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AND IMAGING

Vol. 37 - No. 7

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ON THE HORIZON

MINIATURE MARVELS
- Sandip Guha

PRO-PROFILE

CAPTURING FLORAL FASCINATION
- Kristine Zāle

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WHERE DOES MACRO END AND MICRO BEGIN?

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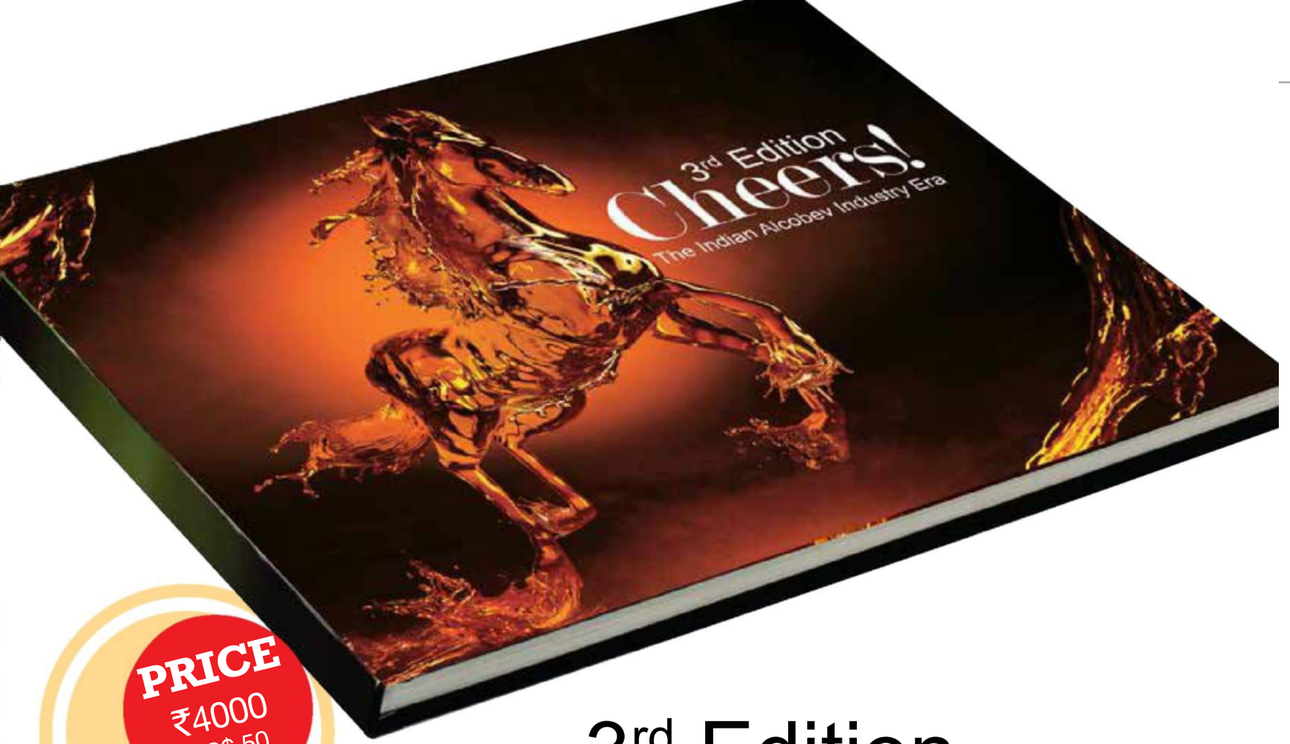

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Small Scale, Big Stories

Every year around this time, we turn our focus to the world of Macro - a realm that might seem unremarkable from a distance but, upon closer inspection, reveals a breathtaking tapestry of detail and wonder. These tiny marvels hold the power to mesmerise, but they also bring their share of challenges. For those unfamiliar, venturing into macro photography can feel daunting.

With this issue, we aim to demystify that perception through insightful articles, expert perspectives and practical tips to help make the world of macro more accessible.

In our *Pro Profile* section, we speak with *Christian Brockes,* who explores the techniques, patience, and passion behind documenting insect life. *Kristine* from *macro.viewpoint* shares how macro photography has shaped her creative journey and deepened her connection with nature and mindfulness. Closer to home, *Sandip Guha* offers a lens into his precision-driven process, the hardships faced, mistakes made, and the pursuit of that elusive 'bucket shot'. Each photographer brings a unique voice to this issue, sure to both inspire and encourage you to explore macro for yourself.

In our *Tips* section, we explore key themes - like the boundary between macro and micro. Where does one end and the other begin? It's not just a technical question, but a philosophical one, prompting us to see beauty not only in the grand, but also in the minute.

We also discuss macro ethics - a crucial conversation, especially relevant to today's world. Ethical storytelling and photography extend beyond journalism. In macro, it raises questions about our environmental impact, the treatment of living subjects, and our collective responsibility to nature.

One of the more experimental themes we've explored is *bioluminescence* - a striking metaphor for beauty emerging from darkness. In the deepest waters, light exists not in abundance, but in resilience. It's a reminder that wonder can lie hidden in the shadows - waiting to be noticed.

We've skipped a dedicated feature on macro gear this time, since it was covered in depth last year. However, we'll make that content available on our website for easy reference. And don't forget - our E-version is now completely free, making it easier than ever to dive into this edition.

Until next time…
Happy Reading!

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Asian_photography_magazine
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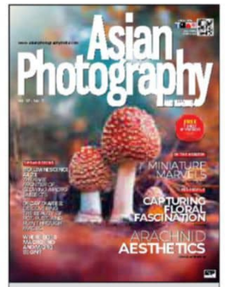

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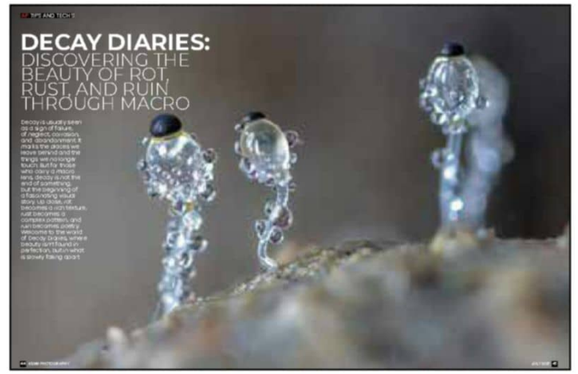

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REVIEW

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at apindia.feedback@gmail.com

LETTER OF THE MONTH — Asian Photography

The Letter of the month will receive **1 Year subscription (12 E-Issues)**

Dear Team,

I've seen your OnePlus 13 and Xiaomi 15 reviews. Is it possible for you to do a camera comparison between OP13 and Xiaomi 15?

Regs,
Soura

Dear Soura,

Sure. We will feature this soon. :)

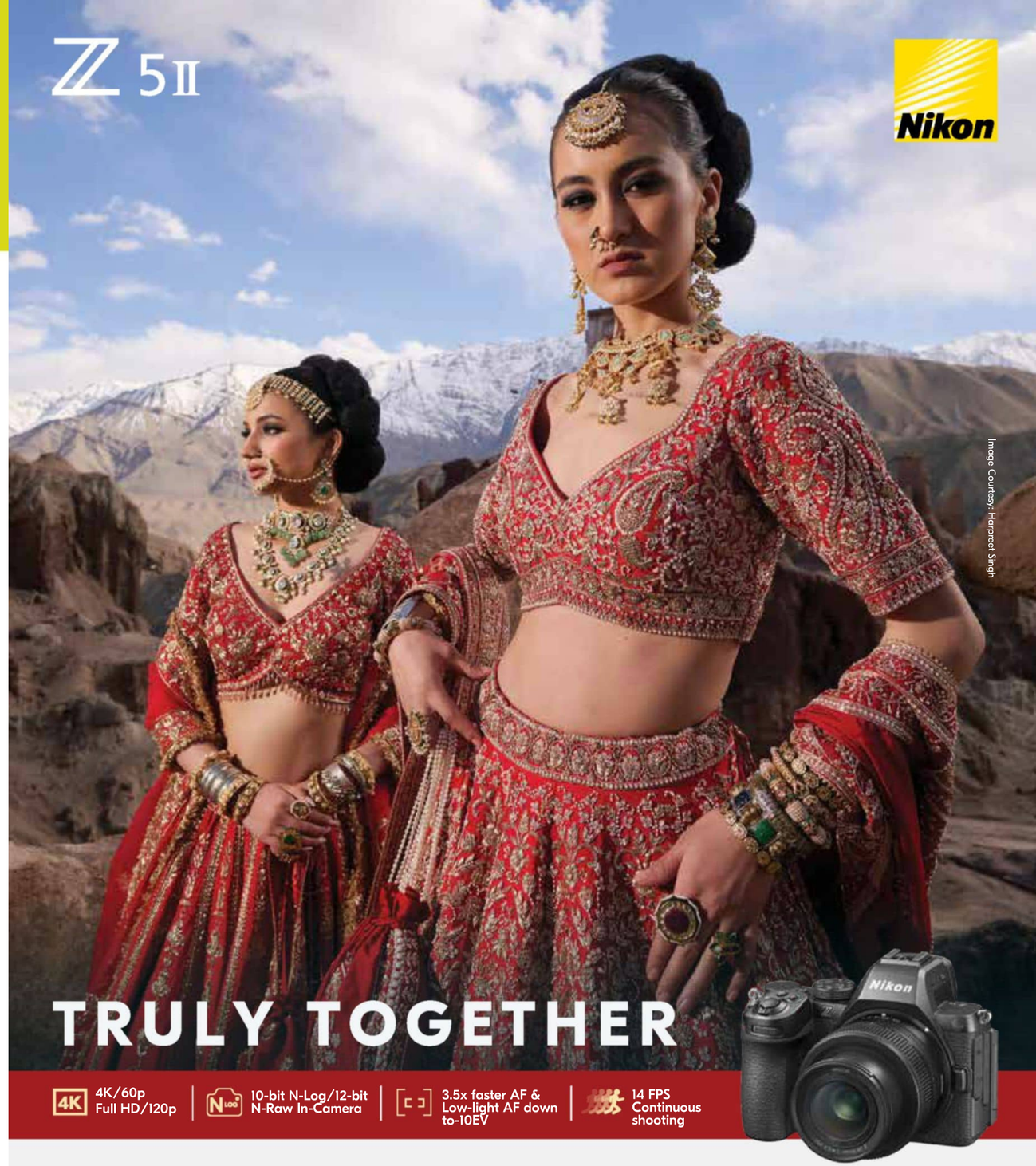
Dear Sir,

I saw your Vivo X200 review and I feel that if you are not given pro, then you are tarnishing the image of Vivo X200. I have used the camera and I think it is an all-round camera performance.

Regs,
Moshin Khan

Hi Moshin,

While it is great to have your own perspective – and you are surely entitled to one, I find it naïve to think that I would review a specific product keeping another in mind. We've not built out legacy and heritage over 34 years doing that.



LETTERS TO EDITOR

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Dear Sir,

Among white, blue and black, which colour of OnePlus 13 looks pretty good according to you?

Regs,
Supriyo Dutto

Dear Supriyo,

Well in most of my time users and readers have always asked for my perspective – but none that've actually seeked my guidance on which colour looks the best. Honestly, I think that a colour is a personal perceptive. But the white one that I am suing for the OP 13 looks pretty good.

Apple's iOS 26 Brings Changes to Imaging Experience, Camera APP and Photos

Apple's new design overhaul brings an update to the Camera app in iOS 26, iPadOS 26, and macOS Tahoe 26, making everyday photography feel more immersive and intuitive. The redesigned UI prioritizes easy reach for core controls while minimizing distractions. Buttons, sliders, and toggles now live within a refined control layer that adapts as you frame shots or switch modes. In the app, navigation and tools morph fluidly to stay out of the way until you need them, keeping the focus squarely on capturing the moment. New gestures streamline access to pro tools, and the layout now curves with the edges of modern displays for a more cohesive, hardware-conscious experience.

Apple's redesigned Photos app complements the new Camera experience with a cleaner, more fluid interface. Browsing feels faster and more immersive, with dynamic transitions and updated navigation that responds to how you interact. Albums are easier to organize, search is more intelligent, and editing tools are now grouped more intuitively. Built with the new Liquid Glass design language, every element — from buttons to background panels — subtly reflects your content and surroundings, creating a photo viewing experience that's as rich and expressive as the memories it holds.

Apple also debuted the new Liquid Glass interface - which is a translucent, responsive material that shapes the entire experience, refracting surrounding content and reflecting your environment in real time. Liquid Glass marks a leap in UI design for Apple, making interactions in the Camera & photos app across Apple's platforms more alive, tactile, and visually rich. The Developer version of iOS 26 is now made available and the Public Beta will be available from July with the final version coming out in Fall this year.

Leica Announces Monopan 50 Film

Leica has announced Monopan 50, its first true Leica-branded 35mm black-and-white film, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Leica I—the camera that launched 35mm photography in 1925. While early 35mm film was made by others like Kodak and Agfa, Leica is now releasing its own: Monopan 50.

This new film offers 36 exposures and features a fine-grain ISO 50 emulsion with panchromatic sensitivity up to 780nm, making it suitable for infrared work and ideal for use with color filters. It delivers ultra-high resolution—up to 280 line pairs per millimeter—and an exceptional tonal range.

Designed and produced in Germany, Monopan 50 is optimized for landscape, architecture, cityscapes, and travel photography. Leica says it's compatible with all black-and-white developers and works with any 35mm camera, though it naturally pairs best with Leica's lenses and bodies. Its low ISO means brighter lenses or daylight shooting conditions are recommended.

The name "Monopan 50" nods to its monochrome nature, ISO 50 speed, and Leica's Monochrome digital camera line. While Leica hasn't confirmed the film's actual manufacturer, some speculate it may be a rebranded version of Adox HR-50.

Monopan 50 goes on sale August 21 for $10 per roll and will ship in four retro-style box designs inspired by the early days of 35mm photography.

Apple Built a Custom iPhone-Based Camera to Film Inside Real F1 Cars

For its upcoming Formula One film, Apple engineered a custom camera module using iPhone components to capture cinematic-quality footage from inside F1 cars—without affecting performance.

Traditional F1 broadcast cameras are low-res and optimized for live TV. But director Joseph Kosinski and cinematographer Claudio Miranda wanted more. Apple's solution: a camera module built to look like a standard F1 broadcast unit but powered by iPhone internals—including a 48MP sensor (likely from the iPhone 15 Pro), an A-series chip, battery, and neutral density filter.

The module matched F1 broadcast gear in size, shape, and weight to preserve the car's aerodynamics and balance. It also withstood extreme shock, vibration, and heat during the 2023 and 2024 racing seasons—meeting and exceeding Formula One's durability standards.

Footage was recorded in ProRes Log format for maximum post-production flexibility. A custom version of iOS ran the system, with a USB-C iPad app giving filmmakers full manual control—frame rate, white balance, shutter angle, and more.

The project directly influenced consumer features. Log encoding and ACES color support—both used in the module—later appeared in the iPhone 15 Pro.

While iPhones are rarely used solo on film sets, Apple is increasingly blending pro filmmaking needs into its hardware development. Other companies like Samsung and Sony have shot films on phones, but Apple's F1 module marks a new level of integration—embedding iPhone tech in a rugged, race-tested system built for Hollywood-grade results.

Sigma Launches 17-40 F/1.8 Lens

Sigma has unveiled the 17-40mm f/1.8 DC Art lens, the long-awaited successor to the hugely popular 18-35mm f/1.8 DC HSM Art from 2013. Designed specifically for APS-C mirrorless cameras, it's the first Art series lens for APS-C since 2016—and it's built with videographers in mind.

This new lens delivers a constant f/1.8 aperture across its zoom range, offering prime-like brightness in a compact zoom. It features an internal zoom mechanism, fast and silent linear autofocus, minimal focus breathing, and a weather-resistant build. Weighing just 535 grams (18.9 oz), it's significantly lighter than its DSLR-era predecessor.

Optically, the lens is built with 17 elements in 11 groups, including four SLD and four aspherical elements, and uses Sigma's Super Multi-Layer Coating to reduce flare and ghosting. The 11-blade aperture ranges from f/1.8 to f/16 and now includes an external aperture ring with click and de-click options. The body also includes two customizable buttons and a manual/auto focus switch.

Sigma says its high-response Linear Actuator motor enables quiet, precise autofocus that works well with subject tracking and gimbal setups—making it ideal for hybrid shooters.

The 17-40mm f/1.8 DC Art lens launches July 10 for Fujifilm X, Sony E, and Leica L mounts, with a Canon RF version coming in August, priced at $919 (~₹79700) across all mounts.

Dronemaker DJI Faces Imminent Ban Despite Complying to Scrutiny

DJI is still waiting on a U.S. government security audit mandated by Congress—six months after formally requesting it. The delay could have major consequences for DJI's future in the American market.

Concerns about Chinese-owned tech companies like DJI have escalated in recent years, with lawmakers warning that their products could pose national security risks. In response, Section 1709 of the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) requires a U.S. national security agency to determine by December 2025 whether DJI's communications and video equipment present an "unacceptable risk" to national security.

In April, DJI called on the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, DoD, NSA, or ODNI to begin the audit, warning that the process could take months. Two months later, DJI says nothing has changed.

While DJI praised recent executive orders from the Trump administration aimed at boosting domestic drone innovation, the company says they fail to address the critical issue at hand: the overdue audit that could decide DJI's future in the U.S.

"If no agency steps forward by December, an automatic ban could take effect — not because of any findings, but because the process never started," DJI warns. The company says this would hurt thousands of U.S. businesses, public safety agencies, and entrepreneurs who rely on its drones.

DJI maintains that its products are secure and welcomes scrutiny. "We're ready and eager for the audit," the company says, urging officials to act before time runs out.

Insta360 Unveils Wireless Mic

Insta360 has launched the Mic Air, its first compact wireless microphone, designed to seamlessly pair with Insta360 cameras like the new X5 8K 360° camera. Weighing just 7.9g, the Mic Air is built for portability and ease of use. It connects instantly to the X5 with no need for extra adapters or receivers. Key features include a magnetic clip, remote recording control, 48kHz/24-bit audio recording, built-in noise reduction, and a removable windshield.

The Mic Air also supports other Insta360 devices like the Ace Pro 2 and Flow Series. For broader use, a TX + RX (transmitter + receiver) bundle is available, enhancing compatibility with non-Insta360 devices.

The Insta360 X5 Ultimate Creator Bundle has also been announced, combining the X5, Mic Air, Bullet Time Selfie Stick 2.0, and Quick Reader (for USB-C or Lightning transfers). Priced at ₹55,700 (approx.), this bundle provides a complete content creation suite via the Insta360 app, featuring tools like FlashCut and Shot Lab.

The Mic Air is priced at $49 (approx ₹4,100) while the TX + RX bundle is available for $69 (approx ₹5,800). All products are now available through Insta360's website and authorized retailers, including Amazon.

Christian Brockes

ARACHNID AESTHETICS

Christian Brockes' fascination with arthropods started out as a chance encounter with one in his bathroom. Since then, he has documented many more species over the years, earning acclaim, partnerships and an ambassadorship, for being a leading voice in macro photography as well as his creative expertise. **Asian Photography** had a conversation with him about techniques, patience, and purpose behind their highly stylised documentation of insect life. Excerpts:

Do you remember the first macro image you ever shot? What was it?

I started out doing portraits and business photos and had a 90mm macro lens, which I only used for its portrait capabilities. After finding a tiny jumping spider in my bathroom, I decided to use the macro lens for what it was originally intended for and was instantly fascinated by the interesting detail I was able to see in the photo – details which were hidden from the naked eye.

The quality of these photos was not even close to the quality of my current work, but it sparked my interest and started my journey into the tiny world – always looking for new colours, forms and textures.

What's something people often misunderstand about macro photography?

To me macro photography is like a window into that tiny world beneath our feet, which is generally and often overlooked. It is also a very powerful tool for conservation and to create attention to the world´s fascinating biodiversity.

However, maco photography is often featured less prominently in comparison to wildlife photography of bigger animals, like the big 5. People simply seem not to be aware of the wonderful things that are there to discover in and share from the tiny world.

Many people understand macro as only being photography at 1:1 magnification and above, but forget that also at these high magnifications there are stories to tell. Storytelling and composition can elevate macro photography even further but unfortunately I think, quite a lot of people forget about that easily.

Do you approach your photography more as documentation, art, or exploration?

Nowadays I would like my macro photography to be seen as a mixture of stylised documentation. While I always emphasise on composition and also try to create a direct connection between the subject and the viewer, the thing I look for the most is the story: this can be a distinct behaviour of an insect, a hunting scene, mating, simply any other interaction within the same or between different species.

It is my wish to share my findings to create awareness and interest through these fascinating forms, colours and features of the insects and spiders I photograph – hopefully leading to respect towards these, which ultimately helps with conservation and bringing people´s attention to these tiny wonders, which we can find all around us.

How do you balance patience and spontaneity when working with unpredictable subjects?

The trick is indeed to actually balance both: patience often rewards us with wonderful opportunities and scenes – but these happen spontaneously, so it is very important to be alert, have your setup ready and be able to control your camera blindly, when the moment comes.

I have one routine, which I like a lot, where I stay at a promising spot for about an hour. Sometimes it is only 1 or 2 square metres. As my subjects are usually very skittish and always on the move, I adapted my photographic technique to align with this behaviour: I always use a flash and a diffuser, which gives me a highly mobile and compact setup and also enables me to take tack-sharp shots even during movements of my subjects.

How do you see the future of macro evolving—AI, computational focus, mobile macro?

I think mobile macro is the way to go, but not necessarily with mobile phones.

Smaller, real cameras, that are capable of reaching high magnifications while providing decent depth-of-field at the same time, would be very interesting and open up the field of macro photography to many more people, even kids, which is great.

However, the latest generation of mobile phone flagships have

remarkable macro features. I use mine from time to time and the results are better than what I captured with my first camera and macro lens.

AI is far from being able to create realistic insect and spider macros – you can spot the AI-generated images easily if you're a biologist or a naturalist. AI images can appear realistic, which is questionable in my opinion, as these images are not real and also do not depict reality and the true forms of nature.

Computational in-camera features are a big time saver, which means more time to actually photograph in the wild. My current camera, the OM-1 Mark II, has tons of those: ND filter, graded ND filter, High-Res Shot, modes for light painting, photographing stars, and many more.

My favourites are the focus bracketing and focus stacking modes, which allow me to create a focus bracket, which I later combine into one image with enhanced depth-of-field, which is a big plus in macro photography, where the layer of sharpness is usually paper-thin. It also speeds up my process, as I do not have to take that focus stack manually.

What are you currently experimenting with or trying to learn next?

Right now, I am pretty satisfied with

both my gear and technique when it comes to macro photography of insects and spiders at high magnifications.

However, I've recently favoured single shots over focus stacks more often, as it is all about getting that one specific moment (often behaviour of my subjects). It also saves time during post-processing and I can use that time to get out into the field again.

The next thing, I am currently experimenting with, is filming macro at high magnifications. Creating macro movies with the same quality as my photos is challenging though, as the lighting approach is very different.

Is there a specific image that you want to be remembered by?

I have two personal favourites, which are also my best known photos from publications, so I would not be mad if it were these two, I was remembered by.

One is an Acorn weevil (Curculio glandium) that is just about to take off and spreads its wings, and the other is a zig-zag sawfly larva that has eaten its distinct zig-zag pattern into an elm leaf.

I specialise on jumping spiders, and my two favourite species, both extremely colourful – which I have yet to photograph, as one, Habronattus americanus, is from North America and one, Stenaelurillus lesserti, can be found in southern India – would be my personal holy grail and the ultimate macro portrait, which I could imagine being remembered by.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

CAPTURING FLORAL FASCINATION

Kristīne Zāle

Kristine's journey began from a father's influence and a curious eye grew into a deep, self-taught journey into the miniature world. She specialises in capturing flowers alongside insects, capturing and excelling at an intriguing perspective in macro photography. **Asian Photography** spoke to her about how macro photography shaped not just her creative process, but also her perspective on nature, patience, and purpose. Excerpts:

Were you always a photographer, or did macro come after exploring other genres?

My photography journey really started thanks to my dad. He always had a camera with him, capturing our family moments, and he was the one who put my first camera in my hands. Watching how he worked with his own, much more advanced camera, inspired me to keep learning and improving.

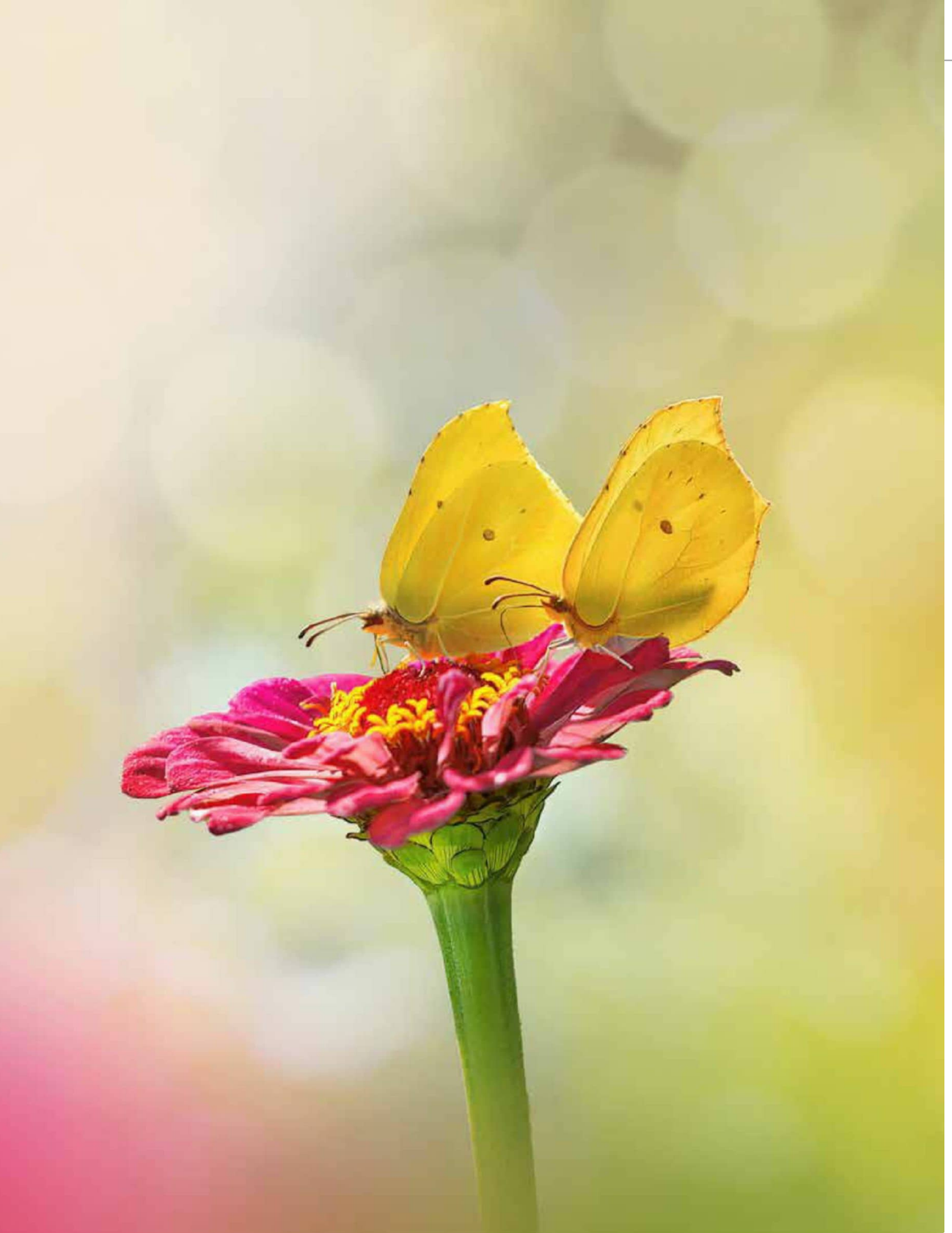
He also helped me choose my first DSLR, which was a big step forward. I remember the first time I tried manual mode and suddenly realised how much I still had to learn. While my dad's guidance started me on this path, most of what I know now is self-taught through years of experimenting and making mistakes.

In the beginning, I just shared my photos on social media as a way to post something I'd made, just like sharing travel pictures. I never thought much of it, but as people started to give feedback and encouragement, I realised this was something I wanted to pursue more seriously. Looking back, those early steps, the learning curve, and my dad's support really shaped who I am as a photographer.

What's something people often misunderstand about macro photography?

A lot of people think macro is easy. They think you just get close, and the background will blur out, and you have a nice photo. But macro photography takes much more skill and patience than most realise. Patience, precision, and observation are essential, but what really matters is the willingness to keep growing and improving. I remember when I started, the only inspiration I had was from my dad. Once I joined Instagram and saw the work of other creators, it pushed me to get more creative with my own photos. Inspiration from others has always driven me to try new things, not just repeat my old shots, and keep evolving.

One technical challenge in macro is dealing with the shallow depth of field. You get super close, thinking you'll capture the perfect insect photo, but only a tiny part ends



up sharp. I had to learn how to balance distance, settings, and composition to get enough of my subject in focus. For example, with insects, I try to shoot them from the front or side so more of their body is in the same focal plane. The same applies to flowers, especially those with more complex shapes. It is not just about what is in focus, but choosing which parts are sharp to create a composition that works. All this takes practice, and it is a constant process of learning and experimenting.

Have you had any close encounters with wildlife while shooting macro?

Most of my wildlife encounters are with insects, since they are my main subjects after flowers. I usually search for them locally, especially in the botanical garden, where I find a huge variety from spring to autumn. Over time, I have been lucky to spot and photograph many species, including different kinds of bees, damselflies, dragonflies, and even a cuckoo wasp. Seeing a cuckoo wasp for the first time was a real surprise. They are so tiny, and their metallic colours are incredible.

I have learned that insects are often skittish, so I usually take a quick photo as soon as I spot one, before even adjusting my settings or composition. Sometimes that first shot is the only one I get if the insect flies away. There have been times when that photo ended up being the one I posted and was proud of. Even if the subject is small in the frame, I do not mind cropping in a lot later to get the right composition. It is better to have something than nothing at all.

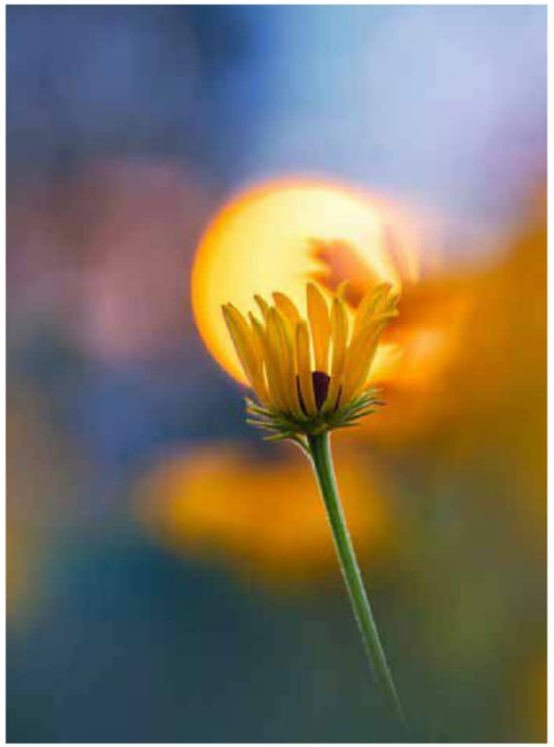
One dream encounter I still hope for is photographing a praying mantis. I do not think they live in my area, but maybe one day, I will get lucky.

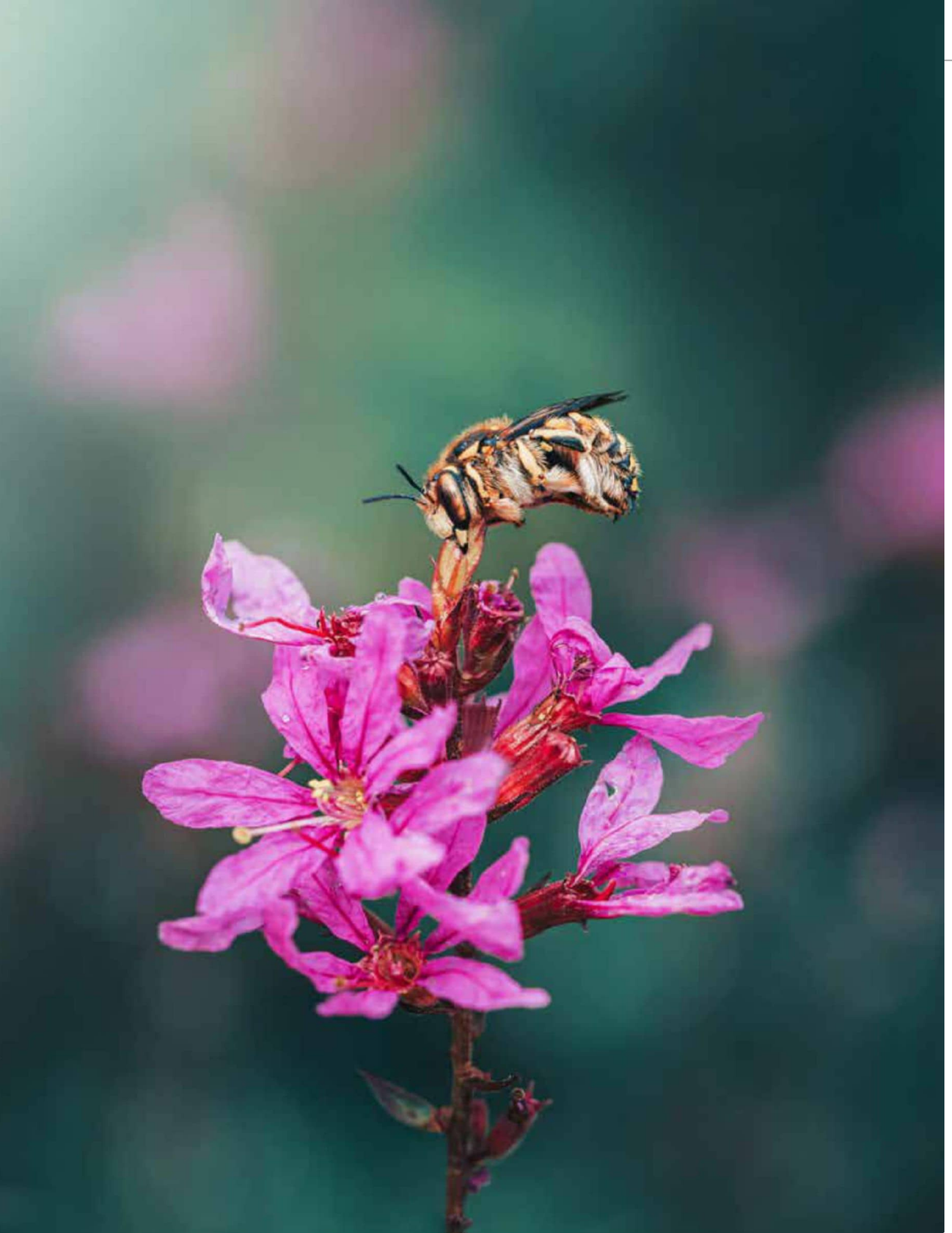
What's the most important lesson you've learnt from a shoot-gone-wrong?

Preparation is key. Always check the weather forecast before heading out, especially the wind, because a breezy day can make photographing flowers and insects almost impossible. Now, I make it a habit to check conditions beforehand and have a backup plan, such as staying home and editing the photos I have already taken.

Another important lesson is to make sure your gear is ready. With my old DSLR, the battery would drain quickly, especially in cold weather. I learned the hard way by running out of power before I was finished shooting. Now, I always carry a spare battery, fully charged, just in case.

That said, sometimes you have to work with what you have. On a recent walk, it was really windy and I felt hopeless at first, but with enough patience, I managed to get many great insect photos between the wind gusts. Nature can be unpredictable, so adaptability and a little patience can turn a difficult shoot into a successful one.





Are there still moments when you feel like a beginner, even after years of experience?

Absolutely. Even with experience, I still have days when nothing seems to go right. Sometimes I will come home with barely any sharp photos, or enough sharp photos of which none feel special or worth sharing. That is perfectly normal. I have learned that those ups and downs are just part of the creative process. Without the downs, the ups wouldn't feel as rewarding.

I am always discovering new techniques, often from other creators online. For example, I used to think you could only share single photos, until I learned about focus stacking. Now, I sometimes shoot multiple images at different focus points and combine them for a fully sharp subject with a beautiful background. When I first saw focus-stacked images, I was amazed at how sharp everything was, not realising it was possible with my setup. Learning new things like this keeps me feeling inspired, and it is proof that there is always room to grow, no matter how long you have been at it.

Can you describe a time you had to really "earn" the photo?

Most of my photo walks are unplanned. I just head out and see what I find. But the photos that feel truly earned are the ones where I put in extra effort, whether it is planning ahead or pushing myself outside my comfort zone.

One photo that stands out is a dewdrop-covered cobweb during a foggy sunrise. I had to wake up at 5 AM, which is not easy for me at all, and drive to a bog trail hoping for the right conditions. I honestly did not know if the effort would pay off, but that morning everything came together perfectly. There was thick fog, a golden sunrise, and more sparkling cobwebs than I had ever seen. I spent a long time looking for the best-looking webs and waiting for the light to be just right, all while my hands were getting cold from the early morning air. When I finally got the shot, it felt incredibly rewarding. The memory and effort behind it make that photo one of my favourites.

Has macro photography influenced how you see life, outside of photography?

Definitely. Macro photography has made me much more observant and appreciative of the little things in life. Now I notice details everywhere, like tiny flowers starting to bloom, insects most people walk past, even the way light hits a leaf. I often carry my camera with me just in case I spot something interesting, especially on walks in the botanical garden.

Getting into macro has also changed the way I relate to nature. I used to be pretty neutral about insects, but now I am much more considerate and careful around them. I even find myself moving snails or bugs off walking paths so they do not get stepped on.

It has also inspired me to share what I know with others. I started a community where I share tips and tutorials about photography and editing. Teaching others, seeing them inspired by my work, and watching them grow as photographers brings me a lot of joy. Macro photography has not just changed how I see the world; it has helped me connect with a community and give back in a way I never expected.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

MINIATURE MARVELS

Drawn to the hidden dramas of the insect world, **Sandip Guha** uncovers nature's quietest stories through patience, precision, and reverence. Since picking up a macro lens, he has captured moments as fleeting as damselfly mating rituals and as rare as spider courtship. His work goes beyond beauty, documenting behaviour, ecology, and the fragile poetry of life in miniature. **Asian Photography** spoke to him about inspiration, hardships, mistakes, bucket shot and more. Excerpts:

Sandip Guha

What drew you to macro photography in the first place?

I've always been fascinated by the unnoticed creatures, the things people walk past without ever truly seeing. Growing up in Siliguri, I was constantly surrounded by nature's quiet brilliance, but it wasn't until I picked up a macro lens in 2015 that I discovered an entire universe hiding in plain sight. One that thrives under leaves, on petals, in the golden morning dew.

Macro photography, to me, felt less like an art form and more like a secret language—the subtle stillness of a butterfly's wing, the rhythmic prayer of a mantis, or the poetic synchrony of mating rituals among insects. These scenes aren't staged. They're real, raw, and fleeting. Capturing them requires patience, respect, and a kind of reverence for life's tiniest engineers.

What drew me to macro wasn't just the detail—it was the entire story that's captured in the detail. Through my lens, I began telling their stories—and in doing so, I found my own.

How has macro photography changed the way you see the world in daily life?

Macro has made me incredibly observant in my day-to-day life. I now notice the tiniest details that others usually overlook—a small insect blending into the bark, a perfectly formed droplet on a leaf, or the subtle movement of antennae in the grass. It's like my brain is always in "macro mode", constantly scanning for beauty in the little things.

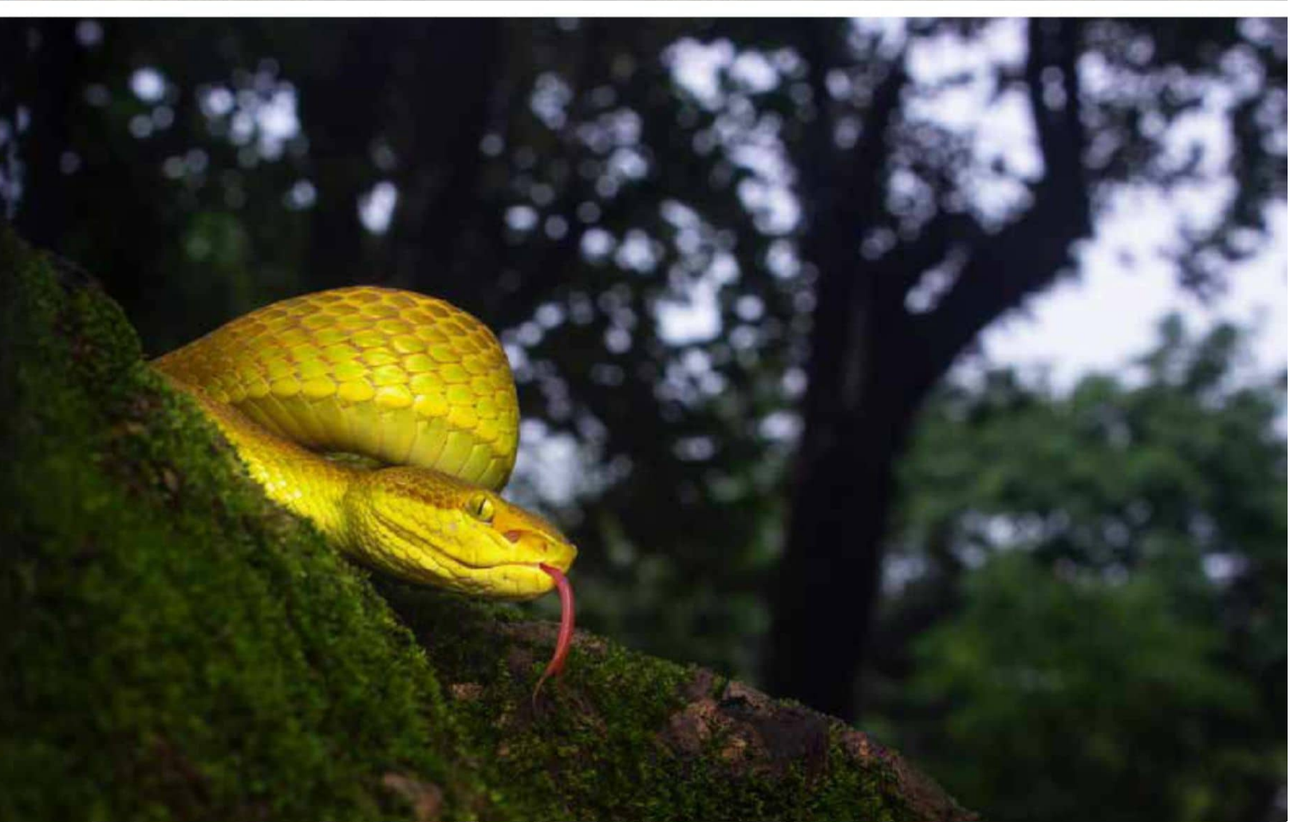
This craft has sharpened my attention to detail beyond just photography. It spills into how I work, think, and even interact with the world. I've become more focussed, more present in the moment. Capturing the perfect macro shot isn't about luck. It takes serious concentration and timing. One second too early or too late, and the moment is gone.

And of course, patience is everything. I've learned to wait for hours, sometimes in the same position, just to get that one magical frame. Macro photography trains you to slow down and appreciate how extraordinary the world truly is.

What's the hardest shot you've ever taken—and how did you get it?

Photography, for me, has always been a way of telling stories—the kind that exist quietly in nature, away from the noise of the human world. One of the hardest, yet most rewarding, shots I've ever taken was of two damselfly pairs captured in the middle of their mating ritual. It wasn't just a photo; it was nature's choreography, unfolding in front of me like poetry in motion.

This was more than just a rare moment—it was a glimpse into the delicate and beautiful cycle of life. The male damselfly clasps the female by her neck, while she curves her body to complete what's known as the "mating wheel". To witness this once is special. But to witness two pairs forming this shape simultaneously? That's sheer luck!



I spent hours by the water that day, barely moving, fighting the wind, adjusting my focus millimetre by millimetre. Lighting was tricky, the scene was fragile, and one wrong step could've disturbed everything. But I waited with patience, precision, and quiet respect, until the perfect frame aligned.

That image is a reminder that the most powerful stories in nature don't need words. They just require someone willing to pay attention and wait.

Is there a particular image that marked a breakthrough moment for you?

Yes, there's one image that really stands out as a milestone in my journey. It was a shot of crab spiders during mating—something that's rarely seen, let alone captured clearly. I didn't expect much when I submitted it, but that image ended up winning Best Photo in the Macro category, and to my surprise, it was displayed at the London Camera Exchange (LCE). That was truly a rewarding moment for me.

What made it even more special was seeing several media outlets pick it up as the feature image while covering the prestigious exhibition. It felt surreal to see something I captured being shared and appreciated at that level. It wasn't just about the recognition—it was about realising that this small, detailed world I'd been so drawn to for years was finally being noticed by a wider audience.

That photo gave me a quiet but powerful push to keep going. It reminded me that even the smallest subjects can make a big impact.

How has your approach evolved over the years?

In the beginning, my approach to macro photography was quite simple—I was drawn to the visual beauty of nature. I would focus on the subject itself: the colours, the textures, the symmetry. It was all about capturing that one perfect, detailed frame. But as the years passed and I spent more time in the field, my curiosity grew deeper.

Now, my work goes far beyond aesthetics. I've become deeply invested in observing and documenting behavioural activities—how these tiny creatures move, interact, court, mate, hunt, or defend. Each movement has meaning, and I find myself studying their lives like an invisible guest in their world.

I also think a lot more about the ecological impact of these species and how crucial they are to the balance of our environment. This has led me to explore and advocate for conservation strategies through my photography. I want my images to spark awareness, so that people begin to value these often-overlooked lives and the roles they play in our ecosystems.

What's one mistake you hope new macro photographers make—because it will teach them?

If I had to pick one mistake I hope every new macro photographer makes, it would be underestimating the importance of light, especially the use of diffusers. I've been there too, chasing the perfect shot under harsh sunlight or forgetting to control shadows, only to end up with images that looked too sharp, overexposed, or just… off. That's when I truly understood that light isn't just technical—it's emotional. It shapes the mood, the texture, the story of the frame.

I also think every beginner should struggle a bit with framing. We've all gone through that phase of being too zoomed in, or slightly off-centre, only to miss the golden moment. That's how you learn to slow down and really think about composition.

And finally, I hope they spend hours observing, waiting, guessing—and getting it wrong. Because only through missed shots will they begin to predict behaviours, understand rhythms, and anticipate moments before they happen. That's when macro becomes less about the gear and more about connection.

Is there a shot you've been trying to get for years but haven't nailed yet?

Yes—and it's one that continues to haunt and motivate me: capturing the rare moment of cannibalism among robber

flies. These powerful predators are known for their swift attacks and stealth, but witnessing and photographing one preying on another of its own kind is incredibly rare. I've had fleeting sightings, brief encounters, even partial frames—but never that one perfect, sharply detailed shot that tells the whole story.

It's a complex scene to capture. Timing is everything. They're fast, alert, and unpredictable. The lighting, the angle, the focus—it all has to align within seconds. I've returned to the same patches of land season after season, hoping to freeze that intense and dramatic moment in a frame. No luck yet, but that's what keeps me going.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

Bioluminescence at 2:1: The Rare Frontier of Glowing Macro Subjects

In the dark corners of nature, far from city lights and human eyes, organisms glow. Some flicker like fading embers; others pulse like neon signs underwater. This phenomenon, known as bioluminescence, is one of nature's most hauntingly beautiful tricks. To witness it is one thing. To photograph it, especially up close, at extreme magnifications like 2:1, is another. Welcome to one of the most elusive and visually captivating niches of macro photography: the glowing world of bioluminescent life.

What Is Bioluminescence?

Bioluminescence is the production and emission of light by a living organism. It occurs when certain enzymes (usually luciferase) react with molecules like luciferin, producing light in the process. Unlike fluorescence or phosphorescence, which require external light sources to charge and emit, bioluminescence is entirely self-powered. It's a survival mechanism used for hunting, mating, camouflage, or communication.

The phenomenon is more common than most people think. It appears in deep-sea creatures, fireflies, certain fungi, bacteria, and even some land snails and millipedes. Yet, very few photographers have successfully captured this rare light at extreme close-up levels - especially at a magnification of 2:1 or higher, where even a few millimetres fill the frame.

The Challenge of 2:1 Macro

In macro photography, magnification refers to the ratio of subject size on the camera sensor versus its real-world size. A 1:1 ratio means your subject is life-size on the sensor. At 2:1, it is twice as large. This kind of magnification reveals details invisible to the naked eye, tiny ridges on insect wings, the fine fuzz on moss, the glistening spore structures of fungi.

Now combine that scale with a bioluminescent subject, likely active only at night, incredibly small, and dim by photographic standards, and you begin to see the scope

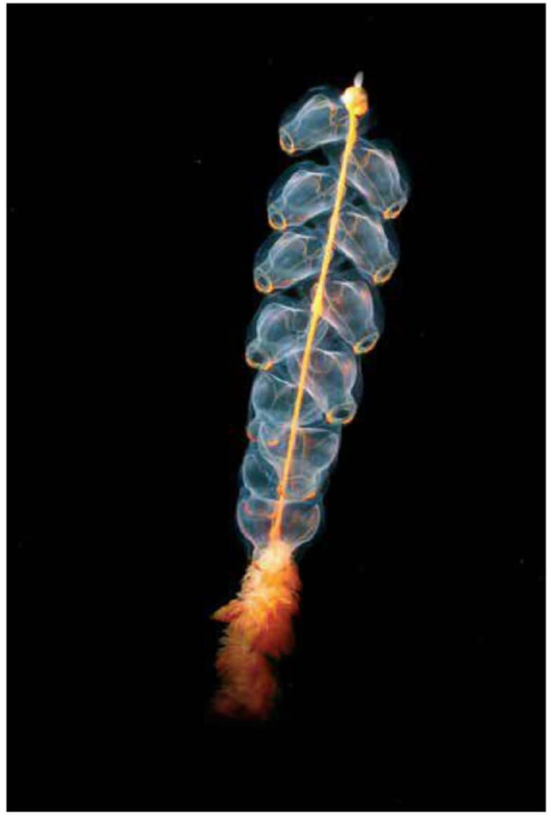


Image: Mark Hendricks

of the challenge. You're not just capturing a small glowing organism; you're capturing it at high magnification, in darkness, without external light.

A Rare Cast of Characters: Bioluminescent Macro Subjects

Let's look at some of the subjects that might grace the frame of a patient (and lucky) macro photographer working in this niche:

1. Fireflies (Lampyridae)

The most familiar glowing insects, and perhaps the "easiest" bioluminescent organism to photograph. While their bodies are larger than most macro subjects, photographing the actual light-emitting organ at 2:1 allows for abstract compositions of glowing tissue, textures, and colour gradients.

2. Railroad Worms (Phengodidae)

These beetles possess multiple glowing spots across their bodies—some red, some green. At 2:1, each glowing node becomes a separate frame-worthy subject.

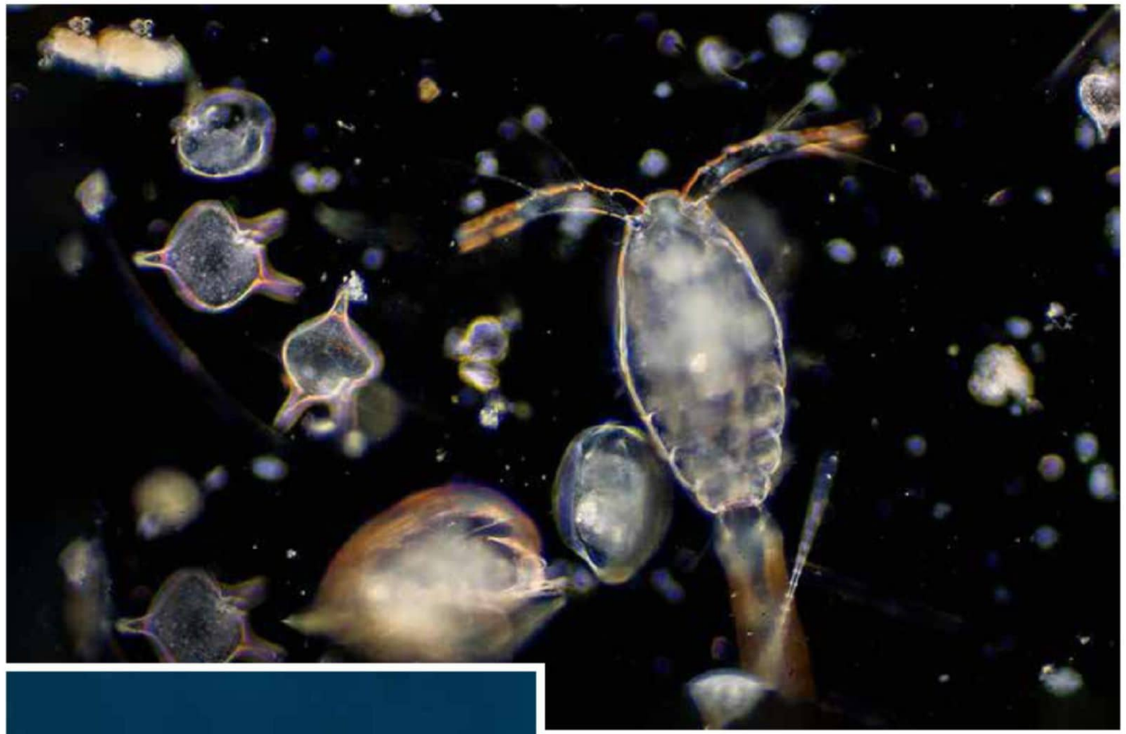
3. Bioluminescent Fungi (e.g., Mycena chlorophos, Panellus stipticus)

These glowing mushrooms emit a faint green light. Found in humid, decaying forests, their glow is often too dim for the human eye, but macro lenses and long exposures reveal stunning radial gill patterns and spore surfaces.

4. Marine Plankton and Dinoflagellates

Usually photographed in large-scale beach scenes, these single-celled organisms emit brilliant blue light when agitated. But under controlled lab conditions (and with serious patience), their bioluminescence can be observed and captured in isolation at high magnifications.

5. Bacterial Colonies (e.g., Vibrio fischeri)



These microbes glow as part of a symbiotic relationship with marine life like squid. Cultured under lab conditions on petri dishes, their colonies can be viewed at high macro magnification—revealing granular structure and shimmering wave-like patterns.

The Technical Hurdles

Capturing bioluminescence at 2:1 magnification is an extreme technical challenge. Here's why and how a determined photographer might overcome the odds:

1. No External Light Allowed

By definition, bioluminescence must be shot in the dark. Unlike traditional macro subjects, you can't use a flash, LED, or even a dim modeling light without washing out the glow. You're forced to rely entirely on the emitted light.

Solution: Use long exposures—often 30 seconds or more—with high ISO settings. Multiple exposures may be required and stacked to reduce noise.

2. Minuscule Light Source

Most bioluminescent organisms emit extremely faint light. What looks magical to the eye is often too dim for a sensor.

Solution: Shoot with the fastest possible lens (f/2.8 or wider), and consider using image intensifiers or highly sensitive astro-modified cameras. Some researchers use cooled sensors for scientific imaging.

3. Shallow Depth of Field

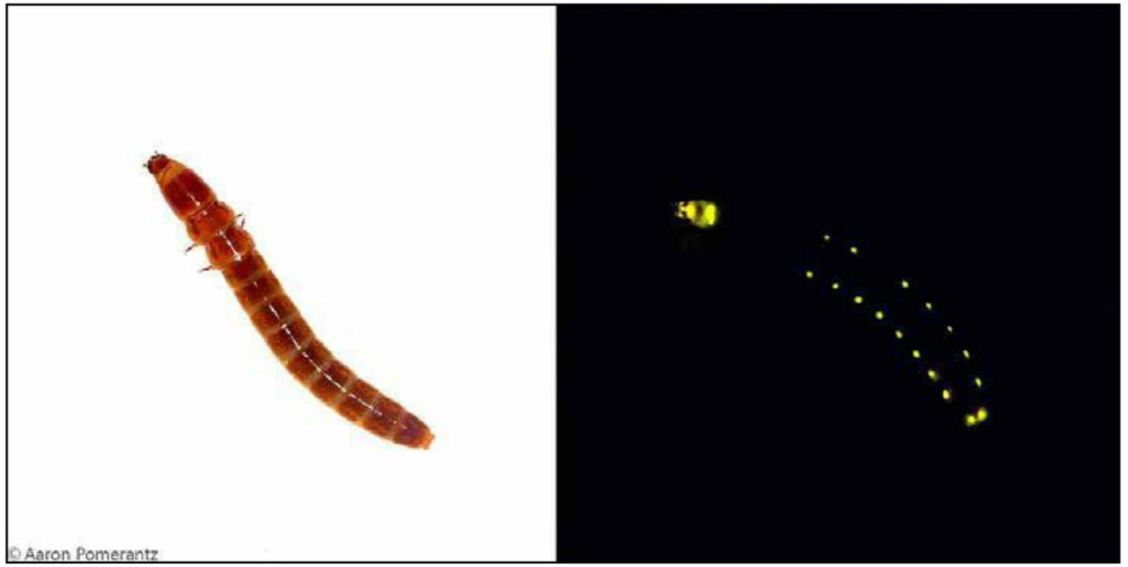
At 2:1, even at f/8, your depth of field is razor-thin. But stopping down means losing light—already in short supply.

Solution: Focus stacking is one way around this, but it's difficult with live subjects. Alternatively, you can embrace the shallow DOF and shoot creatively, emphasising a single glowing plane of focus.

4. Subject Motion

Many bioluminescent subjects are alive and moving - fireflies twitch, fungi sway in the breeze, bacteria multiply.

Solution: Stability is a key. Photograph in windless environments (ideally indoors), use remote triggers, and isolate your subject physically. With fungi and bacteria, create a dark lab-like environment to minimise disturbance.



Why It's Worth the Effort

When it works, it's spellbinding.

Imagine seeing the tiny gill ridges of a glowing mushroom, radiating green like stained glass. Or the bioluminescent organ of a firefly, not just as a dot of light in the night sky—but as a textured, pulsating structure that looks like an alien gem. These images are not just rare—they're revelatory. They expand our understanding of life and energy and demonstrate that beauty often hides at the intersection of science and patience.

Moreover, these photographs are powerful visual tools. They connect audiences with the wonder of the natural world. In conservation, bioluminescent fungi and insects are often used as flagship species to raise awareness about deforestation, soil health, and biodiversity. Macro bioluminescence photography can play a role in that education—bridging the gap between wonder and responsibility.

Final Thoughts

"Bioluminescence at 2:1" is more than just a technical challenge. It's a frontier. It represents one of the most poetic and elusive forms of visual storytelling available to photographers. To pursue it is to slow down, experiment, and often fail. But the reward is a window into life's quietest glow—a glimpse into the deep biological mysteries that surround us, mostly unseen.

As camera technology evolves and image sensors become more sensitive, this rare niche may become more accessible. But for now, it remains one of the most difficult and magical pursuits in all of macro photography.

In a world increasingly flooded with artificial light, perhaps the most valuable images are the ones that show us the natural light still flickering in the dark.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

DECAY DIARIES:
DISCOVERING THE BEAUTY OF ROT, RUST, AND RUIN THROUGH MACRO

Decay is usually seen as a sign of failure, of neglect, corrosion, and abandonment. It marks the places we leave behind and the things we no longer touch. But for those who carry a macro lens, decay is not the end of something, but the beginning of a fascinating visual story. Up close, rot becomes a rich texture, rust becomes a complex pattern, and ruin becomes poetry. Welcome to the world of Decay Diaries, where beauty isn't found in perfection, but in what is slowly falling apart.

The Allure of the Forgotten

Macro photography has a way of flipping the world on its head. What we might walk past without a second glance - a crumbling wall, a rusted hinge, a bruised fruit - suddenly transforms into something captivating when seen a few centimeters away. Details emerge: delicate cracks, explosive colours, structures layered like geological strata.

There's something deeply meditative about photographing decay. It requires slowing down, seeing not just what's there, but what's happening. Every spot of rot or smear of rust is an unfolding process. Each tells a quiet story of time, transformation, and return.

Rot: The Slow Rebirth

Decomposition might be the most misunderstood form of beauty. When a leaf breaks down, it doesn't simply vanish, it morphs! Its veins become skeletons, its surface flakes into lace. Fruit, as it ferments and collapses, glows with unexpected colours and textures: deep purples, bruised blues, earthy browns, even soft, ghostly whites of spreading mould.

Fungi and bacteria bring their own aesthetic. Under macro, a simple mould bloom reveals a forest of tiny filaments topped with dew-like spores. What was once repulsive becomes otherworldly. Photographed well, rot takes on a quiet dignity, almost painterly in its colour and form.

To capture rot is to embrace transience. Lighting plays a key role - soft diffused light brings out subtle textures, while directional light carves dimension. Subjects change rapidly. One day, you might see a fascinating bloom; the next, it's gone. Decay doesn't wait.

Rust: Time Etched in Metal

Rust is nature reclaiming what we tried to make permanent. Iron and oxygen dance slowly together, painting surfaces in flaky reds, fiery oranges, dark bruised purples. Rust spreads like frost or like lichen, in creeping maps that echo satellite imagery.

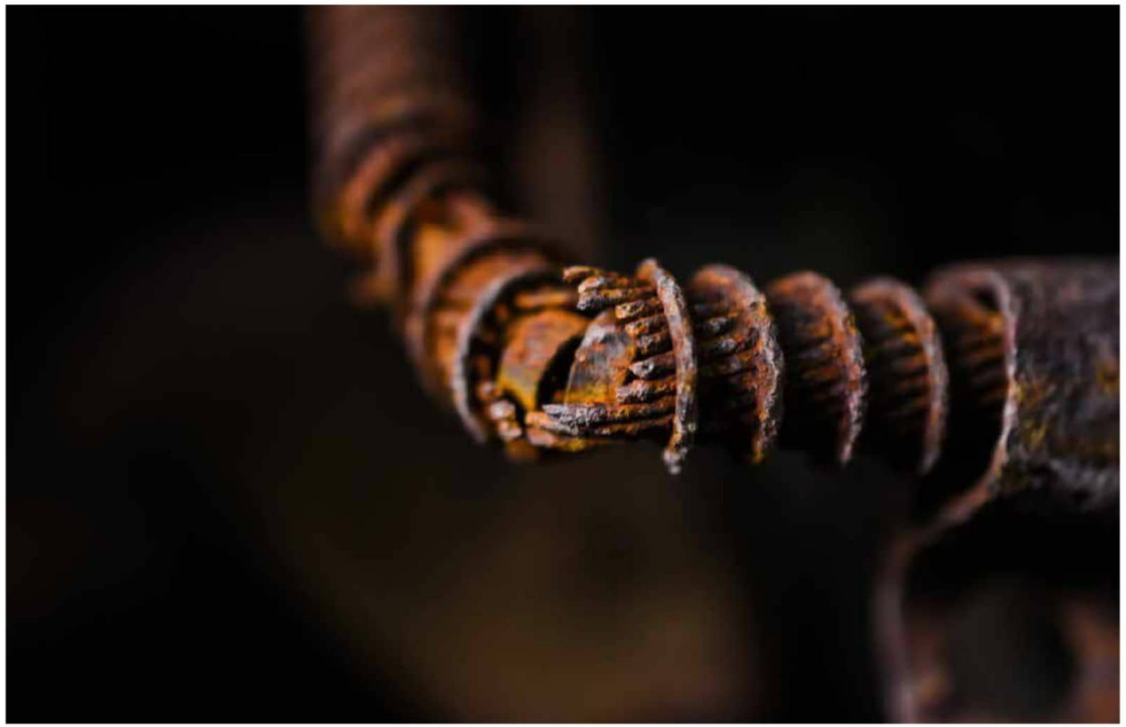
At macro scale, rusted surfaces are rich with terrain—ridges, craters, rivulets. Even a single screw head might resemble an alien planet. In the way it erodes, bubbles, flakes, and bleeds into its surroundings, rust becomes more than corrosion, it becomes artwork!

Macro photography reveals these details in striking ways. Use shallow depth of field to isolate patterns; explore angles to catch the way light clings to rusted edges. Often, what seems like a dull surface transforms into a dramatic landscape of contrast and colour under close inspection.

Ruin: Architecture in Eulogy

Decay isn't limited to the natural world. Human-made structures decay too, and with them, the stories of those who built them. Peeling wallpaper, cracked tiles, broken window panes, all of these become powerful motifs when examined

Image: Daniel Cooke



up close. The macro lens doesn't capture entire rooms; it focuses instead on fragments that suggest an entire history.

A single rusting hinge, a charred beam, a moss-covered keyhole, these aren't just textures. They're symbols. Ruins don't just show collapse; they whisper of life once lived.

In macro photography, details matter more than grand compositions. What paint is doing on the wall, how metal is warping around a screw, how spider webs weave into abandoned corners - these elements breathe character into ruin. Each image becomes a kind of archaeological sketch, small but emotionally dense.

A New Kind of Beauty

Why are we drawn to decay? In a world obsessed with gloss and filters, perhaps it's refreshing to see something real. There's no pretense in rot, no mask in rust. These are honest forms. They mark time's passage without apology.

There's also a deeper aesthetic at play. In Japanese culture, wabi-sabi celebrates the beauty of imperfection and impermanence. Macro photography of decay aligns perfectly with this. Nothing lasts forever, and when you look closely, the moment of falling apart is often where beauty peaks.

Photographing decay also invites stillness. It's not fast photography. You wait, observe, adjust your focus millimetre by millimetre. The process is immersive, even intimate. You're not capturing decay—you're spending time with it.

Tips for Photographing Decay Up Close

- **Seek Soft Light:** Overcast days or shaded windows are perfect. Hard sunlight can wash out textures; decay needs gentleness.

- **Get Closer Than You Think:** Use a dedicated macro lens or extension tubes. A world exists at just 1:1 magnification.
- **Use a Tripod and Manual Focus:** Depth of field becomes razor-thin. Tripods help with stability, and manual focus ensures control.
- **Focus Stack When Needed:** Especially with rust and texture-heavy subjects, stacking multiple shots at different focus points brings out sharpness across the image.
- **Don't Overstage It:** While decay can be found at home (rotting fruit in a bowl, for example), allow it to stay natural. Don't clean it up—it's meant to be wild.
- **Be Safe:** Some rot can release spores or unpleasant odours. Wear gloves, especially when handling mould or decomposing organic matter. Always photograph in well-ventilated spaces.

From Waste to Wonder

In the end, "Decay Diaries" is more than just a photography theme. It's a mindset. It invites us to appreciate the cycles we often ignore. To find beauty in what fades. To treat neglect not with disdain, but with curiosity. To look at what the world discards—and give it attention, light, and presence.

Rot, rust, and ruin aren't signs of failure. They're part of a larger rhythm. Through the macro lens, we don't just see the surface—we see stories, slow transformations, and the quiet elegance of time at work.

So the next time you see a flaking wall, a forgotten apple, or a rusted bolt—don't look away. Get closer. There might be a masterpiece waiting there, quietly falling apart.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

How Close Should You Get to a Subject? **Ethics** in **Macro**

Macro photography is all about getting close — closer than the eye can see. It invites us into intimate worlds: The spiralled symmetry of a snail's shell, the fine hairs on a bee's leg, the dew resting on a spider's web. But as we close in, a question looms that goes beyond technique or gear: *How close should we get?*

Macro photographers face unique ethical decisions. The small creatures and fragile environments we photograph are not props, they're living systems. And while macro photography can inspire awe and deepen appreciation for nature, it can also cause harm if we're not careful.

Let's talk about the ethics of proximity in macro photography and how to capture the unseen without crossing the line.

The Temptation to Get Closer

In macro photography, closer often means better. More detail, more drama, more wow. There's a thrill in filling the frame with the compound eye of a dragonfly or the iridescence of a beetle's shell.

But with each inch you move in, the risk increases—not just to your gear or your shot, but to your subject. Many macro subjects—bees, spiders, butterflies, frogs—are small, sensitive, and vulnerable. Getting too close can disturb their natural behaviour, damage their habitats, or even endanger their lives. The desire for the perfect shot must be weighed against the impact of taking it.

Wild Subjects Are Not Models

A wild insect doesn't understand photography. It doesn't know you mean no harm. It doesn't consent to your lens being a few inches from its face. And when you're hyper-focussed on composition and lighting, it's easy to forget you're interacting with a real, living creature—not a still life. Some ethical questions to ask yourself before clicking the shutter:

- Am I altering this creature's behaviour just to get my shot?
- Have I damaged its environment to position myself better?
- Is the animal stressed, fleeing, or freezing in fear?
- Would it be better to wait, zoom, or back off?

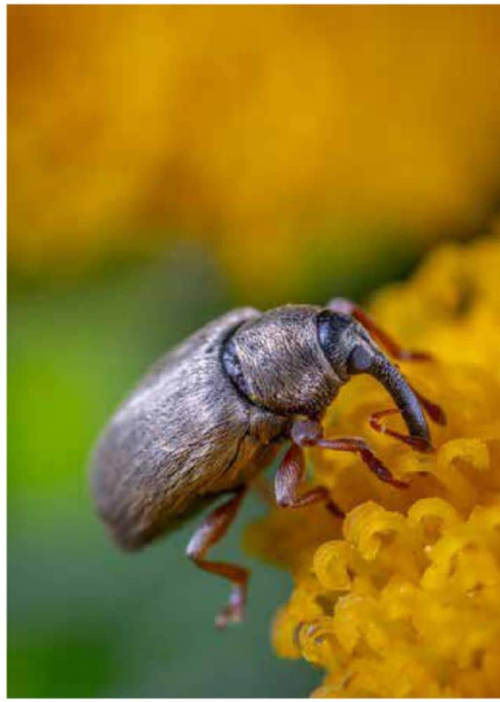
Respect begins with restraint. Sometimes the most ethical macro photo is the one you don't take.

Ethics of Handling and Manipulation

Some macro photographers handle or reposition insects and small animals for a better shot. In controlled environments—like studios or setups with captive subjects—this might seem harmless. But even light handling can injure fragile creatures. Insects can overheat from prolonged exposure to light. Amphibians can absorb harmful oils or chemicals from your skin.

Worse still, there are reports of photographers cooling down insects in freezers or refrigerators to make them sluggish for shooting. This practice, while disturbingly common in some circles, is unethical. It prioritises aesthetics over animal welfare.

The golden rule is simple: If you have to manipulate a creature to get the shot, it's probably not worth taking.



Leave No Trace—Especially at Small Scales

Macro environments are often micro ecosystems: moss beds, flower interiors, muddy banks, lichen-covered bark. A single misstep, tripod leg, or careless elbow can flatten habitats or destroy nesting areas. These environments don't bounce back easily.

Treat your surroundings as if they're delicate—and assume you can't always see the full extent of the life you're impacting. Use lightweight gear when possible. Watch where you step. And always put the welfare of the environment ahead of your photo.

Best practice: Leave everything as you found it.

The Gray Area of Baiting and Lures

Some macro photographers use sugar water, fruit, or pheromones to attract insects. Others introduce predators and prey in close proximity to capture dramatic encounters. While not outright illegal, these tactics raise questions:

- Are you altering natural behaviour?
- Could this interaction harm one or both species?
- Is the image an honest representation of nature?

Staged images blur the line between photography and manipulation. That's fine—as long as you're transparent. But presenting these setups as "natural" not only misleads viewers, it also promotes unethical practices.

If you bait, stage, or control an image, disclose it.

Ethics in Posting and Influencing

Ethics don't end at the lens. When you post your macro shots online, you influence others—especially beginners who look to more experienced photographers for cues.

Posting images of endangered species with GPS coordinates? You may be inviting poachers. Sharing behind-the-scenes photos of you handling a butterfly? You might unintentionally normalise harmful behaviour.

Be honest about how you got the shot. Share ethical practices. Promote respect over perfection. Because if your art inspires harm, it's failing its deeper purpose.

Macro Photography as Advocacy

Macro photography is a powerful storytelling tool. It can help people see the unseen—and care about what they otherwise ignore. When done ethically, it's not just art—it's advocacy.

A close-up of a bee mid-pollination can teach viewers about pollinator importance. A detailed shot of a frog's eye might spark interest in amphibian conservation. But these images only carry weight if they reflect respect for the subjects they portray.

You're not just a photographer. You're a witness. A storyteller. And in a world where insect populations are plummeting and habitats are vanishing, your lens has the power to shift perspectives.

Guiding Principles: An Ethical Macro Code

Here's a simple set of principles to guide your ethical macro practice:

1. Do No Harm – If getting the shot causes stress or damage, don't take it.
2. Leave No Trace – Respect and protect the environment, even the smallest parts.
3. No Manipulation Without Necessity – Avoid handling, restraining, or chilling creatures for convenience.
4. Be Honest – Disclose any artificial setups or alterations.
5. Educate and Elevate – Use your work to promote awareness and appreciation, not just aesthetics.

Final Thoughts

Macro photography gives us access to a hidden world. But that access comes with responsibility. The closer we get, the more care we must take—not just for the shot, but for the subject.

So how close should you get?

Close enough to reveal, but not disturb. Close enough to celebrate, but not exploit. Close enough to inspire respect not just for your skill as a photographer, but for the fragile lives and tiny worlds you're privileged to witness.

Because in macro, ethics isn't a limit, it's the point.

TEXT: RAJAN GUPTA

WHERE DOES **MACRO** END AND **MICRO** BEGIN?

Macro photography opens the door to a world we rarely notice—a place where the texture of a leaf becomes a jungle, the surface of a coin a lunar landscape. But how close is too close? At what point does macro stop being macro and enter the realm of micro photography? The line between the two isn't just a matter of semantics. It's about tools, technique, and intent. In this article, we'll draw that line.

The Basics: What Is Macro Photography?

In photography, macro doesn't just mean "close-up". It has a specific, technical definition: a 1:1 reproduction ratio. That means the subject is captured on the camera's sensor at its actual size. For example, if you're shooting a 10 mm long insect, it will appear 10 mm long on your sensor.

Macro photography usually covers a reproduction range from about 1:5 (0.2x) to 5:1 (5x). In this zone, you're capturing details visible to the naked eye—albeit often missed—and bringing them to life on a dramatic scale. Think dewdrops, butterfly wings, flower stamens, and the compound eyes of a housefly.

Once you go beyond 5:1 magnification, you're not just magnifying reality any more. You're entering micro photography territory.

So What's Micro Photography?

Micro photography, often confused with macro, deals with subjects that are invisible or barely visible to the naked eye. This is where things like bacteria, cells, and microtextures of materials come into play. The magnification starts at 5x and can easily go up to 1000x or more.

In macro, you shoot an ant. In micro, you shoot the cells on the ant's antennae.

This transition isn't just about size—it's about the gear required to make those images possible.

Gear: The Dividing Line

Macro photography is accessible to most photographers with a DSLR or mirrorless camera. A dedicated macro lens, usually with a 1:1 reproduction ratio, is typically all you need. Extension tubes, bellows, or close-up filters can extend your reach even further, up to 3x or 4x magnification. Specialised macro lenses like the Canon MP-E 65mm let you push to 5x, but at that point, you're skating the edge.

To go beyond 5x consistently and clearly, you require microscope objectives, special adapters, and often a lab-level setup. Micro photography typically uses microscope lenses adapted for cameras, high-magnification stacking rails, precise focussing mechanisms, and lighting that's measured in millimetres of diffusion and control.

In other words, macro ends where your gear—and your patience—reach their limits. Micro begins where precision engineering takes over.

Techniques: From Snapshots to Systems

Macro photography still works within the familiar territory of general photography techniques. Depth of field is shallow, yes, but manageable. You still use standard camera controls—aperture, shutter speed, ISO—and often shoot handheld or with a simple tripod.

But micro photography demands a scientific approach. At magnifications beyond 5x, the depth of field is so razor-thin that you can't get a whole subject in focus without focus

stacking—capturing hundreds of images at incremental focus distances and merging them later. Even slight vibrations, like someone walking in the room, can ruin a shot.

Light is also a bigger problem. At extreme magnification, light doesn't just fall off—it crashes. You need strong, precisely positioned lights and often custom diffusion to get usable images.

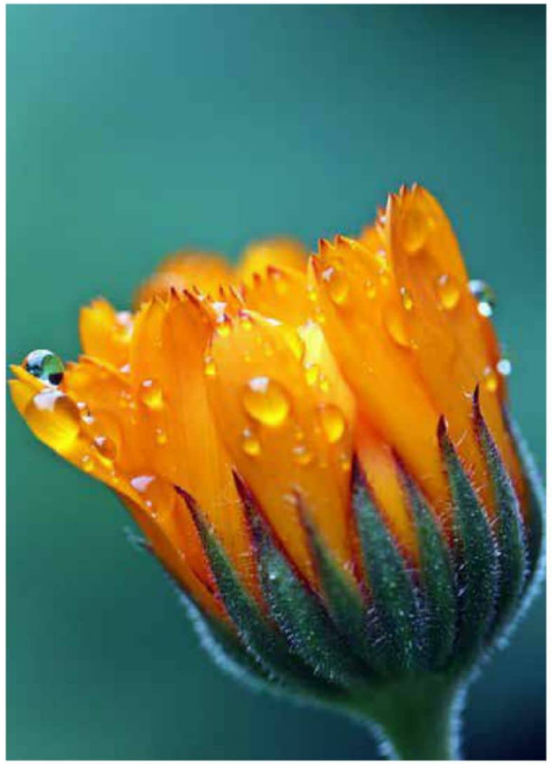
Where macro allows for creativity and spontaneity, micro requires discipline, consistency, and technical mastery.

Subject Matter: Seeing vs. Revealing

Another way to draw the line is by asking what your image shows.

- Macro photography reveals what the eye can see but rarely notices. It shows detail, form, and texture that exist in the visible world.
- Micro photography reveals what the eye cannot see unaided. It pulls from a realm that exists beneath visual perception.

This difference matters because it shapes the intent behind the image. Macro is often about aesthetic appreciation—beauty in nature, textures, or minute details. Micro is more often about discovery, documentation, or scientific inquiry. It's less about the beauty of a petal, more about the structure of a pollen grain.



Where the Lines Blur

Despite the definitions, there's no hard border. Photographers regularly cross from one domain into the other, especially with hybrid techniques and tools. Stacked images at 3x magnification can look "micro" to most viewers. Microscope lenses adapted for DSLRs blur the boundary.

Some might argue that micro photography isn't just a technical threshold—it's a mindset. When you stop thinking photographically and start thinking microscopically, you've made the shift.

Why It Matters

You might wonder: Does this distinction really matter? For casual photographers, maybe not. But for serious hobbyists, educators, or professionals, it's crucial. Knowing where macro ends and micro begins helps:

- Choose the right equipment
- Set realistic expectations
- Avoid frustration
- Understand lighting and focus challenges
- Communicate clearly when publishing or exhibiting work

It also sets the stage for growth. If you've mastered 1:1 macro, and you're curious what 10x looks like, you'll know what technical skills and equipment you'll need to explore further.

Final Thoughts

So where does macro end and micro begin? The short answer is: Around 5:1 magnification. But in practice, the line is more of a gradient than a wall.

Macro photography is a gateway to seeing the world in a new way. Micro photography is the next level, where you stop observing and start exploring. One is about detail, the other about revelation. Both are powerful. Both take patience and skill. But the tools, the mindset, and the goals shift the deeper you go.

If macro makes the invisible visible, micro makes the unimaginable real.

TEXT: RAJAN GUPTA

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OnePlus Nord 5 Camera Review - New Midrange King?

Last year, when we reviewed the OnePlus Nord 4, it left us wanting more. This year, the Nord 5 arrives with bold promises - it's the first Nord to feature a Snapdragon 8-series chipset and the first mainstream OnePlus device with a 144Hz OLED display. But what we're really here for is the camera - especially since it borrows tech from the flagship OnePlus 13. While pricing hasn't been officially confirmed (we received both the Nord 5 and CE5 under embargo), we expect it to stay close to last year's launch price – between ₹30,000-₹35,000. According to OnePlus, this is their most complete Nord yet. So, do the cameras live up to that claim? Let's find out!

Camera Setup & Specs

Here's a quick look at the camera hardware:

- Dual rear cameras
- 50MP main camera with Sony LYT-700 sensor (14.2MP output)
- 8MP ultrawide (9MP output)
- 50MP front camera with Samsung JN5 sensor (14.2MP output)
- Snapdragon 8s Gen 3 processor
- 144Hz OLED display with 1400 nits peak brightness
- 6800mAh battery—the biggest in its segment (for now)

Design & Build

OnePlus continues to push the envelope with its design and build. Ever since the OnePlus 13, they've embraced a flat design that feels premium in the hand. The Nord 5 comes in three colour variants with a sleek glass back - thankfully, it's less slippery than the OnePlus 13. At just 8.1mm thick, it's comfortable to hold and carry. It also gets an IP65 rating for water resistance this time.

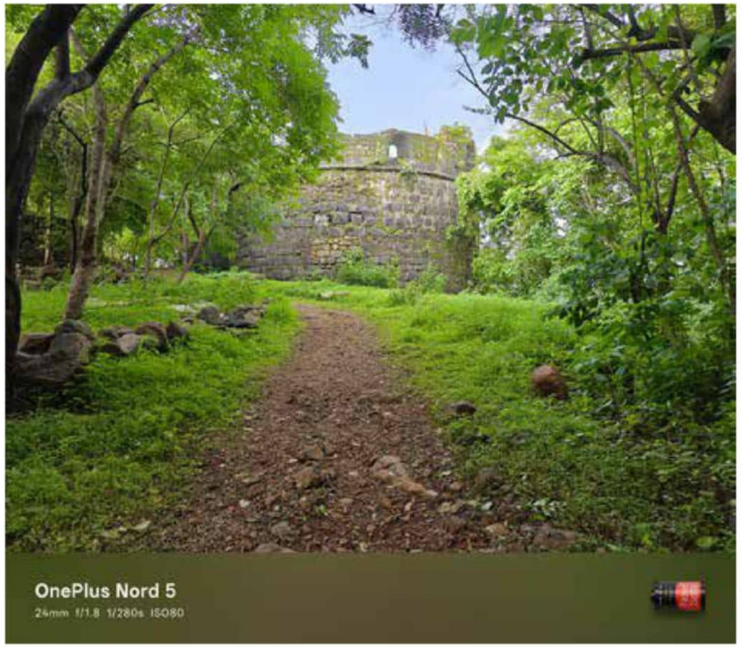
A welcome addition is the new Action Button on the left, which can be customized to perform various tasks - including launching the camera and in the camera app, capturing photos. It adds a tactile dimension to the shooting experience, taking a cue from the iPhone.

The camera layout is minimal - an exclamation mark-style design with a raised module. You also get signature metallic camera rings, just like the flagship models.

Daylight Main

The camera gives you three focal lengths to shoot with, 24mm, 28mm and 35mm and the output is at 14.2 MP and overall the pics it shoots are pretty good. The images are vibrant, saturated and pleasing to the eye. But we feel that they are over-saturated since we prefer a more original and natural look. The sharpness also on zooming in is decent. Yes there is some processing that you can see, but in most cases the image sharpness was decent.

The shadows, highlights and HDR performance is also surprisingly good. But under backlit scenarios the sharpness and focussing takes a beating. And as compared to the Nord 4 in daylight, this is a massive improvement compared to the Nord 4.



Daylight Main

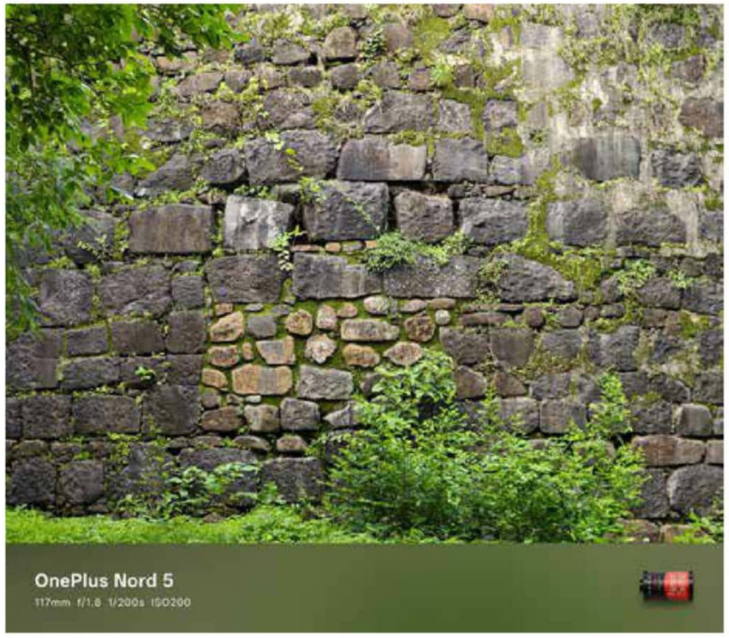
Daylight Wide

The wide camera is a 8 MP camera and they output the images at 9 MP. With a 8 MP camera we don't expect the sensor to do much and at best the images from this one are ok.
The images show high contrast with highlights and shadows coming under. It still shows good colour tonality as compared to the main camera, which means it is maintaining consistency. The sharpness surely takes a beating and can be better on zooming in, but you can't expect much with this. There is also distortion seen in the images as well.
Overall the performance is decent.

Daylight Telephoto

Just like last time, there is no dedicated telephoto camera and lens in this phone. The main camera is used to shoot tele photos and they are processed in the background. There is optical zoom until 2x and then it switches to digital zoom - all the way up to 20x.

In terms of performance, we are pleasantly surprised. The images are actually sharp and usable up until 5x and even on zooming in you can see the clarity (at least most of it). There is also very minimal colour shifting as well and it is able to maintain the consistency. But once you move 10x and above then you can see some colour fringing, which is more apparent at the max focal range. But honestly, a regular consumer wouldn't notice any of these things and we are impressed with this performance.



Daylight Telephoto

Lowlight Images

In the lowlight category the images overall are better than we expected. With the main camera the images look well saturated, sharp and pleasing to the eye. The colour reproduction is also good. Yes, the images surely seem processed and once you zoom in you can see that. But even under those conditions - they are able to maintain good sharpness.

In the wide - much like the daylight the camera does struggle slightly - the shadows and highlights performance takes a beating and the sharpness is also ok. You also see a lot of lens flaring as well in the wide camera, which wasn't evident in the main

Daylight Portrait

Daylight Portrait

camera. There is also a display of colour shifting in the images with some of them displaying a reddish tinge. So we wouldn't really use the wide camera in low light unless it is absolutely necessary.

But like the day, the telephoto again shows a decent performance in lowlight as well. The images are well saturated and look good. You can easily spot the over processing in most cases, but to the naked eye, they are good. The sharpness is also decent until 5x, and at max zoom range the images aren't usable honestly.

Portraits

The Nord 5 allows you to shoot portraits at 1x and 2x lenses, and three focal lengths - 24, 35 and 48mm. The images are good, but not impressive enough according to us.

In daylight the images display good consistency and look natural and pleasing to the eye. We put the phone in a difficult scenario with mostly the light coming in from the back. And the image sharpness in this case was a hit and a miss. The depth performance was good and so was the edge detection - but when you look at the images you don't feel like they are sharp. There is some haziness looming around them.

In lowlight the sharpness looks lack luster in some cases with some sort of haziness in the images. However the edge detection is pretty good. The depth performance is also impressive with the bokeh looking round and cats eye. There is a slight tinge of yellow and red in some cases, but not something to complain about. At times when it focusses then the images are sharp, otherwise they aren't.

Overall, there is room for improvement in this.

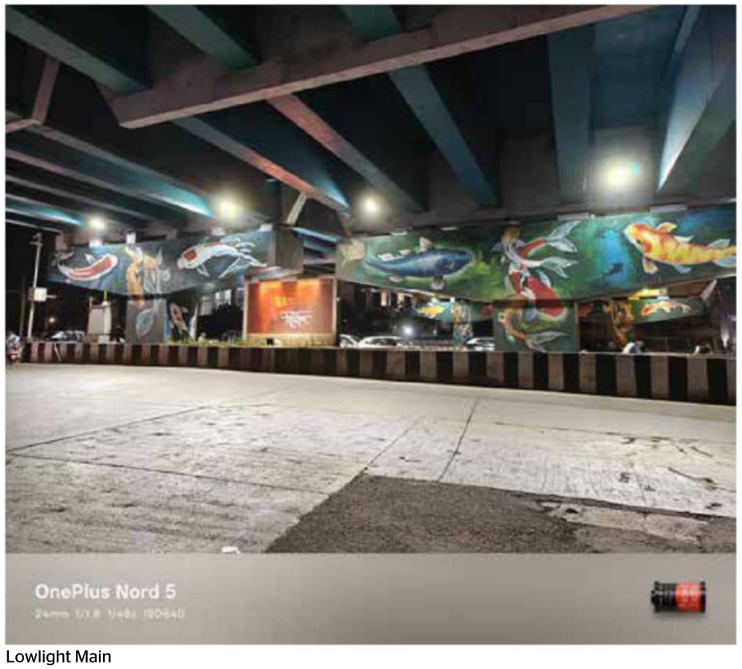
Front Camera

The front camera allows you to shoot with three lenses and focal lengths, 0.8x or 21mm, 1x or 25mm and 2x or 49mm. Powered by the 50MP Samsung JN5 sensor, images from all three lenses are 14.2MP.

The output of the front camera is pretty good. It displays sharp details and also delivers good accuracy which is closer to the original scene. So we're impressed with this one.

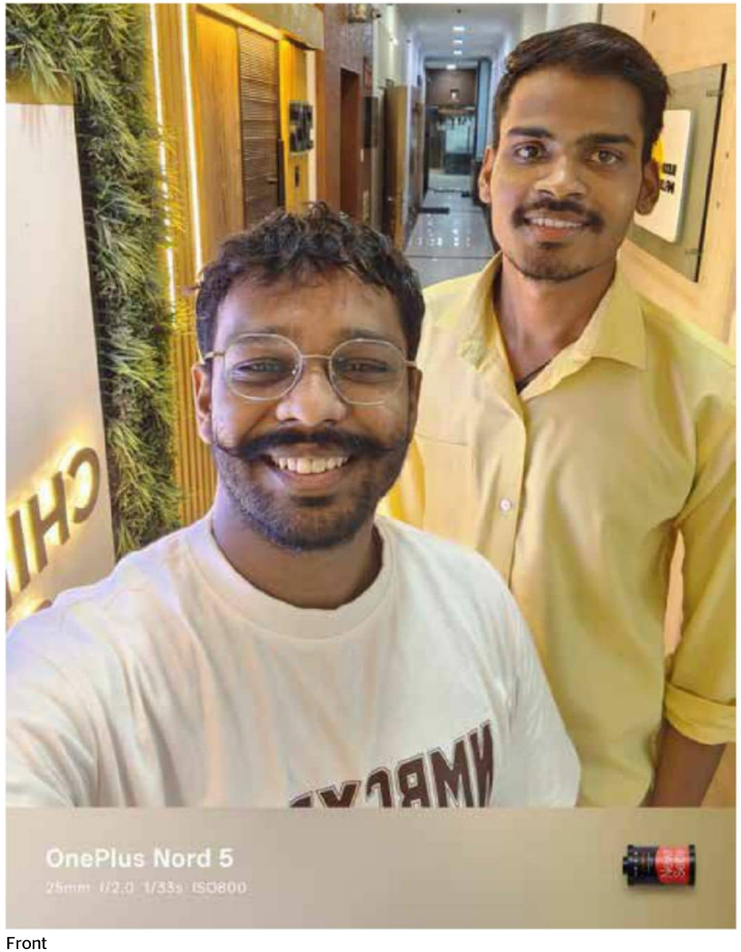
Front Camera Video

This camera is a massive upgrade where it could only shoot 1080p. On the Nord 5, you can shoot 4K up to 60fps on the front camera.



Lowlight Main

Lowlight Telephoto



Front

Video Performance

On the rear camera, you can shoot up to 4k up to 60fps, but only at 1x and 2x. At 0.6x, the view drops down to 1080p 30fps.

Video quality wise, the output is natural looking, a little bit more saturated and vibrant that's what you see with your eyes, and has good dynamic range with no visible signs of over-processing, which is a plus. The OIS gives you super stable footage.

In low light, the Nord 5 has good detail in the shadow, and because of the image stabilization, it looks better overall, but there is a little bit of flaring. But there is noticeable improvement in image quality as compared to the previous phone.

Battery & Display

This might be the first phone we're reviewing with a battery pack exceeding 6500mAh. It supports 80W fast charging and even after using it a lot there is still a lot left over for you to last. For an average user we think it will last more than a day and half easily.

The display quality is very good in this price segment. This is the first ever 144Hz panel on a mobile phone, and it supports HDR. The usage is smooth and the visuals are poppy and vibrant, something you'd expect from an OLED display.

Conclusion

So, is this the most complete Nord ever?

Honestly—yes. Mid-range phones usually leave us with mixed feelings, but this one delivers on most fronts.

Photos are vibrant and detailed, video performance is solid, and the front camera is a standout. Portraits could be better, but with that stunning display, excellent battery, and expected price tag of ₹31,999, OnePlus might just have a winner on its hands.

TEXT: BHAVYA DESAI

PHOTOSCAPE

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or
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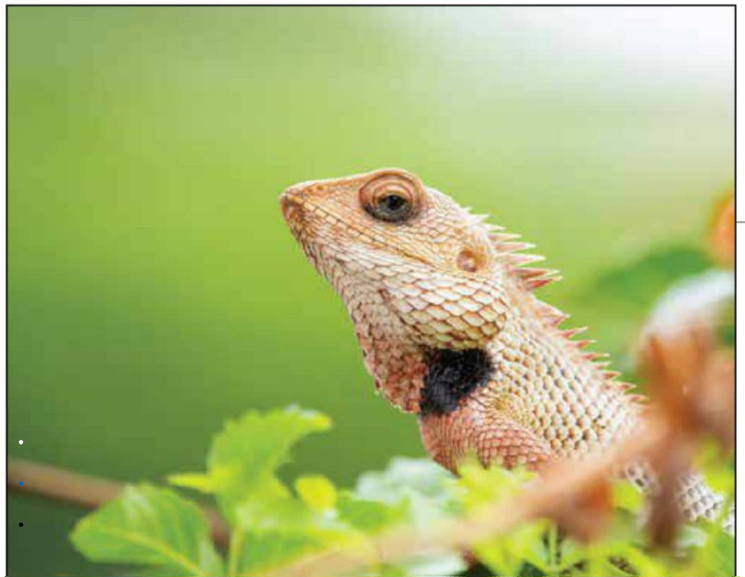
Name: Ameya Sanjay Punalekar
Camera & Lens: Canon 5D Mark IV & Canon 100mm f/2.8
Focal Length: 100mm
Shutter Speed: 1/200s
Aperture: F/6.3
ISO: 100
Instagram ID : @ek_sarfira_musafir

Name: Nitin Srivastava
Camera & Lens: Sony 7RV & 200-600mm
Focal length: 600mm
Shutter Speed: 1/100s
Aperture: F/6.3
ISO: 250
Instagram ID: @nitin_srivastavaa

Name: Shreeraam Sivaraman
Camera & Lens: Canon R6 with Canon EF 500mm F/4
Focal length: 500mm
Shutter Speed: 1/800s
Aperture: F/4
ISO: 3200
Instagram ID: @shreeraam_Photography



Name: Bhumish Patadiya
Camera & Lens: Canon EOS R7 with RF 100-500mm lens
Focal Length: 500mm
Shutter Speed: 1/320s
Aperture: F/7.1
ISO: 800
Instagram ID: @bhumish_patadiya_photography

Name: Dr. Deepak Jaybhaye
Camera used: Canon R5 with RF 100 -500 mm Lens + 1.4x RF Extender
Focal Length: 700mm
Shutter Speed: 1/2000 s
Aperture: F/10
ISO: 4000
Instagram ID: @deepak.jaybhaye.9

Name: Rahul Kahar
Camera & Lens: Nikon D850 + Nikkor 24-120mm
Focal Length: 50mm
Shutter Speed: 1/200s
Aperture: F/20
ISO: 64
Instagram ID: @jungleeframes

Name: Harshit Narendra Suryawanshi
Camera & lens: Sony a6400, Sony FE 200-600 G OSS
Focal length: 600mm
Shutter speed: 1/350s
Aperture: F/8.0
ISO: 1250
Instagram ID: @Lensation_46

Name: Saikat Biswas
Camera & Lens: Nikon D7500 & 70-300mm
Focal length: 300mm
Shutter Speed: 1/800s
Aperture: F/6.3
ISO: 2000
Instagram ID: @_Saikatphotography_

Name: Kaushal N. Maheriya
Camera and lens: Canon 7D MkII + Tamron 70-300mm F/4.5-6.3
Focal length: 100mm
Shutter speed: 1/250s
Aperture: F/5.2
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: @kaushal.wild

Name: Vivekananda Sarkar
Camera & Lens: Nikon Z5 & Nikon 200-500mm
Focal Length: 500mm
Shutter Speed: 1/640sec
Aperture: F/5.6
ISO: 640
Instagram ID: @ Photographervivekananda

PHOTO MONTAGE

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For most, the tiniest elements of nature go unnoticed, a dew-speckled mushroom hidden beneath the foliage, the iridescent shimmer of a beetle's wing, or the delicate architecture of a spider's web catching morning light. But for me, these fleeting details are where the real magic of the natural world lies. Specialising in close-up photography of insects, fungi, and the often-overlooked patterns of nature, I transform the unseen into the unforgettable. With a camera as both macroscope and storyteller, the images invite viewers into miniature ecosystems bursting with colour, texture, and life.

My goal is to slow people down and have a look at these tiny creatures. We live in such a fast-paced world that we forget the tiny miracles happening right beneath our feet. When you truly observe an ant carrying a leaf or the symmetry of a mushroom's gills, you realise how interconnected and extraordinary the small stuff really is.

Driven by both scientific curiosity and artistic vision, I often venture out during early dawn or after rainfall—times when the world is quiet, and the little lives emerge with dew-laced brilliance. Their work is a testament to patience, often involving hours spent in damp undergrowth or lying still in fields, waiting for the perfect moment of light and behaviour. With every photograph, I aim to shift perspectives, reminding us that nature's poetry is not only found in grand landscapes or sweeping vistas, but in the hum of wings, the spiral of a snail's shell, and the silent drama unfolding beneath a mushroom cap.

In a time when environmental awareness is more crucial than ever, I always hope their work fosters appreciation and protection of even the smallest creatures. When people fall in love with the little things, then maybe they'll care more about the world as a whole.

Instagram: @macrovision_hb

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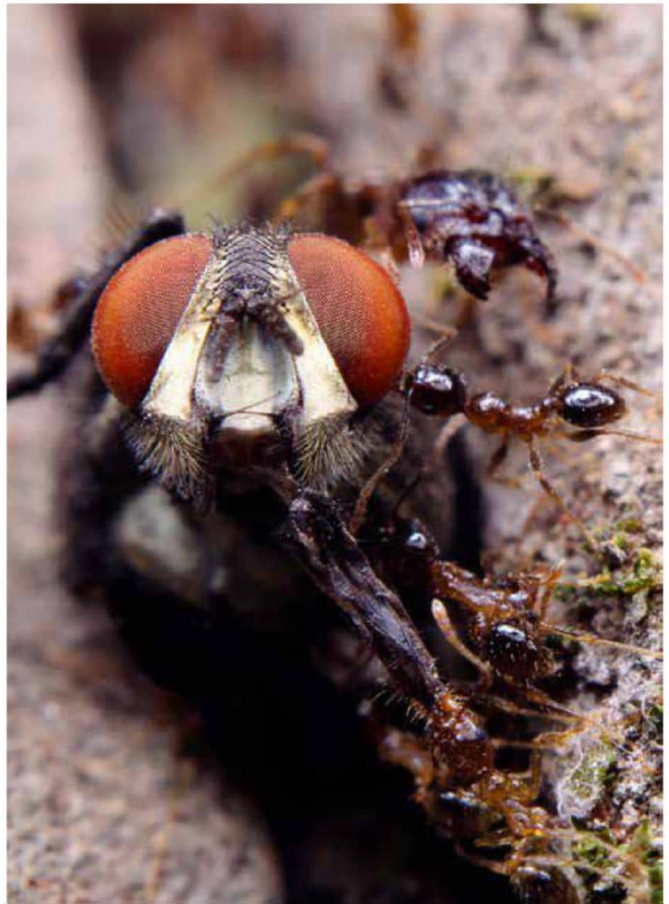

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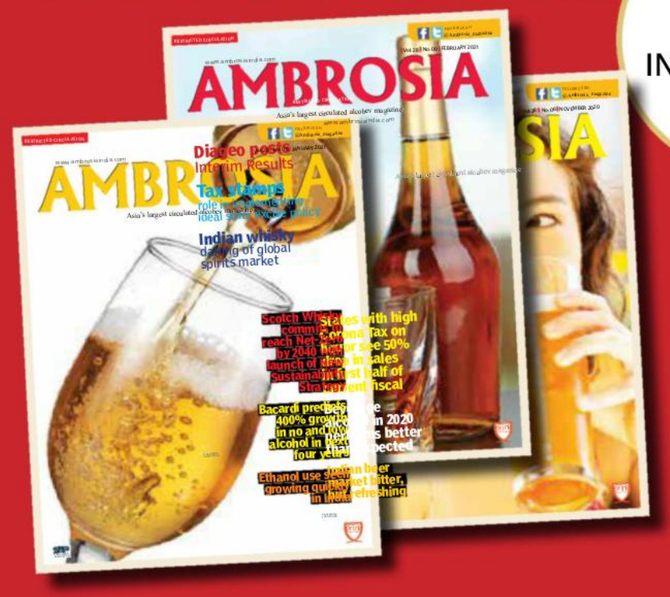

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