

HORNBILL

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FEATURES

The Legacy of Jim Corbett

Why do some people continue to admire and glorify Jim Corbett so much; after all he was merely a hunter? **A.J.T. Johnsingh, G.S. Rawat, and Vishal Ohri** present some instances of his writings and life experiences that highlight his fine qualities, not only as a hunter, but also a man with a golden heart.



A Wild Affair

Spotting a tiger in the wild is a priceless memory for any wildlife enthusiast. For **Shalini Gopalakrishnan**, her wild affair with the Royal Bengal Tiger began after she had a mere glimpse of its tail during an outing. Since then, she has visited the tiger in its natural habitat several times, and yearns for more sightings of it.

PHOTO FEATURE

The Flowers of Kaas

The mesmerizing Kaas landscape transforms into a riot of colours after the onset of the south-west monsoon each year, when a diverse array of wildflowers burst into bloom.

Asif N. Khan takes us on a visual journey through this botanical wonderland nestled in the heart of the Western Ghats.



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Editorial...

Social Media and Nature Conservation

At no time in the past has there been so much awareness on the need to protect nature, and the credit for this goes to the emergence of social media, which has become a powerful tool for raising awareness about nature conservation; the number of interest groups on the internet vouch for it. You name it and there is a group on nature for that topic. Social media fosters the creation of online communities dedicated to nature conservation. These communities provide space for like-minded individuals to exchange ideas, share experiences, and collaborate on conservation projects. Personally, I have benefitted immensely for my interest in butterflies, from my interactions with people on these groups. Besides India, I now have friends in neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka, and also in the butterfly groups of Singapore, Thailand, and Hong Kong. There is so much flow of information among these groups. And as an unwritten rule, we never discuss politics. We are at peace with each other.

These groups often play a pivotal role in the global effort to protect our planet's fragile ecosystems and biodiversity. This digital revolution has enabled individuals, organizations, and activists to reach unprecedented audiences, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and mobilizing action for the preservation of nature. The immense global reach that these platforms offer helps in allowing amateurs, as well as serious conservationists, to connect with people from all corners of the world. It enables rapid sharing of information about endangered species, habitat destruction, and environmental issues on a scale that was unimaginable.

It has become so convenient to conduct online workshops, discussions, and presentations. We, in the Butterfly Groups, organize Butterfly Meets every year for the group members and even involve forest officials to make partnerships work towards nature conservation, which has resulted in very fruitful interactions. Such meets also allow us to step out from the virtual social media domain to interact in person. It helps in encouraging the younger audience when elders meet and endorse their work. Such meets are generally held in places where one would not have gone otherwise, and met people in the remote corners of India. This has been possible only because of social media.

The most delightful aspect among these groups is sharing of photos and videos. Stunning images of endangered animals, pristine landscapes, and the devastating effects of pollution can evoke powerful emotions, driving the viewer to support conservation efforts or change his or her behaviour. Such platforms provide space for compelling storytelling. Conservationists can share narratives about the struggles of endangered species, successful rehabilitation efforts, and their tireless work on the ground. These stories create empathy and engagement among followers.

Be it for crowdfunding campaigns or donations for conservation, social media is the best way to reach people. Some platforms allow individuals and organizations to raise funds for specific conservation initiatives, making it easier for people to contribute for the cause they care about.



Indian Sunbeam (male)

Another important impact of social media is that it serves as an educational resource. Informative posts, infographics, and articles increase public knowledge about environmental issues and help in understanding the importance of biodiversity, ecosystems, and the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Even advocacy campaigns on social media have an effective reach. They facilitate organization of grassroots movements, enabling conservationists to use hashtags, file petitions, and hold online events to mobilize support for policy changes, and to raise awareness about pressing environmental issues.

The best part is that social media allows for real-time updates on environmental crises, such as wildfires, oil spills, or deforestation. This enables rapid response and coordinated efforts among the affected, and can bring help more quickly. Even for researchers, social media is truly a blessing as it is an easy access to reference material and experts.

Many influencers use their platforms to promote environmental causes. Collaborating with such influencers, who have a large and engaged following, can exponentially increase the reach and impact of conservation campaigns. Governments and corporations could be held accountable for their environmental policies and practices. Public pressure generated on social media can influence decision-makers to adopt more sustainable policies.

However, it is important to note that while social media offers numerous benefits for nature conservation, it has its own challenges including the spread of misinformation, “clicktivism” (superficial engagement without real action), and potential for information overload. Therefore, it is crucial to use social media strategically, with well-researched and accurate content, to ensure that efforts translate into meaningful action and positive change for the environment.