

New Book from ATREE Highlights Threatened Biodiversity, Cultures of “Mountains of Life”

BANGALORE, January 30, 2013—The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) announces the publication of *Himalaya: Mountains of Life* by leading conservation biologist Kamal Bawa and conservation photographer Sandesh Kadur. Five years in the making, the book focuses on the Eastern Himalaya-- the first time the region's threatened biodiversity and cultures have been documented together by a preeminent conservation biologist and world-class nature photographer.

The book is a sequel to *Sahyadris, India's Western Ghats* by the same authors. Published in 2005, that book highlighted the biocultural diversity of the Western Ghat mountain range in western India, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Together, the two books, on two of the recognized hotspots of biodiversity found in the country, represent Bawa's and Kadur's commitment to bring India's rich biocultural heritage to life on the page, celebrating its uniqueness and communicating its importance to a wide international audience through compelling words and state-of-the-art digital photojournalism.

“The text and photographs of this book capture the sheer beauty of the Himalaya at every scale, from the intricate detail of a moth's wing to the sweep of vast alpine landscapes, ” says Rohini Nilekani (Chairperson, Arghyam Foundation).

“The Himalaya—land of Gods, of ancient mountain kingdoms, of icy peaks and alpine meadows—is like no other place on Earth. The life and landscapes of the region are as diverse, spectacular and fragile as the mountains themselves,” says Bawa, who has been working in the Himalayas for nearly five decades. “Even today, these mountains hold many mysteries: unnamed species, primeval cultures and the promise of magical cures to heal all of humanity,” adds Kadur.

The importance and novelty of this book lies in weaving together perspectives on the region's land, water, biodiversity and people into an extraordinarily rich and diverse tapestry of words and images. The book reveals the Eastern Himalayas as a melting pot of ancient cultures, languages, and religions. Fascinating, often intimate back-stories of natural phenomena round out the picture—including that of the precious herbal medicine *Yartsagunbu*, a parasitic complex involving a fungus and the caterpillar of the Ghost Moth that lives and breeds on the Tibetan plateau.

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Bawa and Kadur have captured astonishing images of rarely-photographed species and seldom-documented behaviours, from an Atlas Moth in a defensive posture to a tiger feeding on a rhino carcass under the cover of darkness.

Today, dramatic changes are underway in the Eastern Himalaya. Human activities are modifying, degrading, and destroying the habitats upon which wild species depend for their survival. Climate change is altering long-standing patterns of temperature and precipitation. Air pollutants are being found in the most remote valleys and on the highest peaks. The book concludes by documenting these threats, covering the promise and pitfalls offered by tourism, and outlining steps that must be taken to preserve the biocultural treasures of the Eastern Himalaya for generations to come.

The research, writing, and publication of *Himalaya: Mountains of Life* was funded by ATREE with Felis Creations, Gorgas Science Foundation, and the University of Massachusetts, Boston.



Advance Praise:

“The text and photographs of this book capture the sheer beauty of the Himalaya at every scale, from the intricate detail of a moth’s wing to the sweep of vast alpine landscapes.”

—Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Arghyam Foundation

From the Forewords:

“From the plains of the Brahmaputra River, the home of the Great Indian Rhinoceros, up through the evergreen and coniferous forests to the alpine meadows, and finally to the sublime peaks and glaciers, this book celebrates scenic splendor and the glorious variety of plants and animals.”

— George Schaller, Wildlife Conservation Society

“Through the combination of visual and textual material, readers will be able to

understand the richness of Eastern Himalayan life and the importance of conserving it—both for its own sake and because it collectively forms the basis for continued human existence.”

— Peter Raven, President Emeritus, Missouri Botanical Garden

Media Requests (India):

For images suitable for publication, or to schedule print or broadcast interviews with the authors, contact Meetu Desai, Communications Officer, ATREE.

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Himalaya: Mountains of Life

himalayabook.com

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Author Bios

Kamaljit Bawa,

Ph.D. Kamal Bawa is Distinguished Professor of Biology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. He has held Bullard, Cabot, and Giorgio Ruffolo Fellowships at Harvard University and has been named both Guggenheim Fellow and Pew Scholar in Conservation and the Environment. Kamal Bawa has published more than 180 papers and edited 10 books, monographs and special journal issues. He is editor-in-chief of *Conservation and Society*, an interdisciplinary journal in conservation, and also serves on the editorial boards of several other scientific journals. He has served on many national and international advisory panels and the governing boards of several important foundations and non-governmental organizations, and has been appointed President of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation. Kamal Bawa is Founder-President of Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), a non-governmental organization devoted to research, policy analysis, and education in India. Kamal Bawa has received highest honours from the two main professional societies in his field: the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation elected him Honorary Fellow in 2003, and the Society for Conservation Biology bestowed upon him its Distinguished Service Award in 2009. In 2012, the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters presented Bawa with its inaugural Gunnerus Sustainability Award—the 'Nobel Prize in Sustainability'.

Sandesh Kadur

An award-winning wildlife photographer and cinematographer with a passion for natural history. His photographs have been published widely in books and magazines, while his documentaries on subjects ranging from cobras to elephants have been aired worldwide on the BBC, Discovery, and National Geographic networks. Over the years, Sandesh's work has garnered many top awards including the CIWEM Environmental Photographer Award, Nature's Best Award, BBC Camera-trap Award, International Conservation Photographer Award, and has twice been nominated for a Green Oscar at Wildscreen. He is an associate Fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) and the International Environmental Photographers Association (IEPA), and serves as board member for the International Association of Wildlife Filmmakers.

A few years ago he founded Felis Creations - www.felis.in a media and visual arts company that focuses on creating content that inspires conservation. Images, Sandesh feels, have the power to move people in a way nothing else can. He hopes to harness this power through his work, and inspire his audience to protect and appreciate what remains of the wilderness. www.sandeshkadur.com

Mission Statements

Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) is a research institution in the areas of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. We focus on applied science through research, education and action that influence policy and practice on conservation of nature, management of natural resources, and sustainable development.

ATREE envisions a society committed to environmental conservation and sustainable and socially just development, in which ATREE plays the role of a model knowledge-generating organization for catalyzing the transition to such a society.

ATREE's mission is to promote socially just environmental conservation and sustainable development by generating rigorous interdisciplinary knowledge that engages actively with academia, policy makers, practitioners, activists, students and wider public audiences.