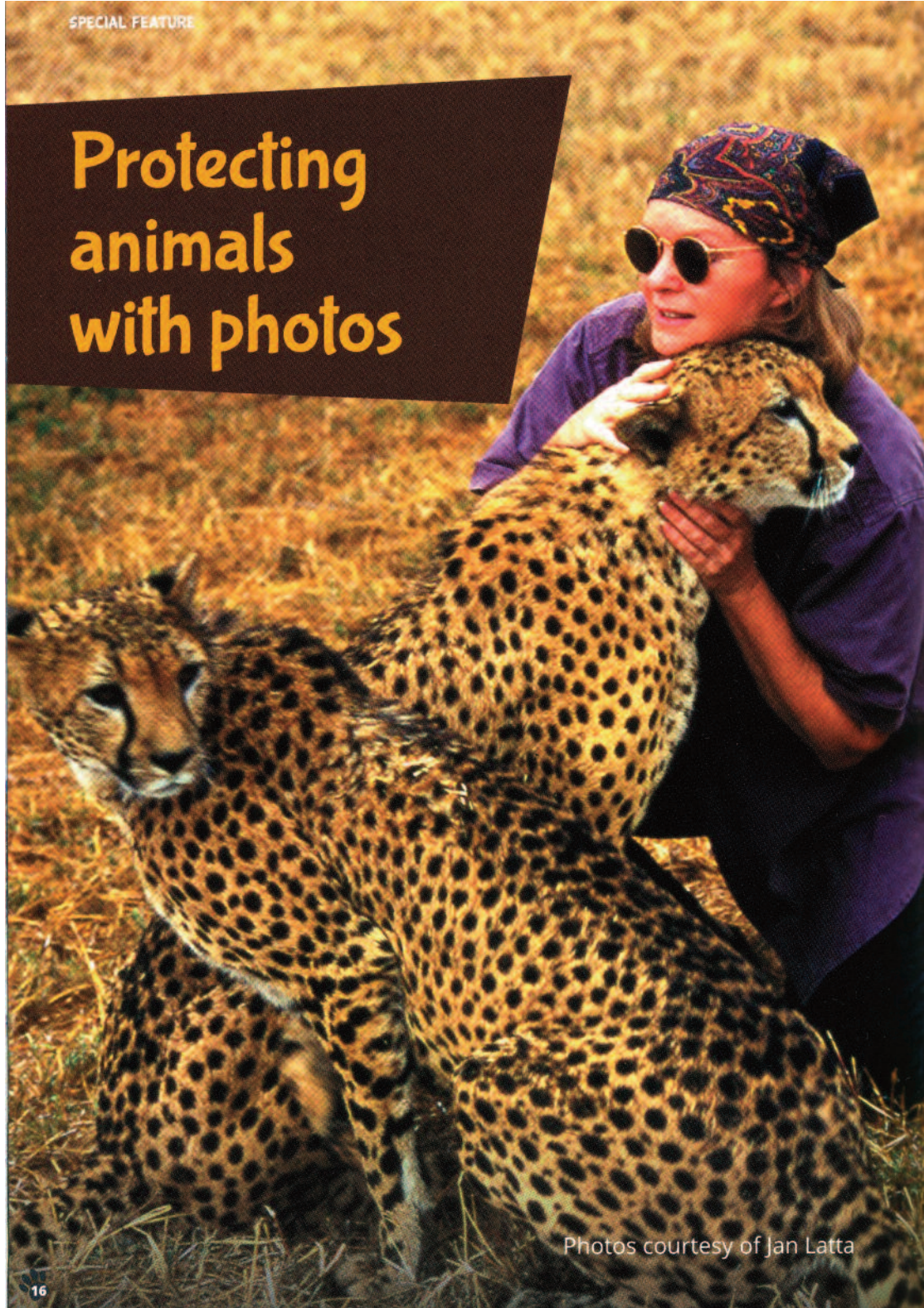


Protecting animals with photos



Photos courtesy of Jan Latta

Jan Latta never planned to become a wildlife photographer or book publisher. She was quite happy in her career in advertising when, on a visit to Africa in 1994, a Mountain Gorilla guide told her during an encounter with the majestic primates there were only 600 of the animals left in the wild.

"At that moment I decided to dedicate my life to endangered animals," Jan said.

Since then, Jan has published 12 books full of her photos of wild animals in their natural habitat alongside interesting facts about the animal.

"I have a great passion for what I do. I travel alone, or with a guide, and sleep in a tent close to lions and elephants, so I think being brave is probably the best skill I have. I do get scared, but I have always done my homework so I know how to keep safe."

Jan said one of her scariest moments was when a rhino was rocking her Jeep with its horn. "I just told myself that it had an itchy nose – that thought kept me calm until it moved away. However my greatest fear always is hippos. I am always on guard against them on the water or on land. You never get between a hippo and water. If they bite you, the infection you get from their mouth can be deadly."

Out of the hundreds of photos Jan has taken throughout Africa, India, Borneo and China, her favourite photo was taken close to home.

"The koala jumping is my favourite – I have never seen another photo like it," she said. Although she admits that sometimes she finds nature so fascinating that she forgets to take a photo, such as the time she was watching an albino giraffe.



Jan has no hesitation in nominating her favourite animal as a cheetah, and has been lucky enough to have a close experience in the wild. "I had stopped to change the film in my camera when a wild cheetah walked up to me. It was amazing, but I knew I had to stay calm. I knelt down and it was actually purring. They are very inquisitive animals," she said.

When she's not travelling, Jan visits schools to talk about her adventures.

"I enjoy teaching children about the importance of our endangered creatures. For example, wouldn't it be sad if we lost all our intelligent primates? We should all be doing whatever we can to protect these wonderful animals." 🌿

Jan's latest book, *Diary of a Wildlife Photographer*, has just been released (a few lucky Animaniacs have already won a copy!). If you would like more information about Jan, visit her website: truetolifebooks.com.au