



## Bookshelf

# Sacred Nature

by Angela and Jonathan Scott

Wildlife photographers **Jonathan** and **Angela Scott** showcase the best of nature. **Oliver Atwell** uncovers a stark warning amid the beauty

Published by  
HPH Publishing  
Price £39  
ISBN  
978-0-99469-  
240-5, hardback,  
288 pages

★★★★★

A question we ask of many photographic genres in this magazine is, what purpose does it serve? What makes a good landscape, street or portrait image? What should a viewer feel and experience when they see it? These are also the questions to ask of nature photography when flicking through the pages of this new book from author and wildlife photographer couple, Angela and Jonathan Scott.

They've worked for several years to raise awareness of the awe-inspiring and boundless beauty of nature. However, their aim is not simply to highlight beautiful animals and their habitats. Instead, it is to show us what we stand to lose if man's rapacious nature continues unabated.

Our planet's ecosystem is undergoing a radical and perhaps irreversible shift. As

John Higgs in his book *Stranger Than We Can Imagine* points out, extinctions are occurring at a horrifying rate – somewhere between 100 and 1,000 times the normal background level. We're now in what has become known as the 'sixth extinction'. To put it in context, the fifth great extinction occurred 65 million years ago when a comet or asteroid destroyed 75% of the planet's plant and animal species, including the dinosaurs. That's where we are now, except the extinction is spreading like a cancer across the planet.

It's with this in mind that the work of photographers such as Jonathan and Angela Scott becomes all the more vital. When AP talked to Art Wolfe (*Nature and nurture*, 10 December) he made the valid point that people are affected by the



Elephant and hail storm. Canon EOS-1D X, 70-300mm, 1/320sec at f/4.5, ISO 250

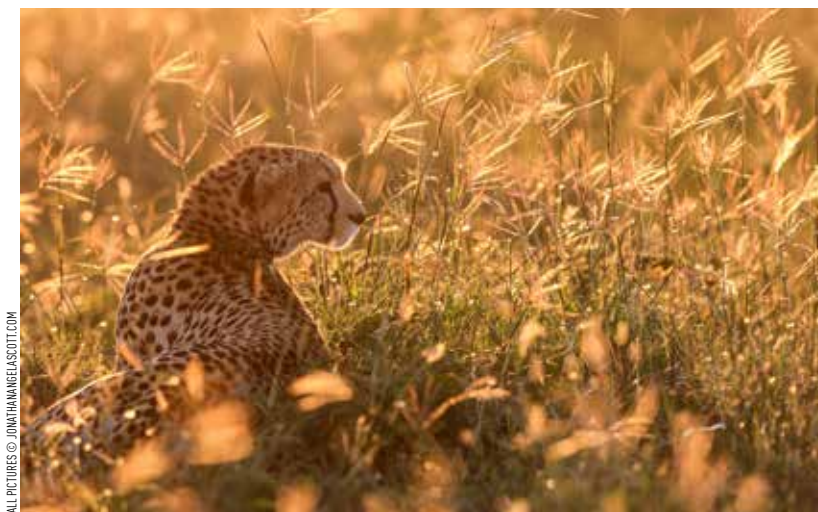
visual. People respond to images, and when there's a beautiful or impactful image that actually connects people to things – such as animals – they may not otherwise encounter, then that serves to hit them on an emotional level. Statistics are dry and abstract; images are something we can relate to.

### Landscapes in danger

The Scotts – perhaps best known for the popular BBC One TV series *Big Cat Diary* – understand this. Having spent much of their adult lives investigating, exploring and studying the incredible open wilderness of Africa, they know their beloved landscapes are in danger of vanishing. It's timely, then, that this book should come out now.

They live in Lang'ata, close to Nairobi National Park, and workwise are based largely around the Maasai Mara National Reserve in south-west Kenya. It's the perfect platform for the pair to photograph and study the range of subjects that make up the body of work featured in *Sacred Nature*.

The work of the Scotts has been known to focus mostly on big cats, but here we see that's not necessarily true. In fact, theirs is an all-encompassing project that features just about every aspect of the wildlife that walks the African landscape. That includes the people who live there, such as the Maasai herdsman and their families. That's perhaps the greatest lesson of this book: the symbiotic relationship between man and the land.



Cheetah at dusk. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, 600mm, 1/320sec at f/5.6, ISO 400

As the Scotts point out, there once was a time when man and nature lived in balance and harmony, yet now we seem determined to destroy the planet that once acted as our cradle.

If you are at all familiar with the work of the Scotts, you'll understand that there is real strength in their images, particularly in their black & white work. Like all good wildlife photography, the images are not mere documents. Instead, we find ourselves actually drawn into the world of these animals. The images are, at times, masterclasses in how to photograph wildlife within its environmental context. It's a generous book as well; huge and beautifully

produced. It is clear that a great deal of care has gone into its presentation and it is well worth the attention of anyone with even a cursory interest in images of the natural world.

Ultimately, this is a book that is not only a great collection of images and a stark warning about the consequences of inaction in the face of impending catastrophe but also a glimpse into the Scotts themselves and their relationship that has endured throughout such an incredible career. Clearly they are a pair with an intrinsic understanding of one another's methods. As a result, we have a book that is incredibly beautiful and very moving.



Zebra stallions fighting. Canon EOS-1Ds, 500mm, 1/100sec at f/4, ISO 250

## Also out now

The latest and best books from the world of photography. By Oliver Atwell



### The Chinese Photobook, from the 1900s to the Present

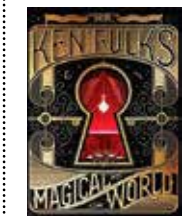
Edited by Martin Parr and WassinkLundgren, Aperture, £50, 448 pages, hardback, ISBN 978-1-59711-3-755



PHOTO BOOKS, both here and abroad, have in recent years become strong platforms for photographers to get their work out to the world. The big draw for photography enthusiasts is that these volumes are often self-produced in limited numbers and therefore highly collectable. More than that, the books are often beautiful little artefacts that can sometimes bring to mind the kind of underground 'zines' that were published in the 1970s. However, photo books have been around for a long while, as we discover in this gorgeous volume that looks at the kind of books published by Chinese photographers as far back as the 1900s. What we find is a diverse range of books on subjects including propaganda and social realism. Martin Parr, something of an expert, is on hand to guide readers through this history and offer some valuable context on which to plant your feet and set you on your way. ★★★★★

### Mr Ken Fulk's Magical World

Ken Fulk, Abrams, £45, 256 pages, hardback, ISBN 978-1-41972-2-387



IF YOU'RE a little partial to architecture and interior design, or have optimistic hopes of one day making it big and moving to the US, then this is a book that should get your mouth watering. Working out of his base, the Magic Factory in San Francisco, Ken Fulk is the go-to name when it comes to designing houses so plush and lavish they burn your eyes, and events so extravagant it's as if a mutant Fabergé egg had thrown up its dinner. Frankly, you're never going to be invited to one of Fulk's parties or houses, so you'll just have to make do with this insanely beautiful book. You'll feel richer just stroking its golden cover. ★★★★★