



African Wildlife

EXPOSED



In his eagerly anticipated book, *AWE – African Wildlife Exposed*, **Greg du Toit** gives us a privileged glimpse at Africa's wild side. Here are some of our favourite images...



Young bulls at play *opening spread*

Young elephant bulls often wrestle with one another, and this behaviour, apparently just play, is nevertheless very important. It prepares the young males for the more serious fights that they will one day face when they have to ward off rival bulls for mating rights. The beauty of a photograph lies in its ability to capture a single moment. For this image, I tried to delay the recording of this moment for as long as possible; I wanted to leave the shutter open long enough so that the energy of the young bulls fighting would transfer into my camera. Any longer and the moment would have dissolved; any shorter and the energy would have been lost.

Bushveld mist *opposite*

It was cold on this morning and, quite uncharacteristically, a shroud of mist enveloped the African bushveld. Driving out of camp and into the eerily beautiful woodland, I knew of a clearing among some acacia trees, so we headed straight there. My hunch proved correct because we found a pair of waterbuck languidly lying in the damp grass. Positioning the 4x4 so as to include the lone knob thorn acacia tree in the background, I waited for the decisive moment to trip my shutter button. This moment came when the waterbuck bull lazily turned and tilted his head.

Golden rhino forest *above*

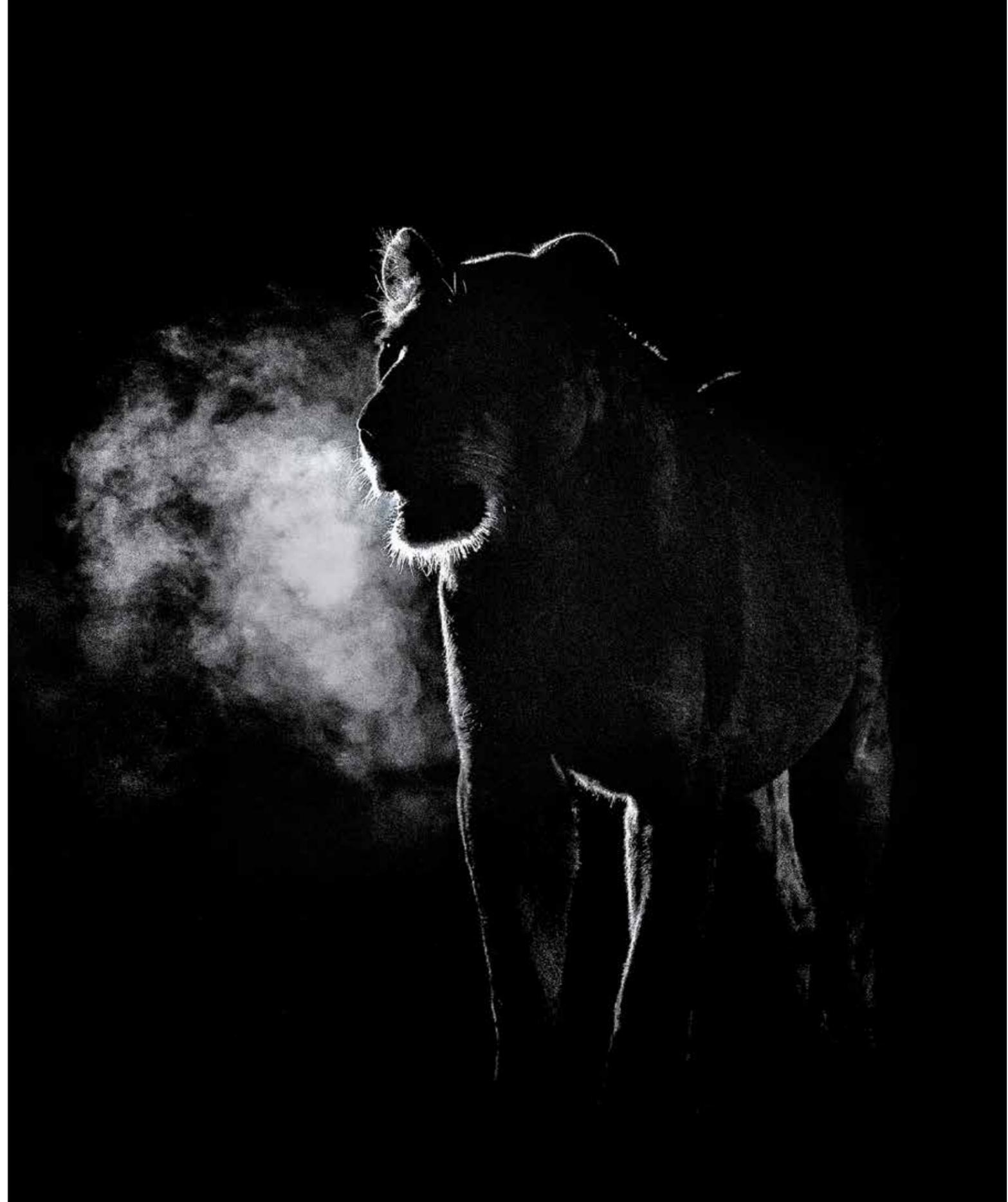
Feeling rather dejected, with my camp all packed up and on my way home early one morning, I decided to take one last turn through the ancient fever tree forests. It was a magical scene: a faint mist lingered in the pre-dawn glow of the equatorial sun, and the forests resembled something out of a children's storybook. Just then, I spotted my photographic nemesis deep inside the forest interior, browsing on a fallen tree. I was excited, so my shaking hands posed a slight problem because the vibration reduction (VR) on my lens was not working. The forest interior was so dark that my shutter speed was down to 1/60th of a second. Snuggling my lens deep into my trusty beanbag, I delicately tripped my shutter button in the hope of capturing the surreal atmosphere of the scene before me.

Dawn king *below*

In the night I had been woken several times by the distant and deep groans made by lions. The following morning we had the simple task of following the enchanting echoes from the night before, and just as dawn broke we found three big lions. They had been roaring in an attempt to track down their pride of lionesses. As they got ever closer to the females, they lifted their heads and curled their lips in what is known as the flehmen grimace. This allows them to sample the air for pheromones. A lingering condensation of breath caused me to hit my shutter button in a rushed panic. Even after 10 years of photographing, my wild subjects still arouse in me an excitement that makes me feel as if the picture I am about to take is my very first.

Exhaling lioness *opposite*

As a wildlife photographer, I spend 99 per cent of my time waiting for something spectacular to happen. I spend the other one per cent in frantic chaos as I try to capitalise on the decisive moment. It was in South Africa's lowveld region on a cold winter's night that the breath of the lioness condensed as she exhaled. The visual effect lasted only a fraction of a second before disappearing. Reviewing my image, I am reminded that some of the most memorable photographs of all time are taken in a split second. A camera's ability to record a moment so brief that it often can't be remembered is what makes a still image such a special treasure.



GET THE BOOK: AFRICAN WILDLIFE EXPOSED

South African photographer Greg du Toit spent over a decade on a quest to discover, and capture, Africa's wild soul. The result is a remarkable collection of images that reveal the mystery, power and beauty of this fascinating continent. Greg, who was last year named Wildlife Photographer of the Year, has gained a reputation for going to extremes to get his shots, and *African Wildlife Exposed* is testament to his commitment and passion.

African Wildlife Exposed: A celebration of nature photography – or simply *AWE* – is published by HPH Publishing, and costs £40 (ISBN 978-0620561716).

