doesn't love something will he/she will want to save it? Without love and appreciation for a species and for a wilderness place as a whole, people won't be motivated to save it.

After Covid 19 clampdown is over and when the tourism starts to our forests, hopefully the authorities see the light and undertake abundant caution to stop the possibility of any disease transmission. So the authorities should reduce the number of vehicles as well as tourists entering into the forests. By reducing the tourist numbers, people are afforded more personal space and also the risk of transmission of any disease is reduced.

Pollution & Greenhouse Gases:

With the virus induced clampdown and people forced to stay indoors, people as well as businesses are scrambling to redraw their strategies and ways of working. When people are forced to work from their homes for such a long period, many companies will be forced to change their ways of working. Man is creature of habit. When people are forced to work from home for months, companies will now see this as a way to reduce their costs. Companies will reduce their office space and will start encouraging more and more people to work from home so that costly office rentals, electricity, water, food and other administrative costs are reduced. Corporates will decide what is absolutely essential and what is not.

In the last two decades our big cities have grown bigger and bigger as more people have flocked to the big cities for jobs.

With companies focusing attention on work from home, people no longer need to be in the same locality or even in the same township. This has the potential to see a reverse migration from costly big cities. If our Government and companies put their minds together then the big cities can be decongested. Already big cities like Bangalore with population density of 4381 people per square kilometre is facing water issues. If big cities can be decongested then the infrastructure problems like brining water from long distance from big dams can be averted. The traffic problem can be reduced so that there is less of vehicle exhausts polluting the air and less greenhouse gases.



We as a species, have multiplied rapidly and have now crossed the 7 billion mark. By 2050 we are supposed to cross the 9 billion mark. The earth has a carrying capacity of 5 billion. Due to our rapid population explosion, other species are being decimated. If we are able to understand the feelings of other species then we may hear that other animals and birds may be calling us virus. And if we dig deeper than may be we hear some name calling like Black, White, Yellow and Brown virus based on our ethnicities.

If we introspect during our covid -19 induced indoor stay and change our ways then certainly the world can be a better place.

Conservation News -

Elephant deaths by train accidents showing a declining trend:

Every year many elephants are mowed down by trains in different parts of the country. In an order dated 2.9.2014 in Writ Petition W.P. (C) No. 107 of 2013 Shakti Prasad Nayak Vs. Union of India & Ors. the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India had issued the following directions:

1. Necessary steps should be taken by the Railways all over the country to reduce the speed limit of running trains that are passing through dense forests. In case a speed limit is not followed/ appropriate action should be taken against the erring drivers and officials concerned.
2. Railways to take steps to discontinue the movement of goods trains at night between Siliguri and Alipurduar.
3. Divert fast moving and night trains through Siliguri -Falakata route.

However, the killing of elephants hasn't stopped. Recently the railways is taking belated attempts at sensitizing the train drivers to reduce speeds. On 6th March, the Minister of State for MoEF Shri Babul Supriyo said that railways has taken the following nine steps in coordination with MoEF.

1. Imposition of permanent and temporary speed restrictions in identified elephant corridors.
2. Provision of signage board to warn loco pilots about identified elephant corridors.
3. Sensitization of train crew and Station Masters on a regular basis.
4. Need based clearance of vegetation on the sides of track within railway land.
5. Construction of underpasses and ramps for movement of elephants at identified locations. Work is in progress at one more location in East Central Railway.
6. Installation of Honey Bee sound system to scare away the elephants from coming near the track.
7. Provision of fencing at isolated locations both by Railway and Forest Department.
8. Deputing Forest Department staff in Railway control offices to liaison with Railway and engagement of elephant track-



ers by Forest Department for timely action by alerting Station Masters and Loco Pilots.

9. Frequent co-ordination meetings between State Forest Department and Railway department.

Conservation News -

As per the information received from States, the number of elephants killed in train accident has been showing a declining trend. The State-wise and year-wise details of elephant deaths due to train hits is as follows:

S.No.	State	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
1	Assam	10	10	2
2	West Bengal	3	2	6
3	Tamil Nadu	2	0	0
4	Jharkhand	2	0	0
5	Kerala	2	0	1
6	Odisha	0	2	7
7	Tripura	0	0	NR
8	Uttarakhand	2	5	1
9	Uttar Pradesh	0	0	0
10	Karnataka	0	1	2
	Total	21	20	19

In 22 years East Antarctica glacier retreated more than 5kms

Animal culture, the learning of non-human species through socially transmitted behaviours, is being linked to conservation action for the first time.

In 22 years from 1996 to 2017-2018 the Denman Glacier in East Antarctica has retreated by more than 5 kilometers.

The Denman Glacier in East Antarctica is protected by a subglacial ridge on its eastern flank. On the western flank, the glacier is retreating along a previously unknown 5 km wide and 1,800 m deep trough, which goes down to 3.4 km below sea level. This steep slope makes the glacier conducive to rapid retreat. Scientists have done a reconstruction of the topography of the glacier bed and found that the glacier has retreated on the western flank. Scientists estimate that the Denman Glacier has retreated any where between 5.1km to 5.7 kms.

The study titled “Grounding line retreat of Denman Glacier, East Antarctica, measured with COSMO-SkyMed radar interferometry data” has been published in Geophysical Research Letters. (Brancato V. Et al., March 2020, Geophysical Research Letters, doi: 10.1029/2019GL086291). Scientists measured the retreat of Denman Glacier using satellite radar interferometry from the COSMO-SkyMed constellation.

During the period 1979 and 2017 Denman Glacier has experienced a cumulative mass loss of between 249 Gt to 287 Gt. This means the ice loss from Denman Glacier is 7.0 ± 0.5 Gt/year.

Conservation News -

Denman Glacier has a 24,000 km floating extension, which includes Shackleton Ice Shelf and Denman Ice Tongue (DIT). This floating extension has been melting at an area-average rate of 3.1 ± 0.7 m/year, which is above average among other ice shelves in East Antarctica.



Denman Glacier

Image courtesy - NASA

Scientists feel that the retrograde glacier bed along with the likely presence of warm water will accentuate the glacier melting. If warm water continues to cause high rates of melting of ice from the Denman Glacier, then the change may be irreversible. The Denman Glacier is so huge that if it fully melts then the global sea level can rise by 1.5 meters or 5 feet high. This is much more alarming news than previous sealevel rise estimates of 2 meters by 2100.

We hope that the various Governments notice this alarming study and undertake actions to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. Else, the sealevel rise by 5 feet will inundate much of coastal areas and human habitations. In India some of our metro cities like Mumbai and Chennai will be at risk of flooding. Along the coastline of India, various fishing and other marginal communities live. Their habitations will get drowned when Denman Glacier or similar glaciers melt. We will then have another set of climate refugees. This has potential to cause social strife and massive upheavals in our society. Hope the Heads of States around the world notice and take action.

Equipment Discussions -

Leica launches 64MP S3 Medium format camera:

Leica has finally released their S3 medium format DSLR camera. The Leica S3 was announced in 2018. This camera is meant for the demanding professionals who want the convenience of a DSLR and command an impressive clientele to afford the iconic brand.



Salient Features:

The Leica S3 has the following features.

Resolution: 64 MP

Sensor size: 30mm x 45mm (56% larger than 35mm full frame)

Dynamic range: 15 stops

ISO: 100 - 50,000

Still burst speed: 3fps

Video: DCI 4K and Full HD video at 4:2:2 colour space using full sensor width to get the medium format look.

Video assist features: focus peaking, brightness and exposure data, a clipping warning, grids and a histogram superimposed onto the image.

Equipment Discussions -

Availability: March 6, 2020

Price: \$18995 US Dollars

B&H Link:

https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/buy/Leica_S3_Medium_Format_DSLR_Camera_Body_Only_B_Hwww_bhphotovideo_com_u203A_u203A_Medium_Format_Cameras/Ntt/Leica%2BS3%2BMedium%2BFormat%2BDSLR%2BCamera%2B%2528Body%2BOnly%2B...%2B-%2BB%2526Hwww.bhphotovideo.com%2B%2525u203A%2B...%2B%2525u203A%2BMedium%2BFormat%2BCameras/N/0/kw/search/BI/19990/KBID/13252/DFF/d10-v1-t12



PRESS RELEASE

LEICA S3: LEICA CAMERA DELIVERS THE LATEST MODEL OF THE LEICA S MEDIUM FORMAT SYSTEM TO RETAILERS

Today Leica Camera delivers the latest model of its medium format system to retailers worldwide – having previously announced the development of the Leica S3 at photokina 2018. The outstanding excellence of the Leica S and its lenses is rooted in a well thought-out system in which every component represents an integral element of the recording process. With the market release of the Leica S3 on March 6, 2020, Leica Camera once again lives up to the ambitious quality standards the company's customers have come to expect.

In addition to the most obvious improvement – an increase in resolution from 37.5 to 64 megapixels – the medium format camera features a number of technological advances. Just like its predecessors, the Leica S3 also utilises the Leica ProFor-

Equipment Discussions -

mat developed especially for the Leica S-System. With dimensions of 30 x 45 millimetres, it corresponds to the classic 3:2 aspect ratio of the 35 mm full-frame format, but offers a 56 percent larger sensor area. In comparison with its predecessor, the new 64 megapixel sensor developed exclusively for Leica offers a 71 percent increase in resolution, a dynamic range of 15 f-stops and a maximum ISO sensitivity setting of 50000 – thereby providing sufficient reserves to be ready to handle any imaginable lighting situation and fully exploit the strengths of the medium format. Subjects can be composed in the large and bright SLR viewfinder, focused sharply with the fast and reliable autofocus and captured at a continuous shooting rate of three frames per second. In addition to all other essential exposure settings, an electronic levelling aid (horizon) can also be displayed in the viewfinder. Whenever required, the LCD screen displays a Live-View image with a refresh rate of up to 60 fps is available in both still picture and video recording mode that also allows focus peaking, brightness and exposure data, a clipping warning, grids and a histogram to be superimposed onto the image.

The entire area of the sensor can be used not only for videos in full-HD, but, for the first time, also for 4K cinema resolution – including the characteristic medium format look. When capturing video footage, 48 kHz, 16-bit stereo sound with automatic or manual level adjustment can be recorded with either the integrated or an external microphone.

The Leica Maestro II processor and a 2 GB buffer memory ensure a smooth workflow that is essential for handling the enormous amounts of data generated by the sensor. Shooting in tethered mode is also possible with the Leica Image Shuttle app, whereby all essential exposure settings can be made with the help of the app and the images captured in DNG and JPG format can be transferred directly to a computer via a USB 3.0 interface. Using the Lightroom Tethered Plugin allows the Leica S3 to be connected directly to the image processing package without any need for additional software.

In addition to a GPS function, which determines the precise geographical location and the exact time with the aid of satellites and saves them to the EXIF data, the Leica S3 also has a WLAN module with which the camera can be remotely controlled in conjunction with the Leica FOTOS 2.0 app.

As with other members of the Leica S-System, the Leica S3 is constructed using superior-quality and extremely resilient materials: examples include the magnesium body, the Corning® Gorilla® Glass cover plate of the 3-inch monitor screen as well as the lens bayonet, which is made from particularly solid stainless steel. Furthermore, the numerous seals that protect the camera against the ingress of moisture, dust and other foreign bodies contribute to the reliability and long service life of the camera when shooting on location. The familiar and proven intuitive handling concept of Leica S (Typ 007) has been carried forward to the Leica S3: the central control elements are two setting dials and a five-way joystick, which control the shutter speed and aperture and enable quick and easy menu navigation. The rear screen is surrounded by four buttons which can be configured in accordance to the photographer's preferences and needs. And lastly, the main switch can be used to choose between the camera's focal plane shutter or a central shutter – provided this is a feature offered by the lens mounted on the camera.

With a special construction concept that ensures protection against dust and spray, the S-Lenses are an integral element of the Leica S-System. As is the case with other Leica lenses, S-Lenses are designed to offer sufficient performance reserves to

Equipment Discussions -

meet the demands of future generations of imaging technology and retain their value as a long-term investment that can fully exploit the potential of future camera generations. The optical performance delivered by these lenses is still by no means exhausted by sensors with a resolution of 64 megapixels. A further highlight of the S-System is the central shutter available as an alternative option for six lenses of the S-System portfolio. In contrast to a focal plane shutter with a maximum sync speed of 1/125 s, a central shutter allows flash synchronization even at its fastest shutter speed of 1/1000 s. This opens up considerably greater exposure leeway for creative photography, particularly when working with professional studio flash systems or shooting in bright ambient light. In such situations, the larger image circle of Leica S-Lenses as a consequence of the sensor dimensions not only creates the characteristic medium format look, but also significantly shallower depth of focus.

The Leica S3 will be delivered to retailers worldwide on **March 6, 2020**.

Equipment Discussions -

Sony Electronics Corporation to be established:

Sony Corporation has announced that starting from 1st April, 2020, it is going to hive off its Electronics Products and Solutions (EPS) segments comprising the Imaging products and solutions business, Home Entertainment & Sound and Mobile communications into an intermediate holding company called Sony Electronics Corporation. Cameras, lenses etc i.e. photography and film cameras business come under the imaging products business. So in layman's terms Cameras, TV, mobiles i.e. all electronic products and services will go into one business. Manufacturing, sales, marketing, procurement, logistics etc. i.e all related functions of these products will also go into the Sony Electronics Corporation. So the mobile, video/audio and imaging businesses will now be separate from the music and the film studio business.



This is an attempt to unlock value of the business. Historically many companies have created separate holding companies before selling off a portion/ getting specific investors or to seek collaboration etc.

Daniel Loeb, an American investor with a huge stake in Sony has been putting pressure on Sony to hive off the businesses. In 2019, June he had asked Sony to separate its image sensor business. There has been speculation that Daniel Loeb has increased his stake recently in Sony taking advantage of the drop in share price in the backdrop of Covid 19 led share market fall.

At times conglomerates become too big with too many different businesses and they don't move fast. Hiving off into separate companies can lead to more nimble footedness. Sony imaging business, after taking over Konica-Minolta and innovating in the last few years, have become a top player. Earlier it was Canon and Nikon in the DSLR arena. Now Nikon has faded. There is tough competition between Canon and Sony in the DSLR and mirrorless space. Sony had bet big on mirrorless and is now infact leading in the mirrorless cameras. From recent announcements (like Canon R5 mirrorless camera with 8K video and Canon 1DXIII DSLR with higher specs than mirrorless cameras) it appears that Canon is hitting back with some high tech products to take back the leadership in mirrorless cameras from Sony.

It is to be seen which direction Sony Electronics Corporation takes from 1st April onwards.

Equipment Discussions -

Canon Announces future firmware update for EOS 1DXMark III

Canon has announced that they are planning a firmware update for the recently released Canon EOS 1DX-Mark III DSLR camera. In early-April 2020, the new firmware update would be released.

The following is the advisory from Canon:

Future Firmware: EOS-1D X Mark III

Thank you for using Canon products.

We have confirmed that the following phenomenon may occur during use of the EOS-1D X Mark III digital SLR camera. A new firmware release is planned for early April; once the new firmware is ready, we will make an announcement on our website.

We would like to offer our sincere apologies to users of these products who may have been inconvenienced by this issue

Phenomenon

When the camera is used with the electronic level set to “Show” in the viewfinder display, in rare cases, the camera may not perform normally when operating the AF-ON button or shutter button.

Affected Product

EOS-1D X Mark III (Firmware version 1.0.0)

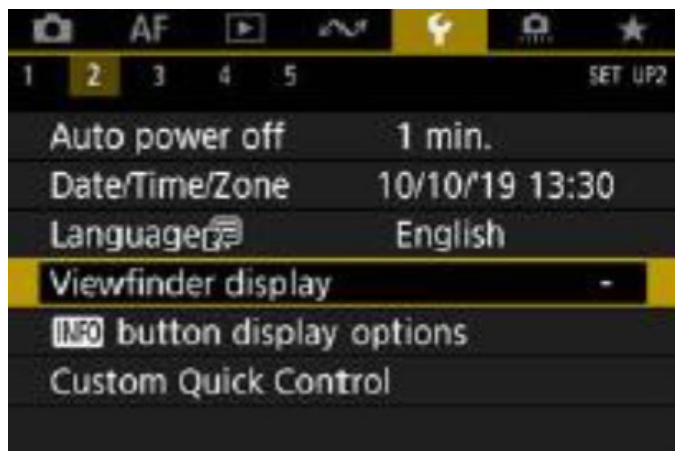
Workaround

Use the “Hide” setting for the “Electronic level” in the “Viewfinder display”.

Setting procedure:

Menu / Set-up 2 tab / Viewfinder display / Electronic level* [Hide]

*Default setting: [Hide]



Natural History -

COUNTRY NOTEBOOK: The Giant Squirrel: M.Krishnan:- 3 June 1973

The Sunday Statesman (shared by Shri. Saktipada Panigrahi)

THE OUTLAW

(DHOLE)

"EVERYONE knows the Wolf of the fable which, seeking justification for killing it, blamed the kid drinking downstream with fouling the water.

Somewhat similarly, men who have invaded their immemorial homes and brought the jungle and scrub under the plough kill the wild animals, from the field-rat to the elephant, on the grounds that they are crop-raiders - the larger herbivores and the carnivores of course, constitute a menace to humanity or might do so, and so must be shot down. It is ironic that with these justifications for killing wild animals sustained over many generations in our country the only creature on whose head a general government reward was set was a beast that never has caused man's crop any damage, or caused him harm in any other way.



Actually the reward was paid not on the production of the head but of the brush of the Dhole popularly miscalled "Wild Dog" though it is much more distantly related to the domestic dog than the Wolf and the Jackal. Stray cases of Dhole killing domestic calves have been reported, but from diligent inquiry of herdsmen in places like Moyar border in the Western Ghats, Periyar in Kerala, west Chanda in Maharashtra and Mandla in Kanha, where both Dhole and cattle are common, I

am satisfied that the killing of domestic stock by these predators is so rare that it can safely be ignored as factor provoking reprisals. Being through going carnivores, Dhole do not raid crops, and they have never been known to attack men. Why, then, were they singled out for being proscribed as vermin and a general reward being offered for their destruction?

The reason is plain to see, though it has not been specified by anyone so far. In the days of Sahiblog, Shikar was the one great solace and pastime of white men bearing their tropical burden in India, and quite a few Indians were (and still are) dedicated to the pastime. To shoot deer, buck and other "game animals" was (and is) the consuming passion of these noble sportsmen, especially those of them employed in the Indian Army and political services, and when they reach their favourite hunting grounds after week of strenuous preparations and eager anticipation, they sometime found the game sparse and fugitive because hunting Dhole had been in the field ahead of them. Later in this note, I shall return to the point, but the general belief is that when dhole enter a forest, the herbivores quit the area in a body. Now this was insufferable, an unlicensed rival hunting game in the hunts of these sportsmen and, worse still, doing it more efficiently. So the Dhole was proscribed.

Everywhere, in every period, men have sought pious, or at least plausible, justification for their capital decrees, and the reason given for outlawing the Dhole was that these pestilent predators would, unless kept sternly in check, kill off the beautiful deer and the other beautiful game-animals. Further, the mode of hunting practiced by Dhole was condemned, anthropomorphically as cruel and inhuman, and this provided an added excuse for their slaughter.

There is no need to argue the point tediously. Two self-evident and conclusive facts will suffice to prove my point. First, for thousands of years before sportsmen came forward to save the game (their game) from the hated predator, deer and other herbivores and Dhole have co-existed in India without any dwindling of the population of the former. Second, only men, and no other predators, have been responsible (intentionally or otherwise) for the rapid, large-scale decline of the wild flora and fauna, both here and abroad.

True that Dhole do tear down their quarry and consume it piecemeal as they chase it, but they cannot hunt animals much larger than themselves any other way. A big Dhole weighs some 18 kg. and Chital, Pig and Sambar (their main prey) weigh from three to twelve times as much. On two occasions have closely watched Dhole killing, an adult Chital stag once and an adult Sambar hind the other time and in both instances the victim died in a few seconds, though its true that its death was brought about by many tearing mouths.

Tribal hunters who use nooses and hooks hidden in baits to kill deer and antelopes, inflict much greater and longer agony on their victims, and we are certainly right in prohibiting such cruel forms of hunting by our brethren, but it is not for us to try, anthropomorphically, to be wiser and more merciful than nature, and to take sided and interfere with the balance of nature. But for Dhole, Chital and Pig would have over-run the land in many tracts, and brought about the end of herbivores

by exhausting the fodder, for example in the Masinagudi area of the Mudumalai sanctuary.

I have seen deer grazing un-concernedly while a party of Dhole trotted past -- more to the point, this indifference of the prey to the dreaded predator on occasion has been recorded by some of the old time shikaris, by the very men who built up the governmental prejudice against the Dhole. Of course it is true that much oftener the prey do panic and scatter when hunting Dhole arrive on the scene, but their fight is only temporary and only to areas immediately around where, probably, there is better cover. when not breeding, Dhole are much given to wandering over considerable territory in packs and frequently shift their hunting grounds, and if everywhere their prey abandoned their homes and escaped from them, the Dhole would have died of starvation long ago and the prey have no homes left. Moreover, having exquisite noses and hunting their quarry mainly by ground-scent, tiring it out over a long chase by virtue of their superior stamina and not by superior speed, Dhole should have no difficulty in escaping prey, and flight per se does not insure a better chance of survival to the prey. Finally, all close observers must have noticed that while the presence does panic and scatter the prey, they do not leave the area en masse.

Even today, even in sanctuaries where all the animals are supposed to be protected, men kill or try to kill Dhole on sight I have seen sanctuary officials going after Dhole with a loaded rifle in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Mysore. The cause of conservation is not helped, but only handicapped, by such partisan and traditionally implanted prejudices# in those who have the running of our sanctuaries."

- M. Krishnan

This was published on 8 April 1973.

Wildlife Photography -

Jungle Cat in Sundarbans by Saktipada Panigrahi



Tigress by Sucheth Lingachar

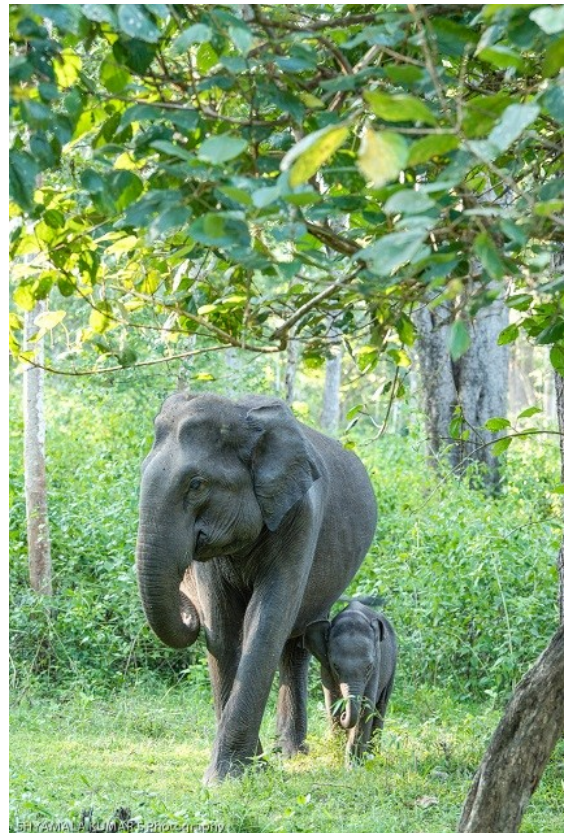


Wildlife Photography -

Red Giant Flying Squirrel by Samrat Sarkar



Elephant Mother and Calf by Shyamala Kumar



Wildlife Photography - **Spotted Deers by V S Sankar**



Desert Fox Pups in LRK by Vipin Sharma



Wildlife Photography -

Little Stint in Chilika by Mrudul Godbole



Black-headed ibis fighting over snake in Chilika by Sabyasachi Patra



Wildlife Photography -

Smew (*Mergellus albellus*) by Sandipan Ghosh



The Zebra Cricket by Prajwal Ullal





This is the **135th issue** of IndiaWilds. The photo of a jungle cat adorns this issue. These jungle cats are now threatened due to habitat loss and many of them meet a sad end when they are runover by vehicles. These lesser carnivores along with many species of herpetofauna regularly get hit by speeding vehicles while they are crossing the road. These days the speeds of the vehicles have increased due to better roads and wild animals are finding it difficult to dodge the vehicles. The authorities are not able to appreciate

this and continue to allow roads cutting the heart of pristine wilderness areas. Since these days the speed of vehicles is much higher, a longer road circumventing a forest would be much better. However, we always look for a straight road directly passing through a forest. We are always quick to protest when a flyover is constructed near our house. However, we don't care that our actions are destroying the homes of other species. Apart from wild animals becoming road kills when we build roads through the heart of a forest, the roads also fragment wildlife into different groups and the genetic diversity suffers. The instances of poaching also increases as people are able to shoot wild animals from their vehicles. Some people feed wild animals and this results in transfer of pathogens. We also drop wafers and other disposable items and litter the forest. Wild animals often lick the wafers packet for salt content. While doing so they can get killed by speeding vehicles.

We are decimating other species due to our callousness. At this moment we are afraid of novel corona virus and are staying indoors. Hope the threat to our life and the prolonged indoor stay will help us appreciate the value of life in general and start mending our ways. If so, then we can say that every cloud has a silver lining.

I look forward to your inputs and support in preserving the last tracts of wilderness and wildlife of our beautiful country. For other interesting articles and images check - <http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/>

To post in the IndiaWilds forums, you can register free of cost using your Full Name as user id at -

<http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/register.php>

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Regards,

Sabyasachi Patra

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