

IN WARM to HOT WEATHER

the Sambar's need for shade and water soars.

March 3rd, 2018, Nagarhole National Park southern India. After a very warm night, it was to be another long, hot day with the temp. to climb above 30°.

As our jeep glided silently to a stop I studied the four sambar at the waterhole. Unlike the chital drinking alongside them, the sambar were nervous and ready to bolt. I quickly focused my 450mm lens on them just in time to catch a spiker as he dashed into the forest, followed by a hind. Despite the risk of death, this hind remained and kept watch whilst the stag drank. His bulging eyeballs and her alert posture speaks of the laws of the jungle.

Every minute of every day sambar live or die according to those laws. They know only too well that every time they drink from an isolated waterhole it could be their last, for at any moment a huge cat could spring out of nowhere, its 7.5cm (3in) canines inflicting a fatal bite to the neck. The stag drank for two minutes, stopped and peered about for one minute, then drank for another - then he was gone.

As I learnt whilst photographing a sambar stag from behind, bulging eyeballs allows them to see the slightest movement all around, even to the rear.

Note the "sore spot" on the hind's neck which was also obvious on a Spiker that was with her. This sore occurs in some parts of India and not in others. [Johnsingh, A. J. T., personal communication]. It does not occur at all in Australia.