



IndiaWilds Newsletter

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Encyclical letter of Pope Francis :

Preservation of Nature and wildlife is governed not only by the inputs from scientific community but also from thoughts emanating from various quarters. George Schaller, one of the most eminent biologists had said “...*Conservation, in the final analysis is culture, economics and politics.*” (DQ, 2007).

People often make value judgments and their judgments are shaped by their culture. Our culture shapes our understanding and when our understanding changes, it gets reflected in the values and in the judgments of the people and society at large.

Our culture is predominantly shaped by our religion. According to World Culture Report (UNESCO, 1999) “*Culture shapes the way we see the world.* It therefore has the capacity



Encyclical letter of Pope Francis

to bring about the change of attitudes needed to ensure peace and sustainable development which, we know, form the only possible way forward for life on planet Earth. Today, that goal is still a long way off. A global crisis faces humanity at the dawn of the 21st century, marked by increasing poverty in our asymmetrical world, environmental degradation and short-sightedness in policy-making. Culture is a crucial key to solving this crisis”.

So when the Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis, revered by the majority of 2.2 billion Christians worldwide and also well respected among other religious communities, talks about the need for environmental protection in an Encyclical letter, it is a big event for conservationists as well.



The encyclical is a letter sent by the Pope and is addressed to bishops, patriarchs, primates, and archbishops and others and is used to address significant issues. This encyclical letter will be discussed via sermons of the religious leaders of the church as well as in public events. It is said that the Pope may address the UN General Assembly this year as well on this topic. It is hoped that this encyclical letter from Pope Francis may sway practicing Christians who are steadfastly opposed to accept that Climate Change is a reality.

Pope Francis's 184 page encyclical letter is titled "On care for our common home" and at length dwells on issues resulting in the ecological crisis that our planet earth is facing today. I have put together a relatively concise version of his salient points along with our observations.

Pope Francis on GM crops:

Pope Francis has lamented that we have foolishly assumed that we are God. He says *"The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations"*. (Page 48)

He also further stated *"Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures"*. (Page 49)

Unfortunately, with the progress in science, man has assumed that he can play the role of God. Some are intentionally closing their eyes and continuing with their efforts to play God, as they are trying to exploit it for narrow commercial gains despite its massive collateral damage to the environment. MNCs engaged in creating Genetically modified crops like BT Cotton, BT Brinjal and other GM crops are closing their eyes to the side effects on our bio-diversity. (The Potential for crop to wild hybridization in egg plant in Southern India, Davidar *et al.* 2015, American Journal of Botany). With the genes from the BT crops being able to hybridize wild plants, there is a huge impact of GM crops on our bio-diversity, which has not been covered in the encyclical letter.

In view of the divide prevailing in the scientific community for and against the Genetically modified crops with some of the proponents influenced by the GM crop peddling MNCs and some genuinely believing that GM crops are good, the Pope in the encyclical letter has chosen to be cautious while talking about Genetically Modified crops. The Pope has narrowly focussed on the impact of GM crops on human health and small producers.

Despite saying that conclusive proof of GM crops being harmful doesn't exist, the encyclical states that complete information about Genetically modified crops are not intentionally shared. *"Complete information is not put on the table; a selection is made on the basis of particular interests, be they politico-economic or ideological. This makes it difficult to reach a balanced and prudent judgement on different questions, one which takes into account all the pertinent variables"*. The encyclical letter calls for a comprehensive approach to examine the GM crops issue.

The Pope in his encyclical letter has focused more on the GM crops from the human exploitation angle. He says, *"Although no conclusive proof exists that GM cereals may be harmful to*

human beings, and in some regions their use has brought about economic growth which has helped to resolve problems, there remain a number of significant difficulties which should not be underestimated. In many places, following the introduction of these crops, productive land is concentrated in the hands of a few owners". (Page 99)

It also says that small producers are forced to withdraw from direct production due to loss of exploited lands. "The most vulnerable of these become temporary labourers, and many rural workers end up moving to poverty stricken urban areas. The expansion of these crops has the effect of destroying the complex network of ecosystems, diminishing the diversity of production and affecting regional economies, now and in the future. In various countries, we see an expansion of oligopolies for the production of cereals and other products needed for their cultivation. This dependency would be aggravated were the production of infertile seeds to be considered; the effect would be to force farmers to purchase them from larger producers". (Page 100)

On reducing consumption:

The Pope has strongly talked about reducing consumption and not blind dependence on technology to solve all our problems. "Human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another; the relationship has become confrontational. This has made it easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology. It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit. It is the false notion that an infinite quantity of energy and resources are available, that it is possible to renew them quickly, and that the negative effects of the exploitation of the natural order can be easily absorbed". (Page 79-80)

He acknowledges that some people, especially in developed countries, are aware about the impending ecological crisis however they are still rooted to their habits. "People may well have a growing ecological sensitivity but it has not succeeded in changing their harmful habits of consumption which, rather than decreasing, appear to be growing all the more. A simple example is the increasing use and power of air-conditioning. The markets, which immediately benefit from sales, stimulate ever greater demand. An outsider looking at our world would be amazed at such behaviour, which at times appears self-destructive." (Page 40-41)

Incidentally this thought is also in sync with what Shri Prakash Javadekar, India's Minister for Environment, Forests & Climate Change mentioned in his June 5th World Environment day speech this year. Javadekar exhorted people to make at least one change in their lives towards a more responsible resource consumption behaviour, or practice. Shri Javadekar said that business, as usual, was no longer an option and that every individual has a responsibility in contributing to protect the environment and reduce the rate of depletion of natural resources. He added that people could become agents of change, by being more conscious of the environmental consequences of their personal choices. He pointed out that by the year 2050, with an expected population of 9.6 billion, it is estimated that three planets would be needed to sustain the ways of living and consumption.

Local Governance:

Pope's call for local level action is in sync with Mahatma Gandhi's call for Panchayati Raj

"Political activity on the local level could also be directed to modifying consumption, developing an economy of waste disposal and recycling, protecting certain species and planning a diversified agriculture and the rotation of crops. Agriculture in poorer regions can be improved through investment in rural infrastructures, a better organization of local or national markets, systems of irrigation, and the development of techniques of sustainable agriculture. New forms of cooperation and community organization can be encouraged in order to defend the interests of small producers and preserve local ecosystems from destruction. Truly, much can be done!" (Page 132-133)

Mahatma Gandhi in his letter to Pandit Nehru on 5th Oct 1945 had said that man should be content in satisfying his real

needs and become self-sufficient. He said *"I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that the people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live in peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth".*

"I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life and this simplicity can best be found in the Charkha and all that the Charkha connotes. I must not fear if the world today is going the wrong way. It may be, that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India the entire world from such a doom.

The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient. If he does not have this control, he cannot save himself. After all, the world is made up of individuals just as it is the drops that constitute the ocean.... This is a well-known truth".

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his "Glimpses of World History" wrote:

"This system of village self-government was the foundation of the Aryan polity. It was this that gave it strength. So jealous were the village assemblies of their liberties that it was laid down that no soldier was to enter a village except with a royal permit. The Nitisara says that when the subjects complain of an officer the king 'should take the side not of his officers but of his subjects'; and if many people complain the officer was to be dismissed, 'for', says the Nitisara, 'who does not get intoxicated by drinking of the vanity of office?' Wise words which seem to apply especially to the crowds of officials who misbehave and misgovern us in this country today!"

As late as 1830 a British Governor in India, Sir Charles Metcalfe, described the village communities as follows:

"The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little State in itself ... is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."

"This description is very complimentary to the old village system. We have a picture of an almost idyllic state of affairs. Undoubtedly, the great deal of local freedom and independence that the villages had was a good thing, and there were other good features also. . . . The work of rebuilding and rebirth (of Village Republics) still remains to be done by us".

Unfortunately, the local level action or Panchayati Raj is not being given the attention it deserves and the power is now concentrated in the hands of a few.

Renewable energy:

The Pope has also noted that renewable energy cooperatives are doing good job in a few places and that can be a good solution. This *"ensures local self-sufficiency and even the sale of surplus energy. This simple example shows that, while the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference". (Page 131)*



In India too, there are places where locals are able to set up solar power and create mini-grids to supply power to their neighbours. Transmission and distribution losses are higher when far flung communities are connected to the grid. Removing such communities from the grid and creating off-grid power supply is the need of the hour. India with its abundant sunshine, can harvest the solar power in such places. Government subsidies and help to these local communities is the need of the hour.

Public Pressure on Government:

The Pope also calls for citizens to exert public pressure on their Government. He says *“the enforcement of laws is at times inadequate due to corruption; public pressure has to be exerted in order to bring about decisive political action. Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power, national, regional and municipal it will not be possible to control damage to the environment. Local legislation can be more effective, too, if agreements exist between neighboring communities to support the same environmental policies”*. (Page 132)

Unfortunately, with the Government throttling NGOs and systematically persecuting them, many Non-Governmental organisations and citizens groups are apprehensive about raising their voice.

Public transport



Pollution due to transport mess

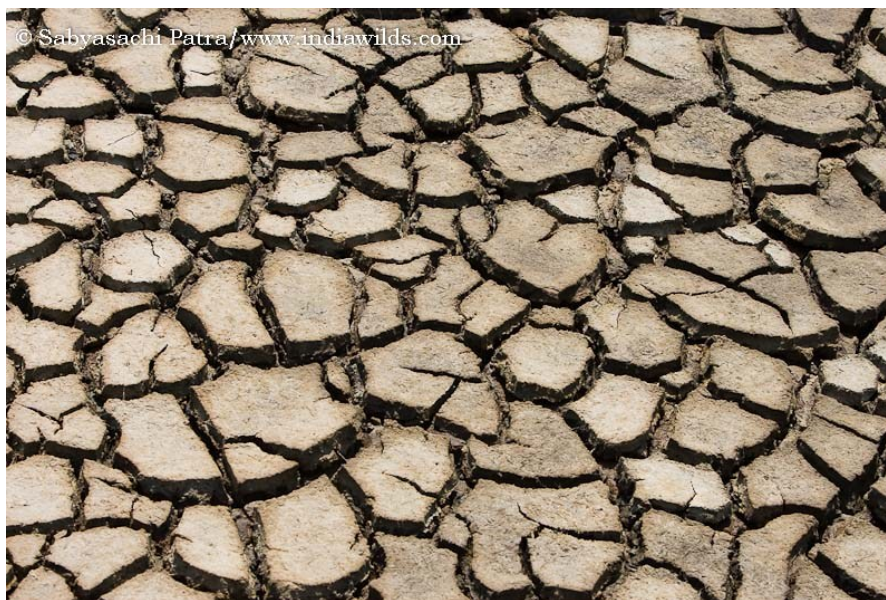
Pope Francis talked about the inconveniences caused as well as the ill effects of our public transport systems and the need for substantial improvements in it. *“The quality of life in cities has much to do with systems of transport, which are often a source of much suffering for those who use them. Many cars, used by one or more people, circulate in cities, causing traffic congestion, raising the level of pollution, and consuming enormous quantities of non-renewable energy. This makes it necessary to build more roads and parking areas which spoil the urban landscape. Many specialists agree on the need to give priority to public transportation. Yet some measures needed will not prove easily acceptable to society unless substantial improvements are made in the systems themselves, which in many cities force people to put up with undignified conditions due to crowding, inconvenience, infrequent service and lack of safety”*. (Page 114-115)

Climate Change

The impact of climate change will be felt all over the world. There is interdependence and hence the Pope has called for all nations to fight climate change together.

“Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan. Yet the same ingenuity which has brought about enormous technological progress has so far proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave environ-

mental and social problems worldwide. A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries. Such a consensus could lead, for example, to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water". (Page 122)



Cracked mud of the dried up fields due to famine in India.

Unfortunately, there are powerful voices which want to continue with our profligate ways of high carbon lifestyles. There are also group of scientists as well as countries who doubt and dispute the impact of climate change. Pope Francis talks about that recklessness and the calls for bold decisions. He says *"At the same time we can note the rise of a false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness. As often occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear. Superficially, apart from a few obvious signs of pollution and deterioration, things do not look that serious, and the planet could continue as it is for some time. Such evasiveness serves as a licence to carrying on with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption. This is the way human beings contrive to feed their self-destructive vices: trying not to see them, trying not to acknowledge them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen". (Page 42-43)*

Owning Responsibilities for Climate Change:

Pope Francis says *"Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most". (Page 125)*

Pope Francis has called for the developed countries to take greater share of the responsibility in fighting climate change as economically poor countries cannot afford some of the measures that are required to fight climate change.

"Some strategies for lowering pollutant gas emissions call for the internationalization of environmental costs, which would risk imposing on countries with fewer resources burdensome commitments to reducing emissions comparable to those of the more industrialized countries. Imposing such measures penalizes those countries most in need of development. A further injustice is perpetrated under the guise of protecting the environment. Here also, the poor end up paying the price. Furthermore, since the effects of climate change will be felt for a long time to come, even if stringent measures are taken now, some countries with scarce resources will require assistance in adapting to the effects already being produced, which affect their economies. In this context, there is a need for common and differentiated responsibili-

ties". (Page 125)

Predictably these thoughts of Pope Francis will not be music to the ears of the leaders of developed countries. Immediately USA president contender **Jeb Bush** blasted Pope and said *"I don't get economic policy from my bishops or my cardinals or my Pope. Religion should be less about things that end up getting into the political realm"*. James Inhofe, the Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, also gave an acerbic response saying, *"Pope ought to stay with his job, and we'll stay with ours."*

Carbon Credits: A Ploy for Excessive Consumption

Pope Francis hit the nail in the head when he correctly identified the farce that Carbon Credits has become.

"The strategy of buying and selling "carbon credits" can lead to a new form of speculation which would not help reduce the emission of polluting gases worldwide. This system seems to provide a quick and easy solution under the guise of a certain commitment to the environment, but in no way does it allow for the radical change which present circumstances require. Rather, it may simply become a ploy which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors". (Page 126)

Irresponsible Growth & Loss of Quality of Life

Pope Francis talks about requirement for new forms of growth as well as restricting the irresponsible growth that we have been witnessing over the last few decades. He says, *"Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress. Frequently, in fact, people's quality of life actually diminishes – by the deterioration of the environment, the low quality of food or the depletion of resources – in the midst of economic growth"*. (Page 142)

It is a fact that our quality of life has decreased. The death of public transport systems, increase in private car ownership, mushrooming of multi storey buildings constructions in place of older houses is giving rise to severe increase in noxious gases and particulate matter in our air in Delhi and in other big cities to such an extent that Delhi has become more polluted than Beijing. Whereas Beijing has implemented limits on personal vehicle ownership, India hasn't yet thought along those lines. To discourage the unnecessary growth in real estate driven by speculation, the Government has to first take away tax breaks given to people while investing in houses.

On Indigenous Communities:

The Pope has urged others to show special care to indigenous communities. He says *"it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture"*. (Page 109-110)

Respect for other religions, cultures etc.

Pope Francis has spoken like a true statesman. In this encyclical letter, under the heading Light offered by Faith, Pope Francis espouses respect for other religions, cultures, art etc. and calls for talking along all wisdom from all sources to tackle the enormous challenge of climate change.

He says *"Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solutions will*

not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality. If we are truly concerned to develop ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it. The Catholic Church is open to dialogue with philosophical thought; this has enabled her to produce various syntheses between faith and reason. The development of the Church's social teaching represents such a syn-thesis with regard to social issues; this teaching is called to be enriched by taking up new challenges". (Page 45-46)

This openly stated respect for other religions, sects, languages, art and culture of people who may be minority in various places is a significant statement. This may fly against the present overt move in some states in India to convert people of other faiths to Christianity. It would be good if the Church continues social service among the needy in the hinterland of India and other countries, without trying to convert people. With conversion, a part of the culture dies. In cases of tribals, who used to be in sync with nature, conversion often leads to abandonment of certain practices that had originated when people had more respect for nature.

In places like Niyamgiri, earlier there were pressures applied on the Church of England to divest its stake from Vedanta and in fact the Church of England had stood up for the Dongria Kondhas of Niyamgiri. So with the call for greater assimilation of wisdom from all religions and cultures and art as well as to accord respect to indigenous communities, I hope, this encyclical from Pope Francis will have its effect in forcing large corporates and MNCs engaged in exploitation of environment to mend their ways.

The total population of Christians in this world is 2.2 billion (source: Pew Research centre, 2012) which is about 31.5% and is the highest population as per faith out of which Roman Catholics are 16.85%. The Christians do revere the Pope and many of them follow his message. In a previous encyclical (*Humanae vitae*) issued in 1968, the Church had urged not to follow birth control and till date many people even in respectable positions follow it. It may be pertinent to mention that Tony Blair was the first Prime Minister of UK in about 150 years to father a child during his Premiership. His wife Cherie Blair, at the age of 45 and with three teenaged kids chooses to deliver the child rather than go for abortion. If the High and Mighty so listen to the Church, then I hope they will also respect this encyclical issued by Pope Francis and implement it.

Pope Francis links Abortions with Environmental destruction:

Continuing with the Church's ban on abortions, Pope Francis says that since everything is inter-related, when we fail to show concern for a human embryo then it will be difficult to hear the cry of nature as well.

"At one extreme, we find those who doggedly uphold the myth of progress and tell us that ecological problems will solve themselves simply with the application of new technology and without any need for ethical considerations or deep change. At the other extreme are those who view men and women and all their interventions as no more than a threat, jeopardizing the global ecosystem, and consequently the presence of human beings on the planet should be reduced and all forms of intervention prohibited". (Page 43)

The Pope alludes to its stand on abortion by saying *"When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities, to offer just a few examples, it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected". (Page 87)*

Later on in his encyclical Pope Francis, reiterating the Church's stand against abortion, comes out more openly and strongly against abortion by saying *"Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incom-*

patible with the justification of abortion. How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties? “If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away”. (Page 90)

When the human population is exploding rapidly, perhaps even faster than mosquitoes, the encyclical refuses to acknowledge that one earth is not enough for such a massive population of 7 billion which is estimated to cross 9 billion in the near future. Hence, this is likely to be used as a justification by unscrupulous politicians and scientists to discard the entire encyclical even though it has got many good thoughts for our environmental protection.

Earth as a Shared Inheritance:

The Pope says that the earth is a shared inheritance. He writes in the encyclical letter *“Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures”*. (Page 49)

“We have only one heart, and the same wretch-edness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people”. (Page 68)

I hope this will lead to less cruelty towards animals not only in animal testing in laboratories but also abolish the needless display in zoos and circuses, in cramped cages, causing much discomfort and agony for them.



Tiger hacked into pieces by poachers

This love for animals should manifest in our approach towards maintaining the habitat of wild animals and not dissecting it by construction of roads, railways or submerging it through dams and canals.

Industries like thermal and hydel power, mines etc come up in pristine forests and other ecologically fragile locations. These projects often come up on the pretext of “development” and the concerned industries then go ahead and do lip service by participating in sporadic philanthropic activities. The protests by concerned citizens and organisations are branded as anti-national. The Pope seems to have taken note of such happenings and has said *“the interests of economic groups*

which irrationally demolish sources of life should not prevail in dealing with natural resources. The alliance between the economy and technology ends up sidelining anything unrelated to its immediate interests. Consequently the most one can expect is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment, whereas any genuine attempt by groups within society to introduce change is viewed as a nuisance based on romantic illusions or an obstacle to be circumvented". (Page 40)

The capitalists would squirm when they read that Pope has mentioned in his encyclical *"the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone... every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged"*.

A society cannot progress if it doesn't take along all its constituents on the path of progress. Else there won't be peace and harmony. However, it is an open secret that we have failed to create an equitable society. Various social and economic ills are still afflicting our society and that doesn't ensure a level playing field for all.

A large corporate goes and buys the lands of the people to create an industry. The industrialist benefits and the people who were forced to part with their land realise after sometime that whatever money they got in-lieu of their land was not enough for them. If a person who tills his land and lives off it is forced off his land, or if a tribal who lives off the fruits, roots and other forest produce is displaced, then the compensation is not equal to the net present value of all the future earnings that the person can make from the land. When the person realizes that and later demands more compensation for the land, he is denied as he has legally sold the land to the industry/Government. This breeds animosity and leads to unrest as well as increases the inequalities in society.

On raising Environmental awareness:

Pope Francis says that education has a major role to play to help change lifestyles and he says that like other institutions trying to help raise environmental awareness, all Christian communities have an important role in ecological education.

The Pope says, *"There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of*



Cheetal Axis axis deer munching a plastic packet of wafers in Bandipur Tiger Reserve, India. Deers often munch and swallow empty wafers packets carelessly thrown away by tourists and the deers are also known to be killed in the process.

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acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity”.

“Political institutions and various other social groups are also entrusted with helping to raise people’s awareness. So too is the Church. All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education”. (Page 156)

I hope that out of the 2200 million Christians in this earth, if at least half of them start propagating the message of environmental protection, then the world will be a much better place.

In a country like India, where the majority of the people are Hindus, it is important to remind people that all the creation is attributed to God and is divine. There was a time, when as kids we were taught that God is present in everything, within the plants and trees, rocks and mountains, birds and bees and animals big and small or in any non-living object like a cot or table etc. If by mistake your leg hits something, we were taught to say “Vishnu”. Unfortunately, in the midst of unprecedented riches and the poverty, the dichotomy that India is today, we have perhaps slowly forgotten our culture and gravitated more and more towards the big and the ostentatious. So we talk about how big the statute of the Lord is in so and so place or how much money has to be spent on a place of worship.

Wildlife is entwined with Hindu religion and the culture of India. Many of the animals and birds are considered as the vehicle of the Gods. Lord Ganesha who is invoked before any auspicious ceremony has the head of the elephant. Elephant is also the vehicle of the Goddesses of wealth, Ma Lakshmi.

There have been times when Hindu sages have voiced their concern for the environment. Swami Nigamananda died at the age of 34 after undergoing a 115 day fast to save Ganga from illegal sand mining. It is said that vested interests poisoned him. Hindu sages have also voiced their support in saving the dolphin.

The Pope’s message for environmental protection is comprehensive and is timely. It is also in tune with the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and is also in tune with the Hindu religious thoughts and beliefs. I hope like the Pope, many Hindu religious leaders too will continue to come forward in goading us to take action to save our environment and wildlife and in-turn save us from destruction. We all should now share this message with others and help shape popular beliefs and actions.

Conservation News

Central Govt. to allow hunting of animals in Human-animal conflict areas

There was a time, not long ago, when India was ruled by the British and had suffered massive plundering of its natural heritage.

Old hard growth trees were felled down and the wood and majority of those was exported out of India. Large swathes of land was cleared for agriculture and when the settlers came in conflict with the wildlife, animals were declared vermin and a bounty was given to each head of the species brought to the nearest police station by the people. It was a systematic war against India's forests and wildlife. At that time they took great pride in it. Today, realising their follies they have often urged us to preserve whatever little is left of our forests and wildlife.

Though the British have gone and India is now ruled by Indians, the reckless exploitation of our natural heritage continues even till date. As if that is not enough, the Central Government is planning to give permission to State Governments to allow hunting of wild animals in areas where man-animal conflict is high. So soon in some of the North-Indian states like Haryana, Rajasthan etc Nilgai will be declared as a Vermin and will be exterminated. In many states of South like Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra as well as Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and other Northern States, wild boars will be declared as Vermin and exterminated. Even now animals are being killed in the name of man-animal conflict. The next targets will be carnivores like leopards and they will be declared as vermin in states like Uttarakhand, parts of Assam, West Bengal, Gujarat, Maharashtra etc.

It is really unfortunate that the Central Government is not going to the root of the problem of man-animal conflicts. Population explosion is leading to more settlements and cultivations in areas visited by wildlife. In India, lot of areas which are revenue lands remain fallow and help harbour wildlife. When people move in for agriculture, they come more and more in contact with these herbivores and complain of crop depredation.

There is also severe anthropogenic pressures on the forests. The NTFP (Non-timber forest produce) like aamla, mangoes, crusted apple and other seasonal fruits are plundered from the forests and not even a single fruit is left behind. So the wildlife don't have anything to eat inside the forests.

In many of these places, the carnivores like wolves, jackals, leopards etc have been hunted. So there is no biological control for the herbivores.

It is easy for locals and politicians to proclaim that there has been explosion of wildlife numbers and the MoEF&CC immediately moves in to pat itself on its back proclaiming success of its conservation programs. Estimation techniques that are not scientifically robust enough are recently being used to tom-tom success of conservation. The media is quick enough to laud the success story and then this so-called success is justified to slaughter wildlife.

If robust scientific studies had been conducted, then we would have got better insights into the challenges. For example, farmers in many states often complain of crop destruction by wildboars (*Sus scrofa*) and demand license to kill them. However, surveys done by E.R. C. Davidar suggest that Wild boar populations are not stable.

"They seem to suffer from widely fluctuating numbers. There are years of boar drought followed by years of plenty when you see a pig in every bush. Disease could be the reason for this rise and fall. An animal that is subject to fluctuating fortunes in its status, deserves careful management, particularly since it is one of the principal prey species of the large carnivores". (Whispers from the Wild, Penguin Books, Page 155

<http://www.indiawilds.com/diary/whispers-from-the-wild/>)

Conservation News

If the Government undertakes tree plantation drives and plants native tree species in the fallow lands, unused revenue lands, then apart from giving a boost to carbon sequestration, it will also help our herbivores find food. One should remember that killing is easy. Taking a life takes just a second or as long as it takes to pull the trigger. However, we cannot create life. Once our forests are devoid of wildlife, there can be no going back. And generations to come will mourn the loss of wildlife, as we are mourning the loss of the Asiatic cheetah from our forests.

Unfortunately, MoEF&CC is too happy to pass orders to eliminate our wildlife. The way we are moving, it seems after the British the second war on wildlife has begun. This time the result of this war is obvious. India will be devoid of its wildlife in no time. Only if there are more voices raised against this “license to kill”, the Government may relent.

Blue whale sighted in Maharashtra coast

Blue whale, the biggest mammal on earth, has been sighted off Maharashtra coast. A group of marine biologists sighted a pair of blue whales near Kunkeshwar coast. The last sighting of Blue whale was about a hundred years ago in the year 1914, when a blue whale had got stranded on the Maharashtra coast.

This sighting of blue whale was done by the Konka Cetacean Research Team comprising Mihir Sule, Isha Bopardikar, Dipani Sutaria, Vardhan Patankar, and Ketki Jog, who had been surveying these waters since May 2014. Ketki Jog said that their boatmen first saw the huge shape of the blue whale emerging and informed the team. “No sooner had we seen the whale than we spotted the calf and followed them for a while. We took lots of photos and left them alone as the presence of the mother meant ‘don’t disturb’.”

Mr. N. Vasudevan, Maharashtra’s chief conservator of forest, mangrove cell said

that “Fewer than 10,000 blue whales, by one estimate, are on this planet and a live sighting — that too a mother and calf — is rare. We need to do further research to understand whether it is climate change or other changes in the sea that are causing these whales to come so close to the shore.”

In another incident a 40 feet long Blue Whale was washed ashore about 17kms from Alibaug, on the Revdanda coast in Raigad district of Maharashtra on 24th June. Thinking that the nearly 20 tonne whale got stranded due to low tide, the local fishermen and other people tried to push it back into the waters, but couldn’t succeed, as shifting such a massive weight is not possible without heavy machinery. After about 10 hours or so, the blue whale breathed its last on 25th June early morning.

Unfortunately, since no autopsy has been done due to lack of expertise, we have no idea about the reasons for such deaths. The blue whales are threatened world wide and are being hunted by the Japanese who defy the global calls for a ban against whaling. Presence of such iconic species in India’s coastal waters has the potential to boost tourism and also speaks about the richness of our biodiversity. Hence adequate measures are needed to research and document the presence of such species on India’s waters.

<http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/showthread.php?16577-Blue-whale-sighted-in-Maharashtra-waters-1914>

Conservation News

Turtle Trafficking

A case of turtle trafficking has come to notice when 280 turtles were recovered from the home of a villager near the India-Bangladesh border at Bongaon in North 24-Parganas on 6th June. The accused, Hafijur Rahaman, has been arrested.

Rahaman is said to have plans to smuggle the turtles into Bangladesh where they would have been sold.

The police team from the Bongaon police station, acting on a tip-off, raided Rahaman's home at Purbapara and found the turtles stashed in gunny bags in his courtyard.

"The turtles were found in 20 gunny bags. We are interrogating the accused. We are investigating if more people are involved in the racket," said Bhaskar Mukherjee, ASP, North 24-Parganas, adding the forest officials had been informed about the recovery.

<http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/showthread.php?16614-Nearly-280-turtles-seized-from-smuggler-in-Kolkata>

The other major route for smuggling turtles is through Chennai.

IndiaWilds App for Android Mobile

In India most of the internet penetration is happening through mobile phones. And the existing users who have access to desktops and laptops are becoming much more mobile then they used to be a few years ago. So to raise awareness and reach out to more people we need to adapt ourselves and make IndiaWilds easily accessed through a mobile phone using android OS.

Today, I am pleased to announce that we have created a mobile phone app so that people can access IndiaWilds anytime, anywhere without being tied to a computer. No need to type. One can access at the click of a button.

We have developed this app through Business Compass LLC a company based in Randolph, New Jersey, United States so that we create a good app.

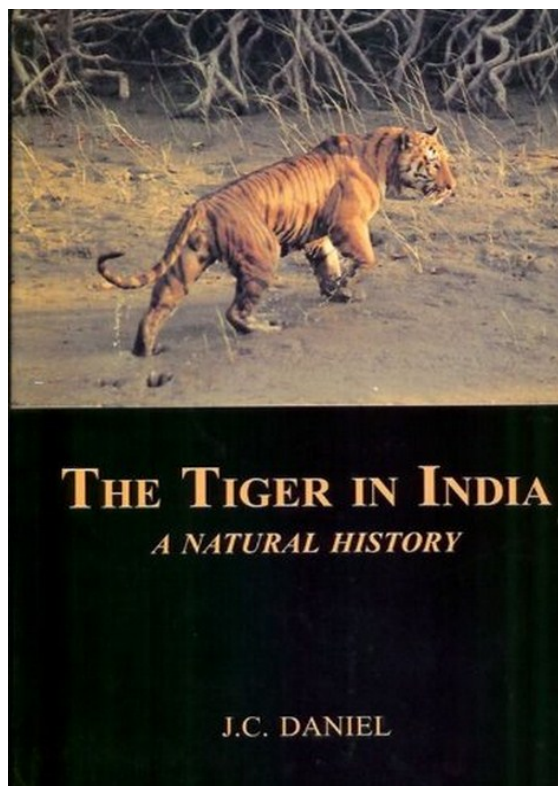
Awareness is the first step before a person can become a champion of wildlife. I hope this will help us in reaching out to more people to raise awareness and make a real impact on the conservation landscape. If you have an android device then please download the app from this link:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.businesscompassllc.indiawilds>

Book Review -

The Tiger in India – A Natural History By J. C. Daniel

'The Tiger in India – A Natural History' by the former curator of Bombay Natural History Society, Late J. C. Daniel is a compilation of information gleaned through the thousands of posts from the journals of the Bombay Natural History Society and presents the interesting ones.



Mr. Daniel has taken pains to segregate the information into various chapters based on the origin, various races, distribution and population, physical characteristics like colour and size, senses, habit and habitat, interaction with other denizens of the forests as well as interaction with man. A keen student of tiger would easily get lot of knowledge which is not possible otherwise as there has been a lot of change in circumstances and getting such experiences in the wild has become nearly impossible.

Walking/ Tiger Tracks

In the old days there were confusion about the tigers walking as there used to be differences in the distance between the track marks of fore and hind legs and at times the tracks were overlapping. The author quotes F.W. Champion and Dunbar Brandar.

Dunbar Brandar writes “If the tiger progresses more slowly, or with purposeful caution, the gap decreases, and in following up pug marks along a nala one comes on places where the tiger has been obviously ‘interested’ or has rounded a corner with great caution. In these circumstances one comes on places where the hind leg on the same side has been placed exactly over the spot vacated by the forefoot. Of course, this action reduced the speed and noise. It is possible that a tiger, hungry and hunting, might

continue this action over some distance, but it is not the tiger’s carefree, habitual action, it is controlled and purposeful action”. (page 99)



A wild tiger stalking its prey in Bandhavgarh National Park, India. The hind leg falls exactly at the same spot where its foreleg is, to minimise noise due to rustling of leaves.

Book Review -

Excellent Swimmers

Tigers are fond of water and during summers can be found lying in water to cool themselves. They are excellent swimmers and can cross great distances.



The wild tigress *panthera tigris tigris* gets out of water on the first signs of danger in Bandhavgarh National Park, India whereas the cub continues to cool off

K. M. Bataye mentions an incident where a tiger appears to have purposefully kept his kill in a deep pool. “A tiger had killed a ‘boda’ (buffalo calf) close to the bank of a river, some fifty yards wide, which flows into the Narbudda. ...I found that the carcass of the ‘boda’ was floating in the centre of the river...I had no means of collecting the carcass from the pool, which was deep and probably contained at least one mugger, and the ‘Korku’ with me preferred to trot back to camp and bring another live ‘boda’ than venture into the water. At about 9 pm. I heard the tiger approaching noisily over dead leaves, and expected it to attack the live ‘boda’ any minute. Instead, it walked down to the river bank, swam out to the carcass and returned to the bank with it slightly slower down stream, out of view of the machan. The tiger left the carcass which still contained the stomach and intestines during the early hours of the morning, but when it became light the carcass was again in mid-stream”. (Page 100-101)

P. Garga writes “The nearest to Sunderbans one could set from within the district of Midnapur was at Khedgerie in Contai Subdivision 18 miles across the river Hooghly, to what is now known as Frasergunj, which is at present devoid of any jungle. But even until 1922, while the deforestation in progress was incomplete, tigers cross this 18 mile wide fast flowing river and were killed by the villagers at Khedgerie”.

Book Review -



Wild tiger cub swimming behind its mother in water in Bandhavgarh National Park, India. Tigers are excellent swimmers.

J. C. Daniel has compiled several incidents reported about tigers young and old climbing a tree.

Smell and hearing

Tigers have acute sense of hearing. However, their sense of smell has been accepted as rudimentary. The author quotes Dunbar Brandar about his experiences with a pet tiger. “Some years ago I had the good fortune to procure a young tiger which I reared under the most natural circumstances and which used to run about loose in camp with the dogs. The following experiments were often repeated. His food, say a pig’s leg, would be taken away from him and hung up so as to be some seven feet off the ground, and when the tiger was led under and past it he seemed to be quite unaware of its presence. Again, when he had carried off his “joint” to the surrounding grass, I have taken him off it, and shifted the joint, trailing it along the grass. The tiger would return to the exact spot where it been, and then proceed to hunt round in circles for it, he never followed the scent, and what is more significant never attempted to. Wild tigers find a shifted “kill” in exactly the same way if it was out of sight. I consider that these experiments prove that the tiger’s sense of smell is less than that of man, and a tiger has failed to scent me under circumstances which, had they been reverse, would have enabled a man endowed with ordinary powers of smell to discover a tiger”.

Mating Behaviour:

J. C. Daniel quotes lot of valuable data from an article by A. K. Das about tiger reproductive behaviour as observed in captivity. “The duration of gestation period in the present observation has been estimated as the period from the last day of mating to birth, and the mean period was 103; and the maximum and minimum were 107 and 101 days respectively. In Calcutta Zoo, seven tigresses mated with the males in 48 heat periods from 1965 to 1977. Out of 48 mating or heat periods, pregnancy occurred in 22 cases and did not occur in 26 cases. The percentage of pregnancy is, therefore, 45.8% only and

Book Review -

non-pregnancy is 54.2%. It was observed that the number of heat periods and percentage, of pregnancy were less when both sexes lived together except at night”.



Wild Tigers mating

Methods of killing prey

The method of killing prey is an oft discussed topic. Some hunters who have watched tiger kill live buffalo baits protest that neck dislocation is not the method of killing employed by a tiger. J. C. Daniel has culled various points of view for and against it, written by various sports persons from the pages of the BNHS journal.



Tigress and cub feeding on a Sambar kill. This image shows the broken neck of the Sambar.

Book Review -

The valedictory chapter of the book talks about the struggle for survival. It tells us the story of E. P. Gee's estimates of tiger and other wildlife numbers from E. P. Gee's book "The Wildlife in India" published in 1963. The estimates of wildlife numbers were from the present population of that time as well as those 50 years ago.

The author nicely summarises the predicament about tiger conservation when he says that "The tiger is probably the species which has received the most publicity, and had more money spent on efforts for its conservation than any other species of Indian wildlife. Yet the tiger keeps sliding towards extinction. Apparently, it is not a sudden process but has been accelerating in the last fifty years". Peter Jackson and Elizabeth Kemf wrote, in the 1999 WWF Species Status Report, that "since the turn of the century its habitat and numbers have been reduced by 95 percent. For a million years the 'King of the Jungle' lorded over a territory extending from eastern Turkey to the Russian Far East, its forest home extending northward to Siberia and southward into Bali. In this century alone the Bali, Javan and Caspian tigers have become extinct. Tragically, the remaining five subspecies are at risk of meeting the same fate".

The author J. C. Daniel ends his book by writing "How long the tiger will survive in the new millennium depends on how intelligently the problems facing its survival are managed. Judging from the present achievement, the future is bleak".

This book is highly recommended not only for the scholars and researchers who are looking at additional information and data, but also for the budding wildlife enthusiasts to get valuable info. The book is easy reading and since it talks about a bygone era, even layman will find it interesting to read.

I had bought this book when it was first published in 2001. This hard bound book published by Nataraj Publishers contains 300 pages and is priced at **495 rupees**. One can order directly from the Publishers or hunt for it online.

Equipment Discussions -

Sony announces the New A7 R Mark II Camera

Sony has announced a new 42.4 MP mirrorless camera with 4 K internal video recording capability at 3198 usd.



Salient Features:

Sensor: Full frame sensor, “world’s first back illuminated” Exmor R CMOS sensor

Sensitivity: ISO range of 100 to 25600 and expandable to ISO 50 to 102400.

AF response: 40% faster than original a7R

Image Stabilisation: 5 axis image stabilisation. Sony claims 4.5 stops stabilisation.

Video resolution: 4K in Super 35mm and full frame.

Codec: XAVC S codec during video shooting, which records at a high bit rate of 100 Mbps during 4K recording and 50 Mbps during full HD shooting.

Shutter cycle: 500,000

Silent shooting mode: The a7R II can be set to Silent Shooting mode to shoot images quietly without any sensor vibration or movement.

Auto Focus: 399 Phase-Detect AF Points & 5 fps Burst

EVF: 0.5" 2.36M-Dot XGA OLED Tru-Finder EVF

LCD Monitor: 3.0" 1,228.8k-Dot Tilting LCD Monitor

WiFi: Built-In Wi-Fi Connectivity with NFC

Equipment Discussions -

Video specific features: S-Log2 Gamma and S-Gamut, time code, clean HDMI output.

Cost: \$3198 US dollars

You can **buy it** from B&H using the following link: <http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product...990/KBID/13252>

Official Sony Press Release

Sony's New a7R II Camera Delivers Innovative Imaging Experience with World's First Back-Illuminated 35mm Full-Frame Sensor

Sony's Flagship Mirrorless Camera Features 42.4 MP Back-illuminated CMOS sensor, In-camera 5-axis Image Stabilization, Internal 4K Video Recording, Silent Shooting, Fast Hybrid AF and more

NEW YORK, June 10, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Sony Electronics, a worldwide leader in digital imaging and the world's largest image sensor manufacturer, has today introduced their new flagship full-frame mirrorless camera, the a7R II (model ILCE-7RM2).

The new a7R II interchangeable lens camera features the world's first back-illuminated full-frame Exmor R CMOS sensor, which realizes high resolution (42.4 MP approx. effective megapixels), high sensitivity (expandable up to ISO 102400) and high speed AF response up to 40% faster than the original a7R thanks to 399 focal plane phase detection AF points. The camera also includes a 5-axis image stabilization system borrowed from the acclaimed a7 II model and can shoot and record 4K video in multiple formats including Super 35mm (without pixel binning) and full-frame format, a world's first for digital cameras. Additionally, it has a newly refined XGA OLED Tru-Finder with the world's highest (0.78x) viewfinder magnification.

"Sony continues to deliver game-changing imaging products that are changing the way imaging enthusiasts, hobbyists and professionals can see and capture the world," said Mike Fasulo, President of Sony Electronics.

Kimio Maki, Senior General Manager of Digital imaging Business Group for Sony Corporation, added "By harmonizing high resolution, sensitivity and speed, we're delivering a high-level full-frame imaging experience unlike anything else in market today, with Sony's newly developed, world's first back-illuminated 35mm full frame CMOS sensor."

High Resolution, High Sensitivity and High-Speed Response

The newly developed 42.4 MP back-illuminated CMOS sensor is the most advanced, versatile and highest resolution full-frame image sensor that Sony has ever created, allowing the a7R II to reach new levels of quality, sensitivity and response speed. In the past, many photographers have been forced to choose between high-resolution and high-speed or high resolution and high sensitivity when selecting a camera. The new a7R II eliminates that sacrifice thanks to its innovative image sensor.

The 42.4 MP sensor combines gapless on-chip lens design and AR (anti-reflective) coating on the surface of the sensor's glass seal to dramatically improve light collection efficiency, resulting in high sensitivity with low-noise performance and wide dynamic range. This allows the camera to shoot at an impressive ISO range of 100 to 25600 that is expandable to ISO 50 to 102400.

Additionally, the sensor's back-illuminated structure, with an expanded circuit scale and copper wiring design, enables faster transmission speed and ensures content can be captured in high resolution without sacrificing sensitivity. Data can also be output from the sensor at an approximately 3.5x faster rate compared to the original a7R.

An ideal match for Sony's extensive collection of FE lenses (35mm full-frame compatible E-mount lenses), the new a7R II

Equipment Discussions -

features a high-speed BIONZ X image processing engine that allows images and video from the camera to be captured with supreme details and low noise. There is also no optical low pass filter on the camera, ensuring that scenery and landscapes are captured in the highest possible resolution and clarity.

The a7R II has a new highly durable reduced-vibration shutter that realizes 50% less vibration from shutter movements compared to its predecessor, and has a cycle durability of approximately 500,000 shots. The camera can also be set to Silent Shooting mode in order to shoot images quietly without any sensor vibration or movement.

The new image sensor features 399 focal-plane phase-detection AF points – the world's widest AF coverage on a full-frame sensor – that work together with 25 contrast AF points to achieve focus response that is about 40% faster than the original model. The a7R II utilizes an advanced motion-detection algorithm combined with this Fast Hybrid AF system to achieve up to 5fps continuous shooting with AF tracking.

Additionally, the focal plane phase-detection AF system on the a7R II works well with Sony A-mount lenses when they are mounted on the camera using an LA-EA3 or LA-EA1 mount adapter. This allows users to enjoy the wide AF coverage of 399 focal plane phase-detection AF points, high-speed response and high tracking performance with a wider range of lenses. This marks the first time that the AF system of a mirrorless camera can achieve high performance with lenses originally designed for DSLRs.

5-Axis Image Stabilization Optimized for 42.4 MP

The new flagship a7R II model is equipped with an innovative 5-axis image stabilization system that has been fine-tuned to support its high-resolution shooting capacity. Similar to the system launched on the acclaimed a7 II model, this advanced form of image stabilization corrects camera shake along five axes during shooting, including angular shake (pitch and yaw) that tends to occur with a telephoto lens, shift shake (X and Y axes) which becomes noticeable as magnification increases, and rotational shake (roll) that often affects video recording. This camera shake compensation system is equivalent to shooting at a shutter speed approximately 4.5 steps faster.

Additionally, the 5-axis stabilization works cooperatively with Sony alpha lenses with optical SteadyShot™ (OSS) to provide maximum stabilization and clarity, while also performing admirably via a compatible mount adapter with Sony alpha A-mount lenses without on-board stabilization. Effects of the stabilization can be previewed via live-view on the LCD or OLED viewfinder of the camera.

Unrivaled 4K Movie Shooting Performance

The impressive video credentials of Sony's new a7R II camera include the ability to record movies in 4K quality (QFHD 3840x2160) in either Super 35mm crop mode or full-frame mode.

In Super 35mm mode, the camera collects a wealth of information from approximately 1.8x as many pixels as 4K by using full pixel readout without pixel binning and oversamples the information to produce 4K movies with minimal moiré and 'jaggies'.

In full-frame mode, the a7R II utilizes the full width of the 35mm sensor for 4K recording, allowing users to utilize the expanded expressive power of the sensor. It is the world's first digital camera to offer this in-camera full-frame format 4K recording capacity.

The camera utilizes the advanced XAVC S codec during video shooting, which records at a high bit rate of 100 Mbps during 4K recording and 50 Mbps during full HD shooting.

Additionally, the a7R II model features a variety of functions to support a professional video workflow including Picture Profile, S-Log2 Gamma and S-Gamut, 120fps high frame rate movie shooting in HD (720p), time code, clean HDMI out-

Equipment Discussions -

put and more.

Enhanced Design, Operability and Reliability

The new full-frame a7R II has an upgraded XGA OLED Tru-Finder™ with a double-sided aspherical lens that delivers the world's highest viewfinder magnification of 0.78x for crystal clear image preview and playback across the entire display area. ZEISS® T* Coating is also utilized to reduce unwanted reflections that interfere with the shooting experience.

The camera has an extremely solid, professional feel in-hand thanks to its light, rigid magnesium alloy design, and has a re-designed grip and shutter button compared to its predecessor. There is also a new mechanism to conveniently lock the mode dial, and an expanded range of customizable functions and buttons to suit the most demanding photographers.

The new a7R II camera is Wi-Fi® and NFC compatible and fully functional with Sony's PlayMemories Mobile™ application available for Android™ and iOS platforms, as well as Sony's growing range of PlayMemories Camera Apps™, which add a range of creative capabilities to the camera. For example, there is more creativity available now for time-lapse photography thanks to a new "Angle Shift add-on" app allows users to easily add pan, tilt and zoom to time-lapse images without any additional shooting equipment or PC software required.

Sony has also introduced a new LCD monitor model CLM-FHD5, an ideal companion to the a7R II for video shooting. A compact 5.0 type Full HD (1920x1080p) LCD monitor, the CLM-FHD5 features enlarging and peaking functionality for precise focusing, false color and video level marker for adjusting exposure and S-Log display assist to assist S-Log shooting.

Availability: 17th June

Buy it from B&H using the following link:

<http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product...990/KBID/13252>

Equipment Discussions -

Canon launches the Powershot G3 X with 24-600mm zoom

Canon's latest Powershot G3 X camera is virtually a mini powerhouse camera.



Salient Specs:

Zoom range: 25x zoom equivalent to 24-600mm. From a decent wide angle of 24mm this camera goes all the way to 600mm.

Sensor size: 1 inch CMOS

Resolution: 20.2 megapixel

ISO: 125 to 12,800

Processor: Digic 6

Auto Focus: 31 point AF.

Continuous Shooting speed: 5.9 frames per second.

Dust and water resistance

EOS Digital camera style features with fully manual controls, this camera can shoot in RAW as well as JPEG or both.

Weight: 733 gms

Size: 4.84 inch x 3.03 inch x 4.13 inch

LCD: A bright 3.2-inch adjustable screen with Multi-Angle capacitive touch panel LCD screen with 1.62 million dot resolution. The adjustable screen will help in low level shots for wildlife or kids and holding it high up in the air and pointing

Equipment Discussions -

down like photo journalists and can also be tilted 180 degrees when you feel like clicking selfies.

Video Features: 1080p Full HD video (at 24p, 30p, and 60p in MP4 format)

This camera has External stereo microphone jack, a headphone jack for audio monitoring while recording, and manual control of exposure and audio levels. A camera like a 5D Mark III doesn't have an external jack head phone monitoring but this camera has.

The camera also features live HDMI output while recording allowing for direct connection to external video recorders as well as convenient playback of recorded movies on an HDTV.

Built in WiFi: The built-in WiFi mode with NFC will help in directly uploading the images and videos to youtube, facebook, twitter through Canon Image Gateway or to iOS or Android phones and then to social media.

From a wildlife shooters perspective the 600mm maximum zoom is massive. A lot of you will now be able to shoot like professionals with closeups of the tigers and birds during your wildlife safaris. The lowlight performance will obviously not be as good as high end DSLRs, however, in good light, the amateurs can click images that can be virtually indistinguishable from Pros. I think because of its size, professionals may also prefer this camera, especially in situations where people don't want to attract attention towards them and shoot.

Price: 999.99 us dollars

Buy this at B&H by clicking this link: <http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/produ...990/KBID/I3252>

Natural History -

COUNTRY NOTEBOOK: M.Krishnan: 'Bear at high noon'

The Sunday Statesman: 14-June-2015 (shared by Shri. Saktipada Panigrahi)

" AT half-past eleven I decided to call it a day. We were six miles from home, at least an hour and a half for a pad-elephant taking it slow on hilltop tracks under an oppressive sun. We had been following a herd of Gaur for over two hours, gaining nothing by our persistence. So now, accepting defeat, we turned home.

On the way there was a sandy nullah and beyond it the only large field of lush grass there in summer. Three days previously, I had seen the almost human footprints of a Sloth Bear in that nullah and I now suggested a slight detour so that to pass through that field of four-foot-high grass, still tender in patches. Bears are very fond of young grass and apparently they are not so shy of daylight in grassy cover - twice before I have seen bears in such places, around four in the afternoon.



The mahout, my only companion, didn't think much of my idea. Bears, he argued, were nocturnal; it was well known that they were nocturnal or, at best, crepuscular. No bear in its senses would be out at noon, under that blistering sun, though some men would.

Furthermore, he would ask me to consider the inevitable delay in getting home, once our mount got into a field of green grass.

We were still debating the point when I entered the field, and I saw the Bear. Actually, what I saw was not a Bear but something coal-back and round, well inside the grass. Before I could warn my companion, he shouted at our elephant for stopping to sample the herbage, and the bear heard him.

Surprised in such tangled cover, Bears usually stand up on their hind legs, better to see the intruder. This one did no such thing. He had his back to us, with his head low and only the humped back and rounded posterior visible through the grass stems, and he turned sharply to the right and galloped away, with that heavy, clownishly exaggerated action that bears have, which is no longer comic when they are comic towards one. After going some distance, he pulled up, rudely turned his

back on us again, and was a black ball in the grass once more.

This manoeuvre was repeated, when we moved nearer.

There are times when a man, retailing an experience, should tactfully omit a detail, in the interests of verisimilitude. But what I noticed was so particular, so altogether droll and improbable, that I am willing to risk such reputation as I have for accuracy to record the detail. Twice I noticed that the Bear was watching us from between legs, getting an upside-down view of us by bending its head so low that his chin touched his chest. The first time I could see both eyes clearly, between the somewhat straddled legs; only one eye, in a somewhat lateral view, the second time.

Never I have seen any other animal watch an intruder in such a fashion, excepting a Langur on tree once - and even that Langur looked downwards and backwards at me from above; it did not bow so low that the eyes looked up and back from the inverted face at the object of suspicion.

We tried another slow casual seeming approach, but that canny Bear was watching us narrowly, and was not to be fooled. When we were still some 30 yards away, he dived to a patch of taller grass, and by the agitation that ridged the grass tops in a wave we could make out that he was bearing steadily towards right, out of the field and back to the nullah we had crossed so recently.

There was a sandy hollow where the field ended, with half-a-dozen tall trees in a clump, and we arrived at this clump only a second after the bear did. Seeing us, he reared against the trunk of a 'Terminalia' - a big Terminalia of the kind whose bark is so reminiscent of crocodile-skin. For a moment he stood in indecision, hugging the rough bark - and for a moment my photographer's heart leaped up with joy, for I was sure he would go right up, and I would get the first pictures ever taken of a Sloth Bear climbing a tree.

He glanced at us, and then looked longingly up the trunk, and then decided to keep to terra firma. I know it is all wrong to interpret or record animal behaviour with any hint of anthropomorphism, but it is equally wrong not to record what one saw. Had you been there with me, you could have seen the Bear thinking - one quick look at us, a longer look at the trunk, and he was away. We lost sight of him as he tore down the hollow, then we saw him again as he scrambled up the other side of the nullah. There was a narrow belt of shorter grass that he had to cross before he could reach the tree jungle, but he didn't cross it. He entered the grass, and then suddenly he was no longer there, vanishing from the sight mysteriously. He has gone down a bolt-hole I knew.

Bears are, I think, the most interesting of our forest-living beasts, so strangely human in some ways. It is no surprise that our folklore and Puranas are so rich in melursine characters, and that in our jungleside traditions Sloth Bears are the only animals that seek out and carry away village belles. It is not merely that the plantigrade feet of the bear leave behind such semi-human prints, or that the carcass of a skinned bear is so horribly like a man - even a live bear, standing up and with the head turned away, looks very like a man. I think the droll ways of these bears, their strong mutual attachments, and their love of fruit and other jungle dainties that men also like (including the toddy in the pot up a wild date palm), have all contributed to those traditions. Only, the traditions have outlasted this wholly Indian and fascinating creature, in many of its former homes."

-M. Krishnan

This was first published on 13 December 1959 in The Sunday Statesman

Image of the Month -

Small Pratincole Juvenile by Mangru Minz

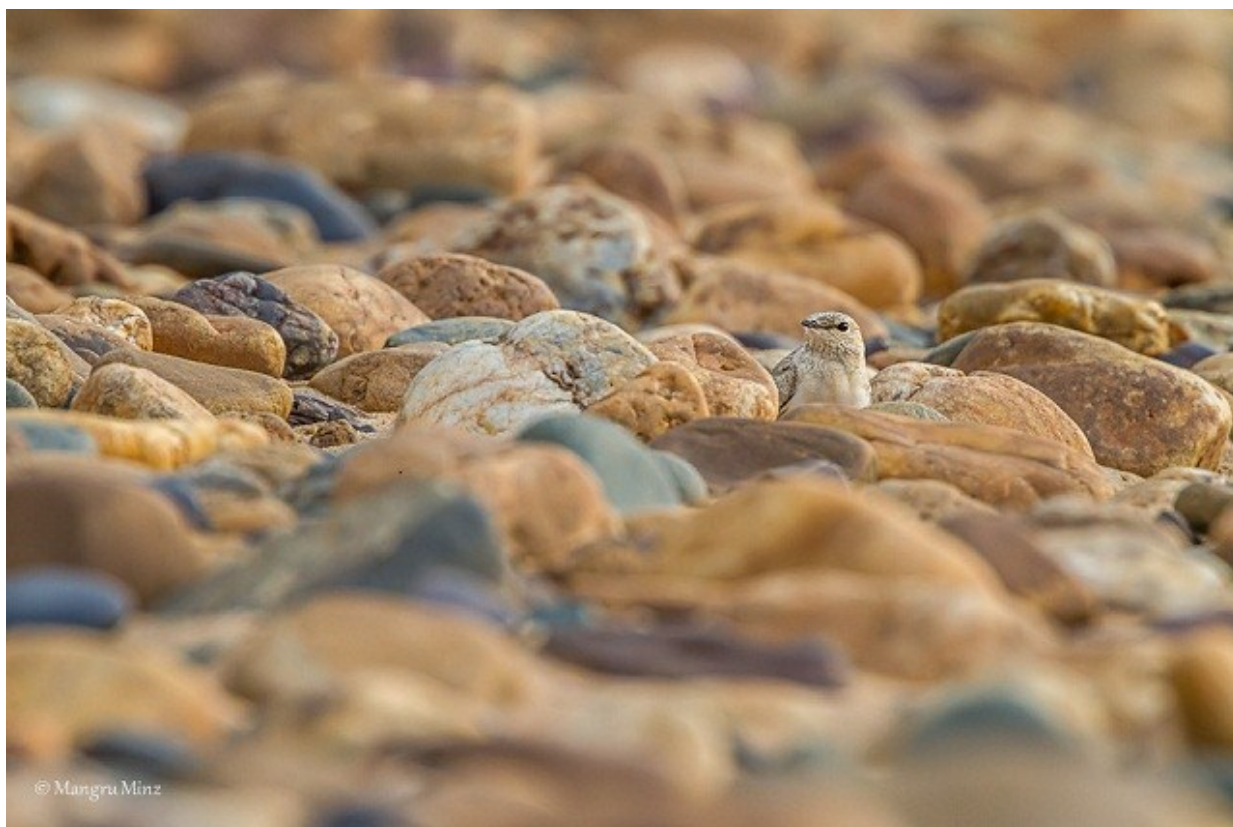
The honour for the Image of the Month for May 2015 goes to Mangru Minz's image titled Small Pratincole Juvenile. I liked the low angle, the nice display of habitat. Nice environmental image. Congratulations!

Congratulations Mangru!

The image details:

Image clicked at River Koel, outskirts of Rourkela .

Clicked with Canon 7D and 400mm f4 DO with 1.4x TC at f8, 1/250 second, ISO 400, EC: -0.3, Full frame image.

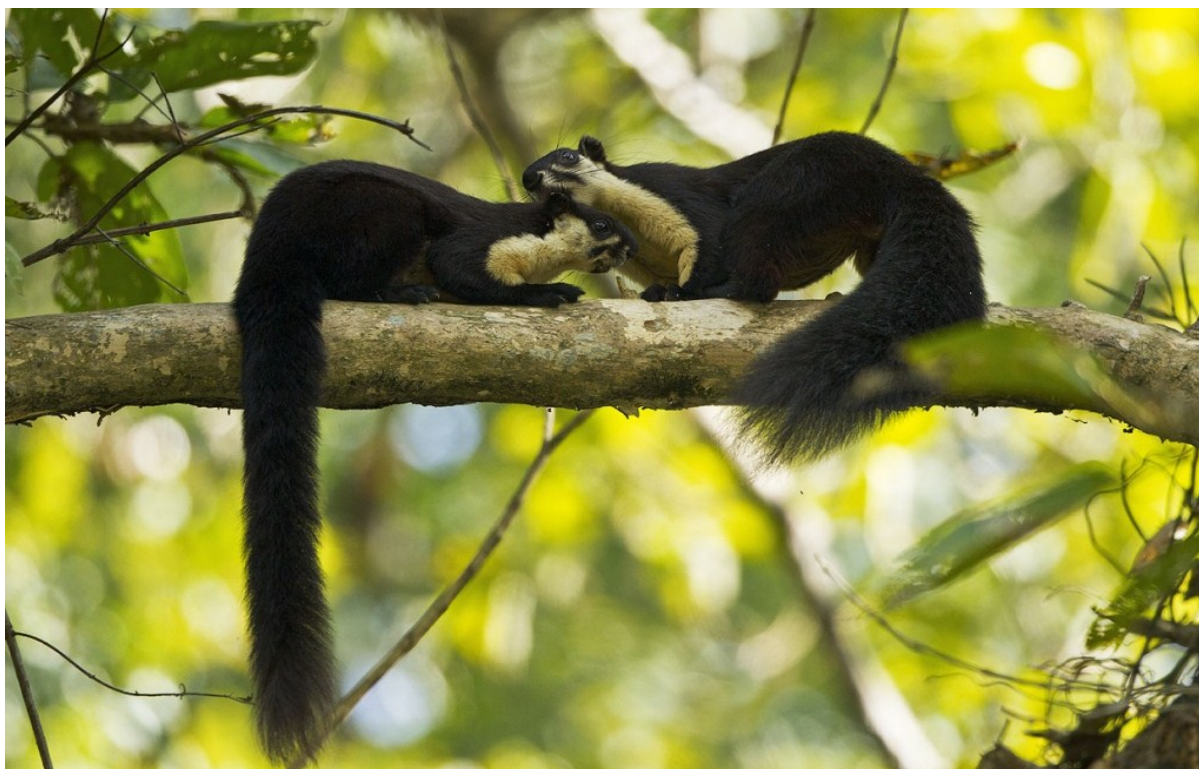


Wildlife Photography -

Kabini elephants by Shyamala Kumar



Malayan Giant Squirrel from Manas by Samrat Sarkar



Wildlife Photography -

Flamingoes from LRK by Mrudul Godbole



Jungle Bush Quail by Sucheth Lingachar



Wildlife Photography -

Milky way by Jitendra Katre



A Sunset by Abhishek Jamalabad



© Abhishek Jamalabad

Wildlife Photography -

Cute bronzeback by Prajwal Ullal



Malabar Pit viper by Bibhav Behera





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/>

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Regards,

Sabyasachi Patra

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