



# in the limelight

FOR THE TWO OF US, it sometimes becomes a challenge to decide which we enjoy more: observing or photographing birds. Fortunately, we have the privilege of managing the photographic hides at Mashatu Game Reserve in Botswana's forgotten south-eastern corner. This gives us the opportunity to observe bird behaviour for hours on end every day, and it is also the perfect setting in which to photograph them.

We have spent most of the past seven years living somewhere in the bush and it is largely birds that have stoked our passion for the outdoors. Bird photography for us is not merely about trying to capture the perfect image, it also plays an integral part in our appreciation and understanding of the ebb and flow of nature. >

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KYLE DE NOBREGA (2)

**previous spread** While we were watching a coalition of cheetahs at a waterhole in the Kgalagadi, our attention was drawn to a pair of Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* chicks peering out of their nest hole in the acacia above us. We subsequently spent the next few days under the same tree photographing the googly-eyed pair.

Canon 7D, 320 mm, f5.6, 1/125, ISO 800

**left** Elephants are not the only stars of the show when photographing in the underground hide at Mashatu. Birdlife is exceptional and even when times are quiet, simple images of familiar subjects, such as this Swainson's Spurfowl *Pternistis swainsonii*, have their place too.

Canon 7D, 500 mm, f5, 1/1000, ISO 1000

**above** The last hour of sunlight is when birds usually enjoy a good dust-bath before heading to roost. Here, literally seconds before the sun went down, we hit pay dirt, catching this Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus* in action.

Nikon D610, 600 mm, f5, 1/500, ISO 500 >



KYLE DE NOBREGA (2)

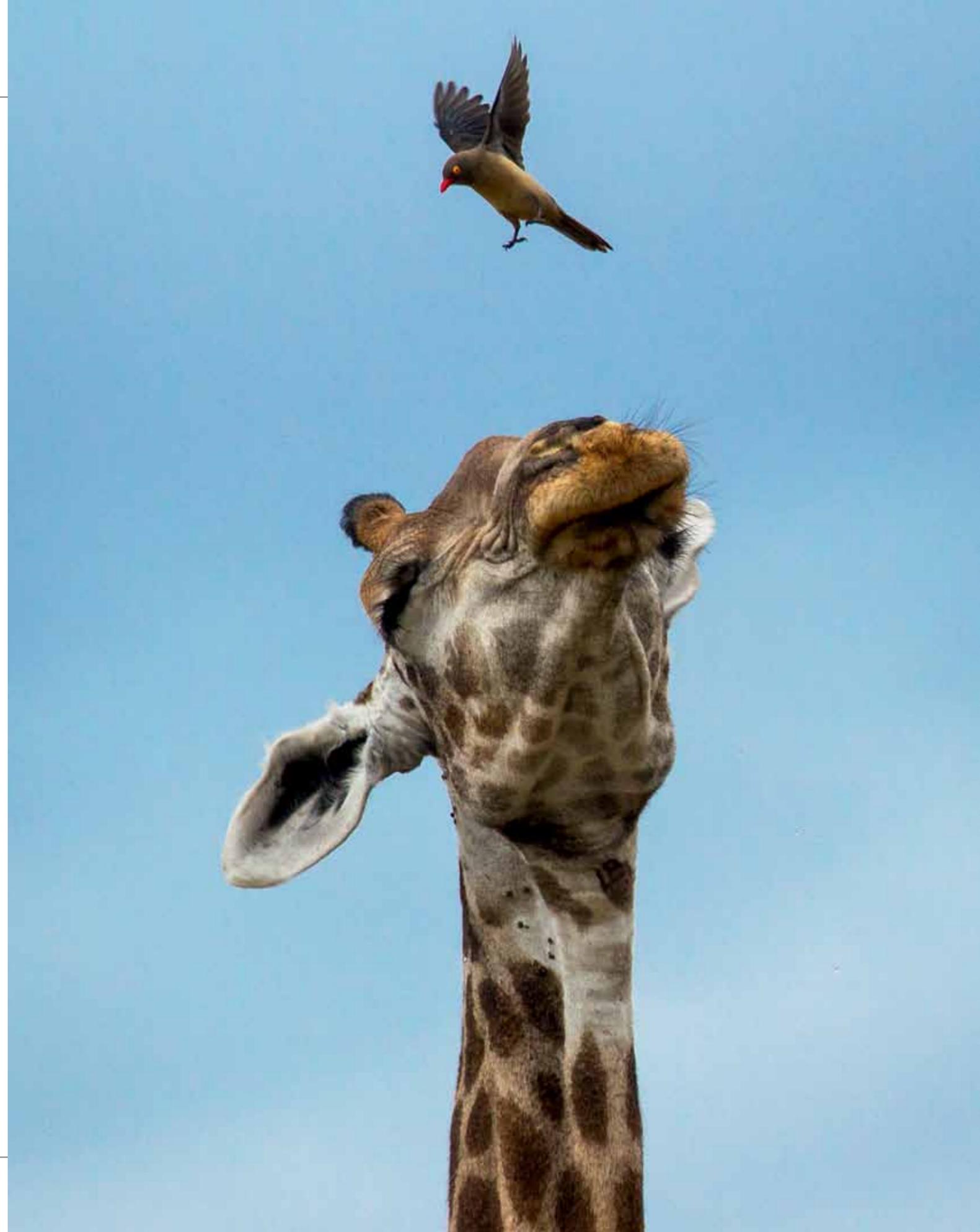
**above** We spent an afternoon observing a pair of Southern Ground-Hornbills *Bucorvus leadbeateri* as they conducted their intricate courtship rituals. A large, dead leadwood tree was the perfect site for both the birds' interaction and our photographic opportunities.

Nikon D610, 230 mm, f6.3, 1/4000, ISO 4000

**opposite** Although the symbiotic relationship is equally beneficial to the Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* and the giraffe, it amuses me that the latter has not become more accustomed to the persistent, irritating attentions of the oxpeckers as they glean ticks from its hide.

Canon 7D, 350 mm, f6.3, 1/1000, ISO 400

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KYLE DE NOBREGA (2)

**above** Over the course of five days we were fortunate to witness the progress of one of nature's most fascinating interactions, brood parasitism. This relentless juvenile Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* had its meals provided every few minutes by the hosts who had raised it, a pair of worn and weathered Meves's Starlings *Lamprotornis mevesii*.  
Canon 7D, 500 mm, f6.3, 1/1600, ISO 640

**opposite** There isn't much that compares to moments spent alone in a hide watching birds, even a common species such as the Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*. This one made a great subject in some excellent morning light as it preened vigorously in front of my lens.  
Nikon D610, 600 mm, f8, 1/2500, ISO 1000

**following spread** While a frantic scurry for water ensued as the last rays of the sun disappeared below the horizon, a rather cool, calm and collected Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* observed from the sidelines. The commotion around the waterhole stirred up a cloud of dust, filtering the light and creating the pink and orange hues in this image.  
Nikon D90, 400 mm, F5.6, 1/250, ISO 640

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