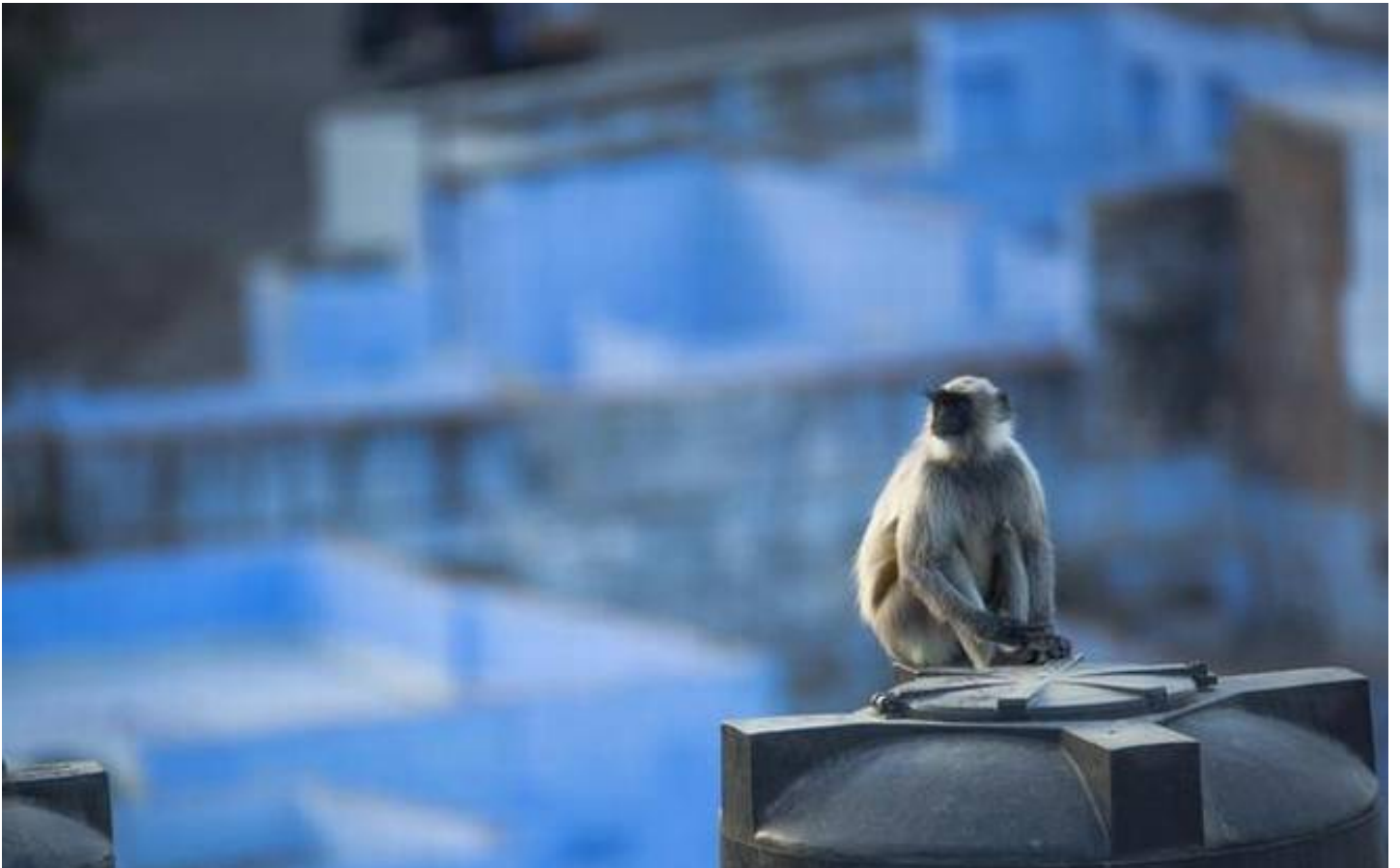


ENTERTAINMENT

One with the world

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As National Geographic's mega live show Earth Live goes on air this morning, wildlife cinematographer Sandesh Kadur talks about the importance of capturing a slice of animal life in environment conservation

Considering its scale, reach and coverage, the much talked about National Geographic's *Earth Live*, a two-hour live broadcast by world's leading wildlife cinematographers, can be called an epic television show. Covering key locations across six continents, it will be simulcast in 171 countries and 45 languages. From hyenas of Ethiopia to rare and elusive ocelots, from Mexican free-tailed bats in Texas to beluga whale breeding grounds at Canada, from lion

prides at Kenya's Masai Mara to flamingos in Mexico , it will be global wildlife non-stop. In India it will be telecast early morning today.

From India well known photographer and filmmaker Sandesh Kadur is showcasing the Old World monkeys, langurs. Calling it a privilege to be part of the show, he says what makes it different is not merely the scale and scope. "Capturing what is happening at the very moment makes it organic for the audience as sitting at their homes they watch slices of animal world like never before. A documentary normally is shot over years and then edited but in this case you see live action of varied animals at different places and time. In India, shooting in the morning will give a chance to show langurs coming down from their roosting trees and interacting while in Africa the lions will be seen hunting at night and Mexican free-tailed bats in Bracken Cave leaving their subterranean home. This makes it special."



Long association

On being asked on choice of langurs, Sandesh explains, “Last year, we had a done a recce of Rajasthan and spotted leopards but then one can never be sure of seeing them again at the same spot. Another choice was the endangered lion tailed macques in Western Ghats but shooting them online would have been tough. So langurs of Mandore Gardens, Jodhpur were zeroed on. Being unique and fascinating people, they can be filmed online as they have been staying there for long.”

His association with langurs goes a long way. “I have clicked their pictures several times. I remember once the black and white images of langur in the blue background setting was a beautiful and surreal experience. It touches me see how people in Jodhpur revere them, keeping aside food for them. In fact, the langurs too visit the same households.” Going by his past experience, Sandesh hopes to get some fascinating frames. “I have witnessed in the past a male langur zealously guarding his flock from another intruding male. It was all high-energy action like fast-paced cinema,” he quips. Set to use the best of the gear for shooting, Sandesh will be using camcorders and special lens. “Lens are very crucial. So we will use superwide for close wide angle shots and telephoto to shoot langurs from far.”

With several international filmmakers being part of the show, Sandesh is thrilled. “Steve Winters who shot tigers and snow leopards in India extensively for many years will focus on ocelot while Andy Brandy Casagrande, who worked with me on a film on king cobras, is shooting sharks in Fiji.”

Given the project’s enormity, Sandesh feels it will go beyond entertainment, leaving an indelible impact on the audience. “Globally more people need to get in touch with nature and natural world as we are getting disengaged from it. With TV and internet becoming world’s biggest classrooms, such programmes can get people know about plants and animals making them inspired and interested in their conservation.”

Emphasising that photographs and films go a long way in this, Sandesh gives the example of the US. “Pictures have helped establishing national parks there. In India, they impact people’s perception, policy making and bringing areas into spotlight. My work on Western Ghats, a coffee table book *Sahyadris – India’s Western Ghats* submitted to UNESCO along other documents by the Wild Life Institute of India got several areas there being declared as heritage sites.” For documentaries with far-reaching effect, he talks about those by Chennai-based Shekar Dattari. “I admire his short films which are observational. His *Mindless Mining – The Tragedy of Kudremukh* played a pivotal role in halting mining operation there while *The Ridley’s Last Stand* bolstered conservation advocacy groups’ efforts.”

Documentation in India, Sandesh believes, needs to be broadened. “Most people rush to click pictures and filming tigers, leopards and lions while ignoring species like frogs and insects which may not be big and charismatic but are integral part of nature. Our aim should be to bring more subtle beings in focus.”

With wildlife and its conservation not being given the required emphasis in schools and colleges to enthuse youngsters enough, Sandesh feels pictures and films can play a vital role. Taking his example he says, “I was inspired as a young boy looking at images in magazines and books. That is what got me going.” He recollects his father, Dr. Vishwanath an entomologist showing him ants, beetles and other insects while getting him interested in photography. Studying in the US, he took this hobby to the next level by making documentaries.

Having devoted years to this profession, Sandesh harps on the importance of research. “One needs to put oneself at the right place and at the right time. That is only possible through arduous and hard research because then only can one zero on where to be and at what time of the year.” What about luck? “That too plays a part but you cannot discount research. Apart from that wildlife documentation requires 3 Ps – passion, patience and perseverance.” In fact, it was this mantra that allowed him to film the never captured before behaviour of three tigers feeding on a rhino carcass after a gruelling wait for six days. Similarly, his shooting the courting, fighting, mating and nest building in the film on king cobra is too rare footage.

Providing a pragmatic view on development versus conservation conundrum, Sandesh says, “You cannot deny that we need development to ensure livelihood for a huge population but at the same time we must ensure that protected areas remain intact. Further corridors need to be created between fragmented habitat so that gene pools do not get stagnated.”

(Repeat telecast at 8 p.m.)

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