



IndiaWilds Newsletter

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Right to Clean Air:

When I was planning to go to Beijing, I was advised by many people to be careful about pollution. I had read many reports published in the newspapers over the years and knew that the quality of air in Beijing is atrocious. Nevertheless, not going to Beijing on the pretext of pollution was a sure-fire way to get fired from the job. Today, reading a news report in New York Times stunned me, as it says that the quality of air in Delhi is far worse than that in Beijing.



Pollution

Image courtesy- getty images

We all know about the pollution levels in Delhi. There are times when the Delhi sky is filled with smog due to the farmers in Punjab burning the wheat stalks and the pollution levels skyrocket. Over the years, the Chief Minister of Delhi had little success in persuading the Punjab Government to control the menace. Perhaps the new activist Chief Minister of Delhi Shri Kejriwal will go and do a dharna in Punjab. However, it is not season to burn wheat stalk in the fields of Punjab, and still the average pollution levels recorded in the first three weeks in Delhi is twice the average level in Beijing. The daily peak level of harmful particulate matter PM 2.5 for Delhi in the first three weeks was 473 as compared to average of 227 of Beijing.



Delhi residents know that even when the doors and windows are closed, fine dust fills the rooms. It becomes virtually impossible to drive in the roads without rolling up the windows and using AC (and heater in winter). In Delhi, all the independent houses are demolished by builders to construct 4 storied buildings. Since this is a way of unlocking the value of your land, whereby the landowner and the builder both benefit, one can see construction of houses in every lane in Delhi throughout the year. With the prevailing manner of construction, dust and sound has become a constant companion of Delhites.

In summer, Delhi gets enveloped by a blanket of dust and again makes breathing difficult. A 2003 study published in current science reports high concentrations of heavy metals like Cu (copper) in the particulate matter (aerosols) in Delhi (*Yadav et al, Current Science, Vol 84, No. 3, Feb 2003*). In Delhi, the impact of dust storm is enhanced due to the low moisture content in the air in summer, leading to a higher resuspension of road dust (*Guttikunda, Sarath et al, Health impacts of particulate pollution in a megacity—Delhi, India, Environmental Development, 2012*). There appears to be no thought by the authorities to create systemic solutions to lessen the impact of the dust storms. The gradual deforestation and rapid urbanisation is resulting in no natural green barriers. The Delhi ridge forest is virtually destroyed. In the neighbouring Haryana, illegal mining has taken its toll. The rapid urbanisation has resulted in lack of green spaces.

Car ownership is a perceived sign of status symbol and people love to flaunt it. With the disastrous state of public transport, it is often a safer mode. No wonder, each person driving a car alone contributes to the pollution levels and every year more and more cars are added to the pool.



Pollution

Image courtesy– indiatoday

Auto rickshaw drivers have become a law unto themselves. Since banks won't extend loans to them, the auto rickshaw drivers have to go to agents for loans as well as to get the permits. After being fleeced by this system, the auto-rickshaw drivers justify it to themselves that they have the right to

fleece the passengers. With the recent Government formation of the Aam Aadmi Party riding on a wave of support from the auto-rickshaw drivers and other economically weaker sections of the society, the Government neither appears to tackle the menace of the auto-drivers nor wants to tackle the root cause. The bitter commuters are compelled to buy cars on EMI.

The Delhi Metro which is tom-tommed as a success story has not become the panacea of Delhi's traffic problems. It is estimated that the Delhi Metro perhaps moved about 5% of the cars off road. These days, I personally prefer to take the metro to the railway station as the distance of about 16kms takes one and half hours by car but only 30mins by metro. However, the daily commuters driving from other parts of NCR area to Delhi say that driving down to work is better for them because they often need to take couple of connecting trains and also the amount of money charged for parking by Metro is high. So a lot of people prefer to drive their own cars.

In the winter the people living in the streets burn whatever they can lay their hands on to beat the heat thereby further increasing the pollution levels.

Several years back on the directions of the Hon'ble SC, the Delhi Government acted to adopt CNG as a clean fuel for transportation. However moving to CNG as a fuel for our public buses and autos was a good move but is simply not enough. We need to take serious steps to reduce the overall pollution levels originating from industries, transportation sector, farm sector as well as from construction activities.

Impact on People:

Unfortunately, the people of Delhi are not aware of the severity of the danger they are facing everyday. The long term health concerns like lung cancer, asthma, bronchitis, heart problems are going to be compounded. Due to the lack of health care system, many people are going to die as well as suffer causing a social challenge. A 2010 report by the Health Ministry says that 1.3 crore people above 15 years of age suffer from asthma and 1.1 crore people above the age of 35 years suffer from chronic bronchitis. The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) project estimated that 627,000 people lost their lives in India due to air pollution. The economy will also suffer due to the impact of absenteeism, drop in productivity of the work force.

Impact of Air pollution on ecosystem:

The Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) released from the motor vehicles react with the atmospheric moisture to form nitric acid. This leads to the acid rain and has a deleterious impact on the ecosystem. It contributes to eutrophication of water bodies (<http://www.indiawilds.com/diary/the-death-of-a-waterbody-2/>) whereby the amount of nutrients increases and the available oxygen in the water decreases. This has a detrimental impact on the aquatic life.



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Pollution due to immersion of idols

Right to Clean Air:

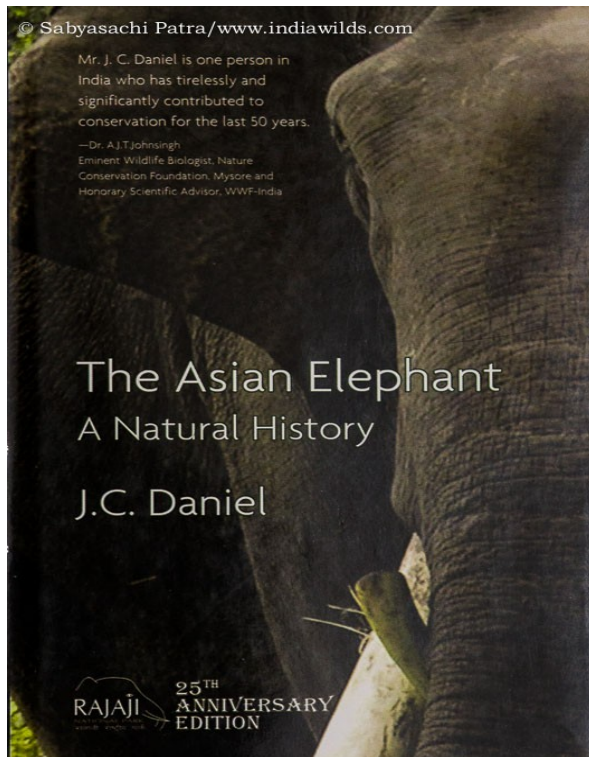
While writing the constitution of India 65 years ago, the founding fathers couldn't visualise a scenario where the air will become so polluted that people will suffer interminably. Else, they would have included the "Right to Clean Air" as one of our fundamental rights.

The Government of India as well as the State Governments should give priority to pollution and the pollution levels should be publicised every day to make people aware. Today people are suffering due to ignorance. Else they would have raised their voice to demand a pollution free air to breathe.

I am sure Pandit Nehru didn't envision his "Temples of Modern India" ie the industries to pollute the air and water. The mirage of economic development has left India coughing and bleeding. It is time we amend our constitution to include "Right to Clean Air" as one of our fundamental rights and act to bring down the pollution to permissible levels.

Book Review : The Asian Elephant - A Natural History by J. C. Daniel

There have been several good books on the Asian elephant written from different perspectives with detailed emphasis on certain aspects. This book on the Asian elephant is a splendid compilation of reports of various naturalists and hunters published in the Journal of the BNHS as well as several research studies.



The book is divided into various chapters detailing the past and present distribution of Asian elephants, their population, colour and size, habits, behaviour, breeding, growth, age, diseases, interaction with man etc.

Like his other compilations on mega-fauna like the Leopard and Tiger, this book on the Asian Elephant too gives us a sneak peak into a bygone era.

By virtue of the detailed statistics, notes and anecdotes, this book will not only act as a fine reference book on elephants, but also help naturalists and other people venturing into the jungle learn some very important learning's which will not only help in understanding the behaviour of these gentle giants but also can be life saver.

In this book review, I have chosen to glean and share a few interesting details which will help the reader to not only appreciate it but also crave for more.

Elephant Vocalisations from M. Krishnan's notes:

M Krishnan's detailed note on elephant vocalisations contains observations that help a lot in understanding elephant behaviour.



Charging elephant: "...A charging elephant may come on in silence or utter a piercing, malevolent scream." "The attitude of an elephant, the way it stands and moves and the way it holds its head, tail, ears and trunk are all expressive of its emotional state. An elephant in a rage stands very still, without swinging its trunk or flapping its ears – the ears are held flat against the neck.

When alarmed and on the point of bolting, the tail is thrown up and the head raised, with ears fanned out and then folded back, an attitude that serves effectively in visual communication of the alarm to other elephants around.”



M Krishnan has succinctly summarised vocalisation by elephants. He says “Some of the vocalisations of elephants are well-known, such as trumpeting, squealing, squeaking (the two terms are used to distinguish a louder sound of protest from a weaker and softer sound, usually of pleasure in elephants), roaring (usually indulged in by juvenile elephants of from one to five years, when separated from their mothers in the course of foraging), and a sudden metallic and at the same time tympanic sound made by rapping the trunk shapely against the ground (the sound seems to be produced mainly by the sudden percussion of the column of air in the trunk as it is expelled) which is a sound of apprehension and interrogation – strictly speaking, not all of these sounds are vocalisations, since some are produced not in the throat but in the trunk.

To hear the vocalisation please click on the link here -

<http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/showthread.php?13896-Elephant-Vocalisations>

Other vocalisations are less well-known and may be briefly set out here. One of these is a plaintive, reiterated ‘kook-kook-kook’, sounded when the animal suddenly discovers something that annoys it (such as the near presence of a man: it is a sound of protest, but I have also heard it used by an exceptionally burly tusker that was demonstrating to us, while covering the retreat of the herd (which we were following), evidently some form of communication with the herd. Very young calves (under 2 months) come out with a loud, quickly-repeated bark that is very like the barking of a dog (though louder and flatter); a sound that is known to very few mahouts, for it is not uttered by calves in elephant camps. It can be heard only from the calves of wild elephants, and seems to be an expression of exhilaration. Older calves do not indulge in this vocalisation.

A loud, repeated smacking, made with the lips, is commonly employed by the leading adult animals in a herd when the herd is on the move and somewhat uneasy over what lies ahead: an adult cow smelling at the rump of another adult cow was also heard coming out with this smacking sound. Frequently when the herd is grazing in the open (never in cover), the adults converge in a close circle, with their heads facing the centre, and seem to confer together; after such a conference, the animals usually move away steadily in one direction, keeping close together and not in loose formation as when grazing: I have never been able to get sufficiently close to elephants in ‘conference’ to know whether or not they make any sounds then, but believe they do come out with some soft, low sounds-they certainly do indulge in tactile expressions with their trunks then.

Among tame elephants, two cows may be seen standing close together, almost in a huddle, caressing each other with their trunks and coming out with throaty, hardly-audible sounds-this is especially noticeable when two cows that like each other meet after a separation.

Tusk Disease & bad Temper

J. C. Daniel has also quoted S. K. Ghosh's observations about maggots in the tusks of elephants *"Every rogue I shot myself, and every other which was shot by others, and which I had the chance to examine, had undoubted need of a dentist for, at the root of the tusks of each one of these animals, I found pounds and pounds of live maggots, which must have caused them excruciating agony. I am inclined to think that it is the tusk disease which makes them, young and old, so bad-tempered, and forces the others to kick them out of the herd. Whenever tracking a 'rogue' or 'solitary' I have noticed that the animal frequently thrusts his tusks through anthills, or soft saplings, and as I have never seen the marks of tusks thrust through in this manner when a herd has passed, nor have I seen our tame elephants doing this, I feel that I am not far wrong in holding that they do this in order to relieve the agony caused by the maggots far inside their jaws."* R. C. Morris too supports this argument that elephants with tusk disease thrust their tusks on anthills or trees *"elephants with tusk disease do thrust the diseased tusk into ant-hills and young trees is correct. A broken end of a tusk, about a foot long, was brought to me some years ago, the Sholaga had found it wedged firmly into a tree, and Sir Frank Colyer, to whom I sent the tusk, expressed the opinion that the elephant had been suffering from toothache."*

Trunk:

M. Krishnan notes "When the animal is at peace with the world, the trunk swings freely and the ears flap from time to time; when the head is held high and movements are brisk, it is in high spirits. When undecided or perplexed, the tip of the trunk is sometimes inserted into the mouth or, in a tusker, the trunk is draped over the tusks and hangs from them. It is curious that both these ways of disposing of the trunk are repeated in sleep." (page 71)

"The presence of men nearby is often revealed to an elephant by smell when it instantly pinpoints the smell with the tip of its trunk."

When it faces a tiger, the elephant raises its trunk probably to keep it unharmed. The elephant also takes great care of its trunk, nevertheless people would prefer to stay away from its reach.

J. C. Daniel also briefly mentions about the various techniques used in elephant capture in the past. Serious students may refer Sanderson's book "13 Years among the wild beasts of India" and "Elephant Gold" by P.D. Stracey.

The Asiatic elephant is fighting a huge battle to survive. A major parts of its former range has shrunk due to human settlements and clearing of forests. Roads, canals, dams, railway lines have fragmented its habitat. So it is apt that J. C. Daniel ends the book by writing a chapter titled the "Conservation and Future of Indian Elephant". I hope that this review will help many people discover this great resource and would be inspired to raise their voice to stop this gentle giants hurtling towards extinction. Published by Natraj Publishers, this book comes in a hard cover with 306 pages is priced at 495 rupees. However, one can find it at a much lower price if purchased online. I highly recommend this book for students, teachers, researchers, naturalists, wildlife and nature enthusiasts.

Conservation News -

Snow leopards in forbidden Spiti valley to be radio collared

Shimla: Satellite-linked collars will be soon fitted on snow leopards in the tribal Spiti valley of Himachal Pradesh to get a deeper understanding of the behaviour of the endangered cat.

Half a dozen snow leopards would be fitted with radio-collars around their neck and their movements would be monitored through global positioning system (GPS).

Almost every step of the cat in the forbidden, high altitude mountain ranges would be under watch. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forest has also sanctioned Rs 25 lakh for the study of the snow leopard.

The study would be the world's second on the endangered big cat. The first-ever radio-collar study on this rare species was conducted in Mongolia's Gobi Altai Mountains, said Devender Chauhan, a forest officer and researcher associated with project on snow leopard conservation in the Spiti valley.

Snow leopards have been categorised as Endangered Species on the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the species is listed as endangered by almost all range countries.

Despite being listed as endangered species, the population of snow leopards is dwindling in all 12 countries where the animal is found. About half of the global population of snow leopards is found in three countries -China, Nepal and India- and authorities in these countries are discussing the possibility of trans-boundary research projects.

The number of snow leopards in Himachal is believed to be around 20. Himachal forest department is already using cameras to monitor their movement in Spiti Valley, the state's northernmost part, running parallel to the Tibetan border.

The state's wildlife department, in coordination with Mysore-based NGO Nature Conservation Foundation, has installed 20 camera traps (automatic cameras) in Spiti Valley under the Project Snow Leopard. As their movement is in an area of thousands of square kilometres in high altitude ranges, it is difficult to gather exact information about them.

The animal resides in one of the harshest and most inaccessible mountainous areas due to which it is almost impossible for wildlife biologist to explore them.

Snow leopards are facing many threats which include poaching, especially for their skin, but also for traditional medicinal trade and retaliatory killing by shepherds and villagers.

Conservation News -

70 projects worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore okayed after Natarajan's exit from MoEF

Jan 14, 2014, 01:27 AM IST

NEW DELHI: Ex-environment minister Jayanthi Natarajan may have dismissed speculation that delay in green clearances for several high-value projects led to her ouster, but environment nods to over 70 projects worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the past three weeks after her exit contradict her contentions.

The projects cleared after she left the ministry shows that even the UPA government's high priority atomic power project, whose foundation was laid on Monday at Gorakhpur village in Fatehabad district of Haryana by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, got mandatory environment clearance only after her exit.

The nuclear power project of 2,800 mw, which got the government's in-principle approval in October 2009, get environment clearance only on December 27, 2013 - six days after Natarajan's exit.

The clearance had been pending for long, stretching back to her predecessor Jairam Ramesh's tenure. In the meantime, the project cost was revised from Rs 14,500 crore to Rs 23,502 crore.

Interestingly, the ministry took years to clear this public sector project despite the fact that there was no complication involved in terms of green concerns. "No forestland is involved in the project. No national park, wildlife sanctuary, elephant/tiger reserve or migratory birds' routes are present within 10-km radius of the site," the order clearing the project said.

The number of projects which got clearance under new environment minister M Veerappa Moily include a public sector thermal power plant in Natarajan's home state of Tamil Nadu.

Moily on January 7 cleared this 2x800 mw power plant of the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board. The project will be commissioned at Vayalur village in Ponneri taluk in Thiruvallur district.

Orders giving district to both these projects show that all necessary steps were completed during Natarajan's tenure. But the projects got final clearance only when Moily took charge of the ministry.

The projects which got district in the past three weeks include South Korean giant Posco's \$12 billion steel plant in Odisha. Posco had to wait for nearly eight years to get the necessary green nod for the project.

The others which got environmental clearance under Moily include two coal mining projects - one of Central Coalfields Limited in Jharkhand and the other of Western Coalfields Limited in Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh.

A long-pending key infrastructure project of Kerala - Vizhinjam International Container Transshipment Terminal at Trivandrum - also got environmental clearance under Moily.

Quote -

Sabyasachi Patra: "Well the flood gates are now open. UPA is in dumps. Everybody believes that the congress party will lose. The industry chiefs used economic slowdown to attack the MoEF saying that lack of project clearances by MoEF is hitting the economy. Unfortunately the MoEF has cleared projects without looking at the impact of the projects. The congress party is throwing away everything in a desperate move.

In case of the Posco project, the gram sabha's have already rejected it. Without clearance from the NGT, it is surprising that the MoEF under Veerappa Moily has decided to give it the go ahead. I am not sure if it would stand the legal challenge that would surely follow."

Equipment Discussions -

Nikon unveils D3300 with new sensor, processor and kit lens

Nikon has released a new DSLR at their entry level segment to replace the D3200. There are two major differences between these two DSLRs. The D3200 doesn't have an anti-alias filter in front of the sensor like the D800E. Videographers using the Nikon brand would be happy that Nikon has given them the ability to do slow motion at Full HD as the D3300 has ability to do 60fps at 1080p. Nikon had earlier introduced 1080p 60fps in D5300. So it seems Nikon has decided to focus a bit more on the video segment.



Nikon D3300

Salient Features -

Here are the salient features of the D3300:

1. 24.2 Mp DX-Format (APS-C) CMOS Sensor with EXPEED 4 Processor
2. Video:
 - a. 1920 x 1080: 60 fps, 50 fps, 30 fps, 25 fps, 24 fps (Record 20 minutes of 60fps)
 - b. 1280 x 720: 60 fps, 50 fps
 - c. 640 x 424: 30 fps, 25 fps
3. No Optical Low-Pass Filter
4. LCD: 3.0" 921k-Dot LCD Monitor
5. Cards: SD, SDHC, SDXC memory Cards
6. AF: 11-Point Multi-CAM 1000 AF Sensor
7. Sensitivity: ISO 100-12800 (High Sensitivity Mode: 100-25600)
8. Burst speed: 5 fps Shooting
9. Availability: February 2014
10. Price: \$650 with 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G Lens

The detailed press released is shared below

PRESS RELEASE

MELVILLE, NY (January 6, 2014) - Today, Nikon announced the Nikon D3300HD-SLR for those ready to take their photography to the next level. Complete with a 24.2-megapixel DX-format CMOS sensor¹ and EXPEED 4 image processor, the D3300 is capable of capturing stunning images and Full HD video with ease. Also featuring an enhanced Guide Mode for those discovering the joy of photography, optional Wi-Fi® connectivity, in-camera effects that operate in real-time and kitted with the new compact AF-S DX NIKKOR 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR II lens, the Nikon D3300 is ready to help capture



and preserve every precious memory. For FX-format photographers, Nikon has also announced an addition to its lineup of f/1.8 prime lenses, the AF-S NIKKOR 35mm f/1.8G. At the popular and versatile 35mm focal length, the new 35mm f/1.8 provides stellar image quality and low-light performance whether shooting landscapes, portraits or travel photos.

“With the new 24.2-megapixel Nikon D3300 and compact 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR II lens, capturing family vacations, dance recitals or the game-winning goal with clarity and brilliant image quality is effortless,” said Masahiro Horie, Director of Marketing and Planning, Nikon Inc. “As the latest addition to the extensive NIKKOR lens line-up, the new AF-S NIKKOR 35mm f/1.8G lens reinforces Nikon’s commitment to providing versatile prime lens options to photographers of all levels.”

Preserve Precious Memories with Incredible Quality

Life is full of memorable moments that are meant to be captured with supreme quality and rich detail. The Nikon D3300 features a high-resolution 24.2-megapixel CMOS sensor to help ensure amazing image quality, even in challenging low-light shooting scenarios. The high resolution affords photographers the ability to capture crisp details or crop images with confidence. For increased image fidelity, the sensor has no optical low pass filter (OLPF), boosting resolution and image sharpness to the maximum, while the addition of a new EXPEED 4 image processor helps render true colors and precise detail in every image. EXPEED 4 also offers improved image quality at high ISOs, enhanced auto white balance performance, faster processing speeds and improved battery efficiency. Whether shooting candid shots of the kids or a weekend getaway at the beach, the Nikon D3300 is ready to deliver beautiful stills and stunning HD video.

The Nikon D3300 is packed with high performance features that make shooting easy and enjoyable, even in difficult shoot-

ing situations such as fast action sports and low-light scenes. A wide 100-12,800 (expandable up to 25,600) ISO range helps ensure top-quality photos and video in challenging light while an 11-point Autofocus System is ready to capture fleeting moments while easily keeping pace with even the most active toddler. Nikon's newest HD-SLR is also capable of high-speed continuous shooting at up to 5 frames-per-second (fps), great for the fast-moving action of a soccer game or dance recital.

Create, Share, Enjoy

Brimming with fun features, the Nikon D3300 is ready to help create and share incredible stories through beautiful images and HD video. With the help of the optional WU-1a Wireless Mobile Adapter², users can take advantage of Wi-Fi connectivity for instant uploading of images and videos to a smart device for easy sharing through social networks. Users can also remotely control the D3300 using their smart device as a remote "Live View" monitor. Releasing the shutter from a smart device will help make sure no one is left out of the next family photo.

The Nikon D3300 is ready to help each user realize their creative vision with 13 In-Camera Effects and four new effects



modes, including Photo Illustration, Super Vivid and Pop. The D3300 is also the first Nikon HD-SLR equipped with the fourth new effects mode, Easy Panorama Mode, enabling the capture of beautiful landscapes and stunning scenic views with ease. When the story is better told with HD video, Nikon's newest HD-SLR is ready at a moment's notice to help users create glorious Full 1080p HD video with vivid color and sharp details, up to 60p. Capturing gorgeous HD video is easy with the Nikon D3300 with the assistance of Full-time AF (autofocus) to help keep elusive subjects in focus, and a one-touch recording button so not to miss any moment.

For those new to the benefits of D-SLR photography, Nikon has expanded upon its acclaimed Guide Mode to help users learn and explore new

ways to capture great photos and HD video. Guide Mode teaches the basic functions of the camera, but also works to help the user become a better, more knowledgeable photographer. When using this mode, users have access to four options: Shoot photos using example images, View/Delete, Setup and Retouch their images in-camera, making it easy for beginners to immediately take their photos to the next level.

Capture On-The-Go

The extremely lightweight and versatile D3300 is the perfect companion for a fast moving, always on the go lifestyle. The camera features a conveniently compact body (4.9" x 3.8" x 2.9"), and is ergonomically designed for a comfortable hold that is easy to take anywhere. Additionally, the camera body is constructed with carbon fiber for lightweight durability. The D3300 is also equipped with an optical viewfinder that helps frame the perfect shot in any lighting condition, whether capturing the school play or a high school graduation.

To complement the Nikon small stature of the D3300, Nikon has also introduced the new, more compact AF-S DX NIKKOR 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR II standard zoom lens that inherits a familiar focal length (27-82.5mm, 35mm equivalent) while incorporating a new retractable lens barrel design found in Nikon's 1 NIKKOR lens series. This design ensures the lens is remarkably smaller than its predecessor, and when paired with the D3300 makes the camera package nearly 30% smaller and 25% lighter. An ideal 3X zoom lens for every on-the-go moment, the 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR II lens features up to four

stops3 of VR image stabilization, a silent wave motor to ensure quiet AF operation and auto/manual focusing options.

The 35mm f/1.8: A Versatile FX-Format Prime Ready for Anything

With the latest addition to Nikon's popular f/1.8 prime series of FX-format lenses, Nikon has announced the new AF-S NIKKOR 35mm f/1.8G, a versatile fixed lens ready to thrive in any shooting situation. The new 35mm f/1.8G lens rounds out a collection of acclaimed f/1.8 lenses including the AF-S NIKKOR 28mm f/1.8G, AF-S NIKKOR 50mm f/1.8G and AF-S NIKKOR 85mm f/1.8G lenses. Sporting the popular 35mm focal length and covering a 63 degree angle of view with a constant f/1.8 aperture, Nikon's newest FX-format lens delivers outstanding viewfinder clarity and high contrast while providing outstanding low-light performance and depth of field control.

Great for available light environment portraits, landscapes and travel photography as well as for producing beautiful images with soft, natural bokeh, the AF-S NIKKOR 35mm f/1.8G is a versatile and valuable addition to any FX-format photographer's lens arsenal and sports the latest in core NIKKOR technologies that ensure elite performance. The lens' construction includes one ED and one aspheric element in addition to a Silent Wave Motor to provide quiet AF operation.

Price and Availability

The Nikon D3300, kitted with the AF-S NIKKOR 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR II lens, will be available in early February 2014 in Black, Red and Grey for a suggested retail price* (SRP) of \$649.95. The AF-S NIKKOR 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR II will be available at the same time as the D3300, and will also be sold separately for \$249.95 SRP*. The AF-S NIKKOR 35mm f/1.8G lens will be available on February 20, 2014 for a suggested retail price of \$599.95*.

Disclosure: Technology details and images courtesy Nikon press release

Natural History -

COUNTRY NOTEBOOK: M.Krishnan: 'Voice of the dusk (Nightjar)'

The Sunday Statesmen 05-Jan-14 (shared by Shri. Saktipada Panigrahi)

Nightjar

" WHEN the sun is set and outskirts of the village is lost in the gathering darkness, the NIGHTJARS wake up from their daytime repose and bestir themselves. There is much 'chuck-chuck-chuckering', calls melt together as the birds begin to answer one another and ghostly forms circle around on wings that are soundless, whether sailing or flapping. One evening last week I sat on a clearing outside a village, still as a rock beneath me, watching the circling and settling nightjars, almost invisible in that light even on the wing, and listening to their voices.



© Mrudul Godbole/ www.indiawilds.com

Nightjar

Those who associate fluty tones with birdsong will be pleasantly surprised at the soft rhythm of these voices of the lonely dusk. There is no resonance or "full-throated ease" in a nightjars call, it is a subdued 'chuck-chuck-chukr-r-r-r' that has been justly likened to the sound of a stone sent scudding across ice. But it has a sure rhythm in it that is all the more enchanting for its lack of emphasis; it is so much or so naturally the voice of uncertain greyness. He who has not been alone and listened to the chorus of nightjars and has not inhaled the sudden perfume of the wild night-flowering jasmine does not know the charm of dusk in the Indian plains.

However, as I sat listening to the nightjars that evening, more prosaic thoughts passed through my mind. Some two years ago, when I wrote in these columns about birdsong at dawn, a correspondent has suggested that it was some actinic property in the early night that stimulated birds organically to sudden and unhappy song - I had heard the theory before, but I have been observing the vocal behaviour of birds whenever I could during the past two years and am now convinced that actinic stimulation (the theory is really as old as Vedas) cannot account comprehensively for birdsong in our country.

Crepuscular birds, nightjars in particular, greet the coming darkness as diurnal birds greet the dawn, with wings and

voices. More strictly, nocturnal birds are vocal and very active for a brief spell after emerging from their daytime retreats and gregarious day-birds, like sparrows and mynahs in September-October, are specially noisy and keep shifting around till it is quite dark when roosting and some like crows and lapwing, invariably call and fly when the moon is bright. It was such things that I thought of that evening.

When it is quite dark and night has definitely arrived, the chorus of nightjars dies down and the birds appear to drift away from the open gathering ground. Their huge eyes are admirably suited to seeing through the dark, just as their softy-barred plumage and owlshly silent wings, and the ear to ear gape of their mouths, are suited to their hunting of night-flying insects. However, as anyone who has travelled across the country roads at night knows, quite a substantial part of the night is spent by these birds on the ground, squatting in the dust of the roadside.

You see a pair of ember-red eyes in the glare of your headlamps, eyes that seemed buried in the dust of the road, then you see the mottled, indistinct form of the bird squatting low and then, as the relentless tyres are about to crush it under, it rises on soundless wings to go floating ahead of the car, or low overhead, the sudden white bar on each wing proclaiming its identity.

Sometimes it flies so low overhead that you feel you can reach up and pluck it out of the air - in fact, I have known a nightjar so captured. And not always is its last-second swerve infallible; once I saw the bird hit the side of the mudguard and fall back on to the road.

Motorists who know only the hard-surfaced and tarred main roads will probably be less familiar with the bird, but sometimes it is to be seen even on such roads when the scrub adjoins the roadway and there is dust enough at the sides. Why it sits so constantly on the roadways I do not know; other birds, like finch-larks, also love the earth-road, and perhaps the loose-plumaged nightjars likes a frequent dust bath - or perhaps it finds the road convenient for the hawking of insects. The only thing I can say is that if I had to spend much time reposing on the road, I too would prefer the cushioning dust to the metalled surface."

- M.Krishnan

This was first published on 02 Oct 1955 in The Sunday Statesman

Image of the Month -

The honour for the Image of the Month for December 2013 goes to the image titled -

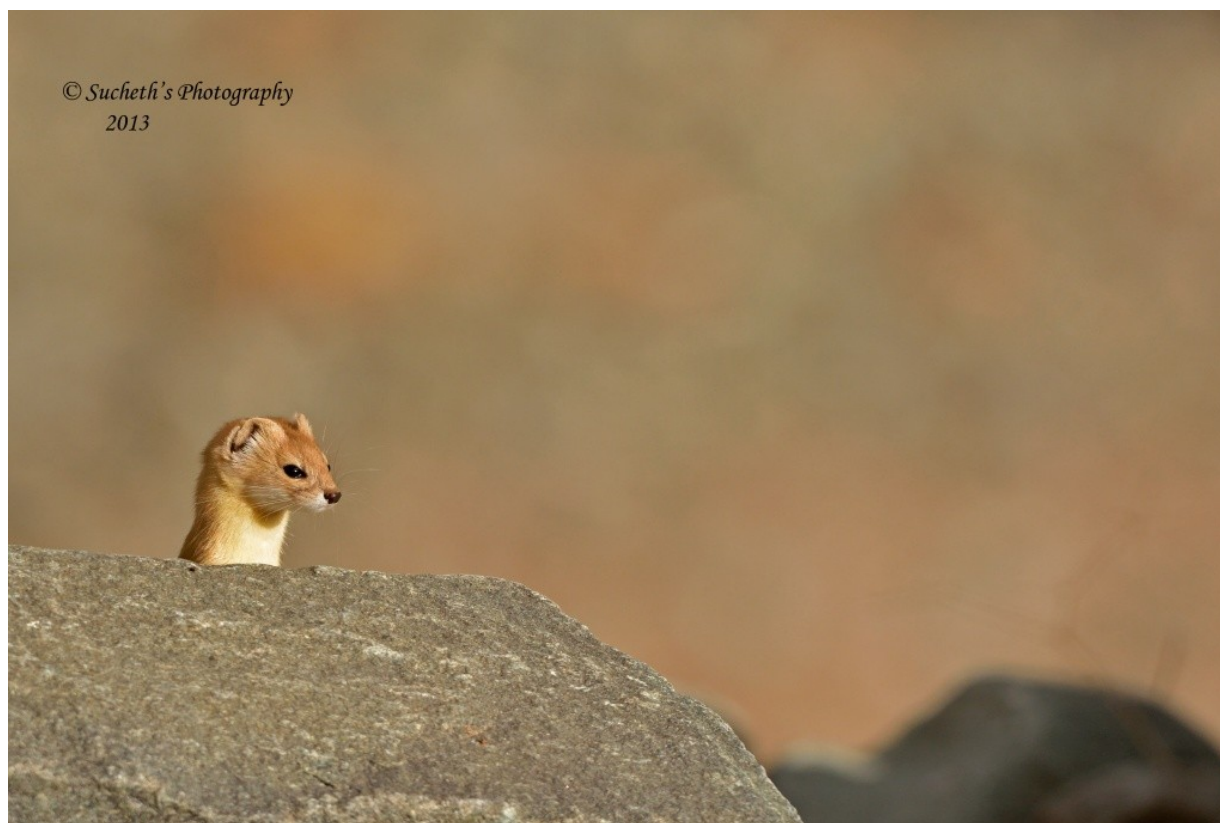
"Himalayan Weasel" by Sucheth Lingachar

Original text from Sucheth:

“Photographed in Hemis National Park at Ladakh(Rumbak Valley).

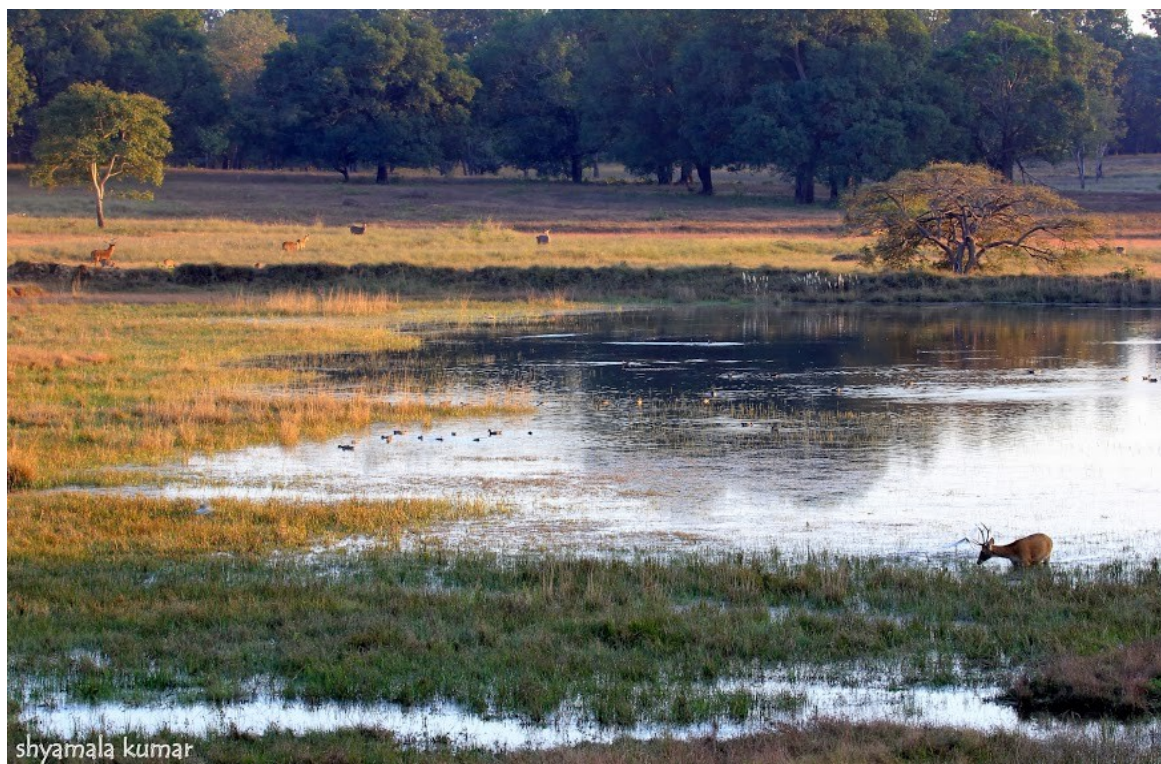
The conservation status, according to the IUCN, is near threatened because it is considered to be in a significant decline and requires monitoring mainly because of habitat and resource loss.

Nikon D7100, Nikon AF-S NIKKOR 300mm f/4D IF-ED + AF-S Tele converter TC-14E II/14E, F/7.1, 1/2000s, ISO 400



Wildlife Photography -

The Swamplands of Kanha - Barasingha - The Swamp deer by Shyamala Kumar



Bekal Fort by Abhishek Mallick



Wildlife Photography -

Red Avadavat By Rajeev Khanna



Young Lady by Sabyasachi Patra



Wildlife Photography -

Pika by Sucheth Lingachar



Sunrise by Gajanan Bapat



Wildlife Photography -

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher by Bibhav Behera



Contemplating a strike - Juvenile Garden Lizard by Anil Kumar Verma



Wildlife Photography -

Asian One-horned Rhino - Assam Diary by Samrat Sarkar



Ashy Prinia by Jitendra Katre



Wildlife Photography -

Jungle Babbler by Arpan Saha



I look forward to your inputs and support in preserving the last tracts of wilderness and wildlife left in 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>

If you are already a member of IndiaWilds and have forgotten your user id and/or password you can mail to administrator@indiawilds.com

Regards,

Sabyasachi Patra

Profile: <http://www.indiawilds.com/about.htm>

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Forums: <http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/index.php>

Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/indiawilds>
