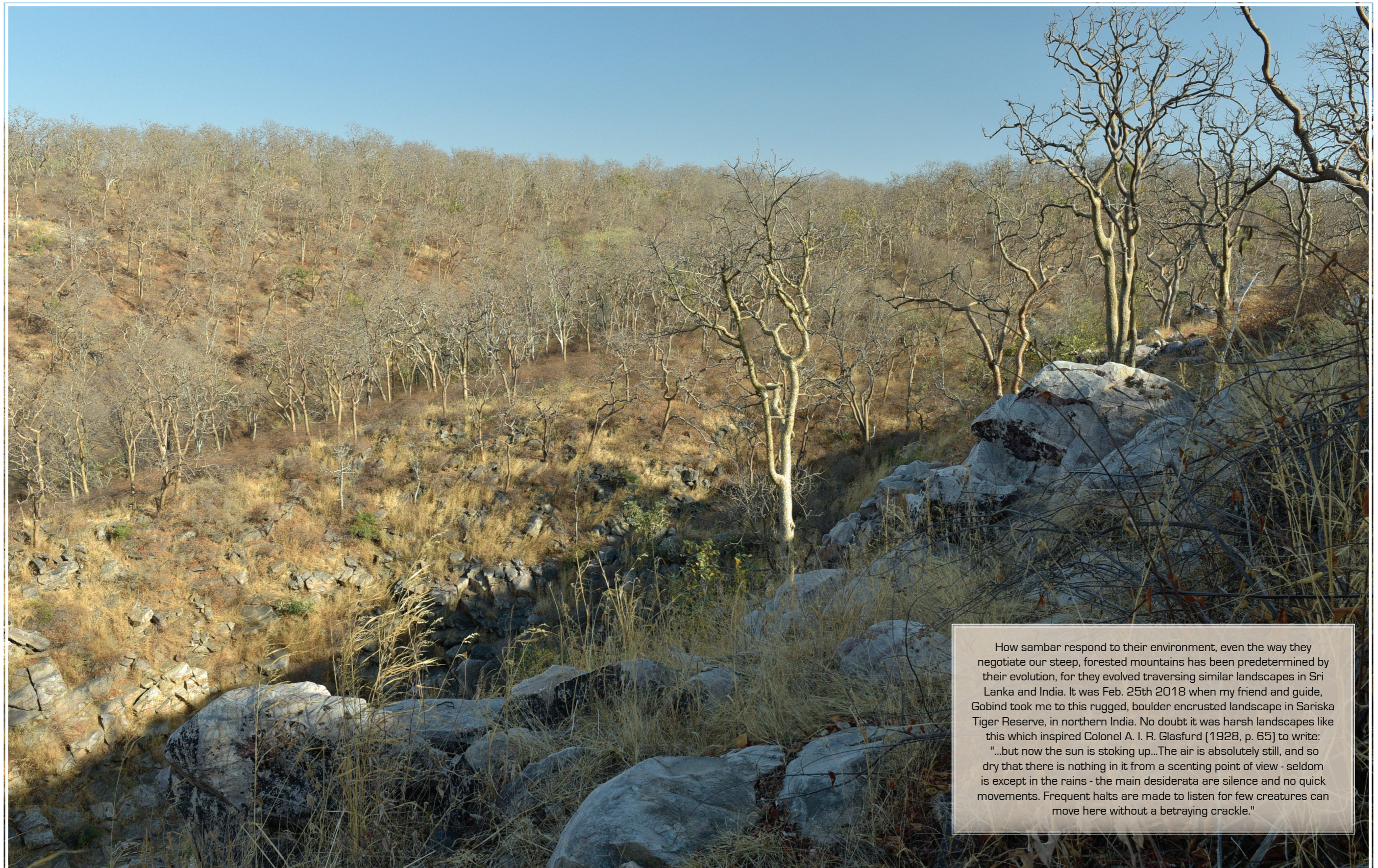


Like tigers, leopards hunt at dawn, dusk and during the night. I photographed this one just before sunset at Nagarhole National Park in southern India. Leopards have amazing stealth, are perfectly camouflaged and strike with lightning speed, so they are extremely effective at ambushing prey from the ground, or by leaping down on unsuspecting sambar from a tree, cliff or rocky outcrop.

Karen Singh told me how he waited in moonlight in a machan overlooking a waterhole for sambar to come to drink. After several hours a hind and spiker arrived and began drinking. Then without warning, a leopard leapt out of the very tree he was sitting in onto the spiker, and with jaws locked around its throat, carried it away. All this happened in the blink of an eye. Having evolved with a predator as lethal as "spots" it's little wonder sambar - especially hinds with young - are constantly alert.







How sambar respond to their environment, even the way they negotiate our steep, forested mountains has been predetermined by their evolution, for they evolved traversing similar landscapes in Sri Lanka and India. It was Feb. 25th 2018 when my friend and guide, Gobind took me to this rugged, boulder encrusted landscape in Sariska Tiger Reserve, in northern India. No doubt it was harsh landscapes like this which inspired Colonel A. I. R. Glasfurd [1928, p. 65] to write: "...but now the sun is stoking up...The air is absolutely still, and so dry that there is nothing in it from a scenting point of view - seldom is except in the rains - the main desiderata are silence and no quick movements. Frequent halts are made to listen for few creatures can move here without a betraying crackle."