

A savanna landscape at sunset. In the foreground, a camera with a long telephoto lens is positioned on a tripod, partially obscured by tall, golden grass. In the background, several antelopes are grazing in a field of tall grass. The sky is a warm, golden color, and the overall scene is bathed in the light of the setting sun.

Quick Bytes”

*Animal
Photography*

Animal Photography.

- Character
- Movement
- Behaviour

Today we're exploring how to photograph animals with confidence, calmness, and curiosity.

Animal photography isn't about chasing the perfect shot - it's about slowing down, watching, and letting the animal set the pace.

If you take away one idea from this session, let it be this:
good animal photography begins long before you press the shutter.

It begins with noticing.

What Makes a Good Animal Photo?

- Expression
- Behaviour
- Eyes
- Movement
- Environment

A strong animal photo usually has one clear point of interest - a gesture, a look, a moment.

Animals communicate through posture, eyes, and tiny movements.

Pause before shooting and ask: *What is the animal doing? What is the feeling here?*

That simple question transforms snapshots into photographs.



Focus on the Eyes

- Eyes create connection
- Use single-point AF
- Focus on nearest eye

Eyes are the emotional anchor of almost every animal portrait.

If the eyes are sharp, the whole image feels alive.

Use single-point autofocus and place it directly on the nearest eye.

If the animal is moving, switch to continuous AF - let the camera track the moment for you.



Use Shallow Depth of Field

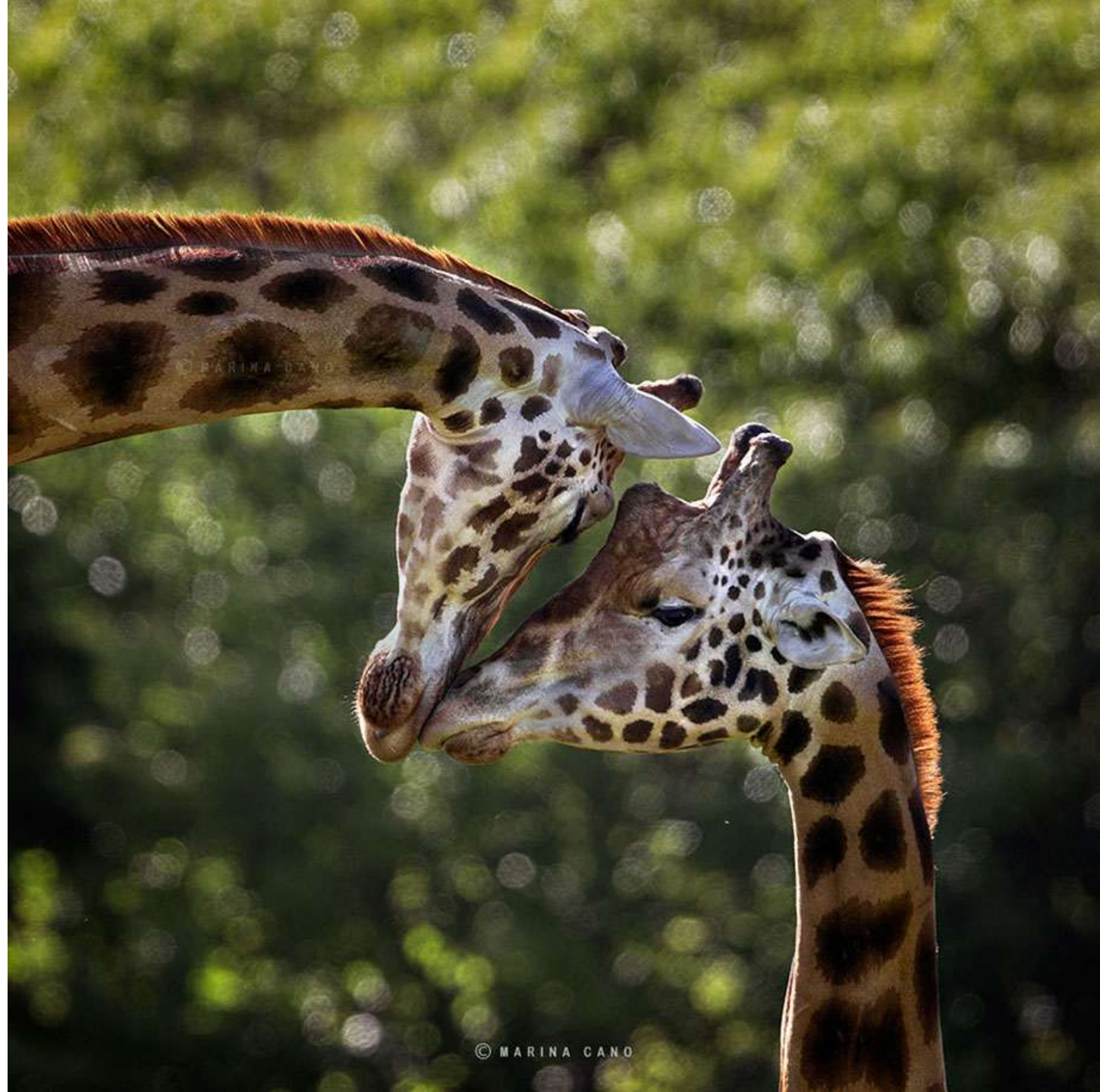
- Wide aperture
- Blur distractions
- Create separation

A wide aperture helps you isolate the animal from a busy background.

This is especially useful in wildlife parks where enclosures can be visually messy.

Move a little, zoom a little, and let the background melt away.

It's a simple technique that instantly adds elegance.



Capture Behaviour

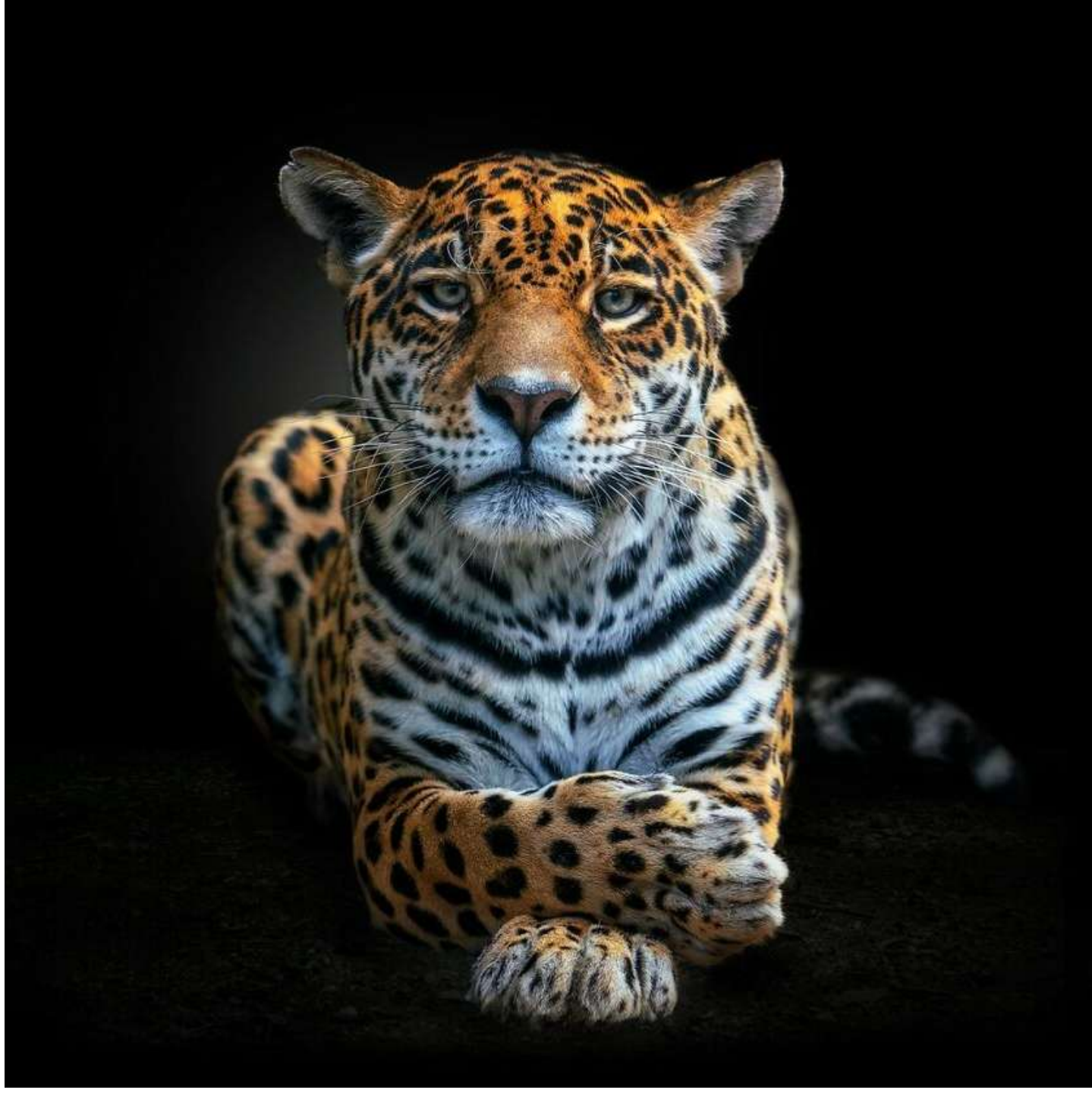
- Eating
- Grooming
- Playing
- Resting
- Moving

Behaviour is where the story lives.

A yawn, a stretch, a shake, a call - these tiny actions reveal character.

Don't rush. Watch for patterns.

Animals often repeat behaviours, and anticipation is your greatest tool.



Use Soft, Natural Light

- Avoid harsh sun
- Use shade
- No flash

Soft light brings out texture in fur and feathers. If the sun is harsh, move to the shaded side of the enclosure or wait for a cloud. Flash flattens the image and can disturb animals - natural light is always kinder.



Get Down Low

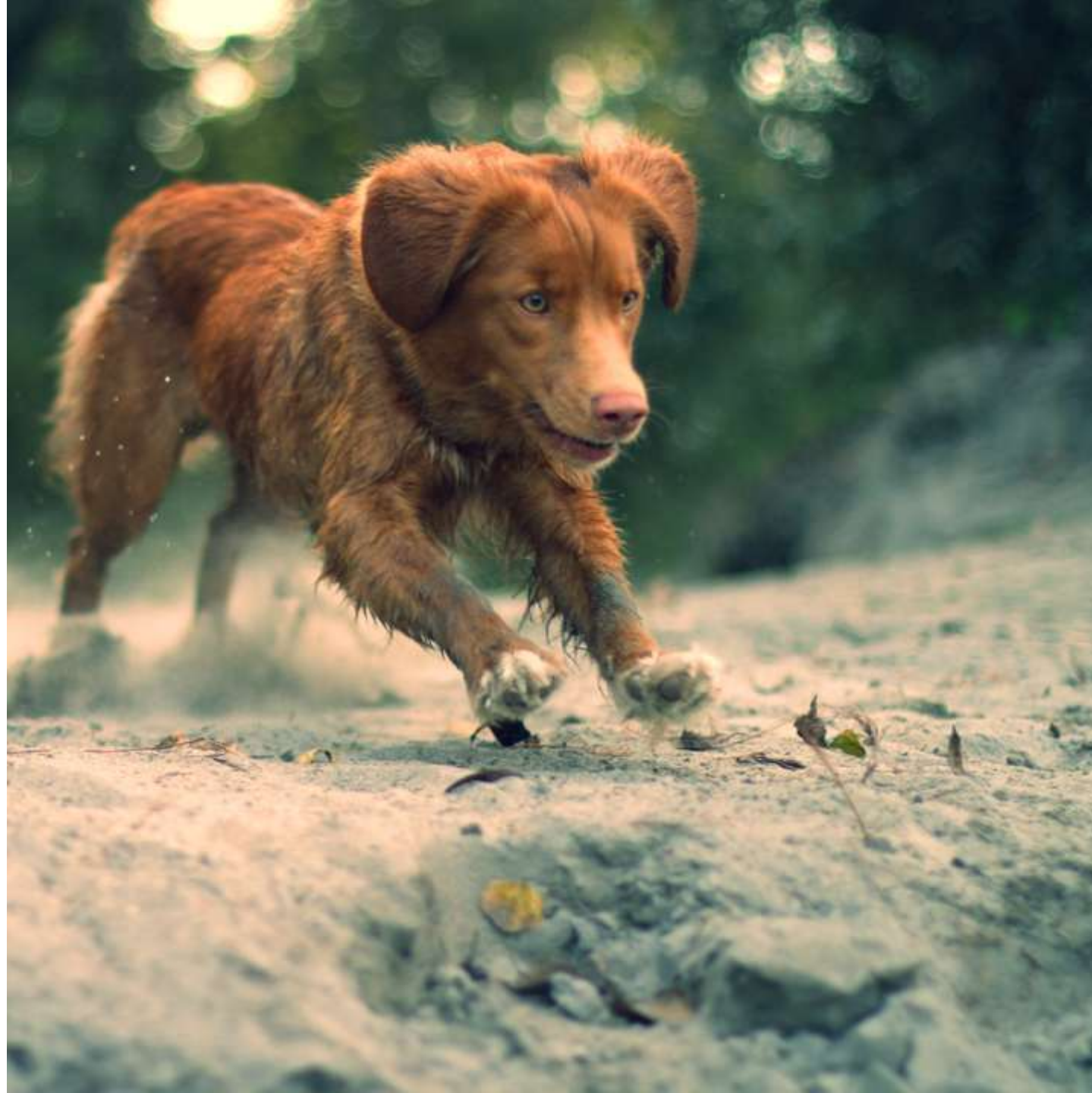
- Eye-level
- Natural perspective
- Stronger connection

Eye-level creates intimacy.

It removes the “looking down” feeling and invites the viewer into the animal’s world.

If it’s safe, kneel or crouch.

A small change in height can transform the photograph.



Include the Environment

- Habitat
- Context
- Story

Not every photo needs a blurred background. Sometimes the surroundings tell the story - reeds, branches, water, shade.

Take two versions: a tight portrait and a wider environmental shot.

You'll see how the meaning changes instantly.



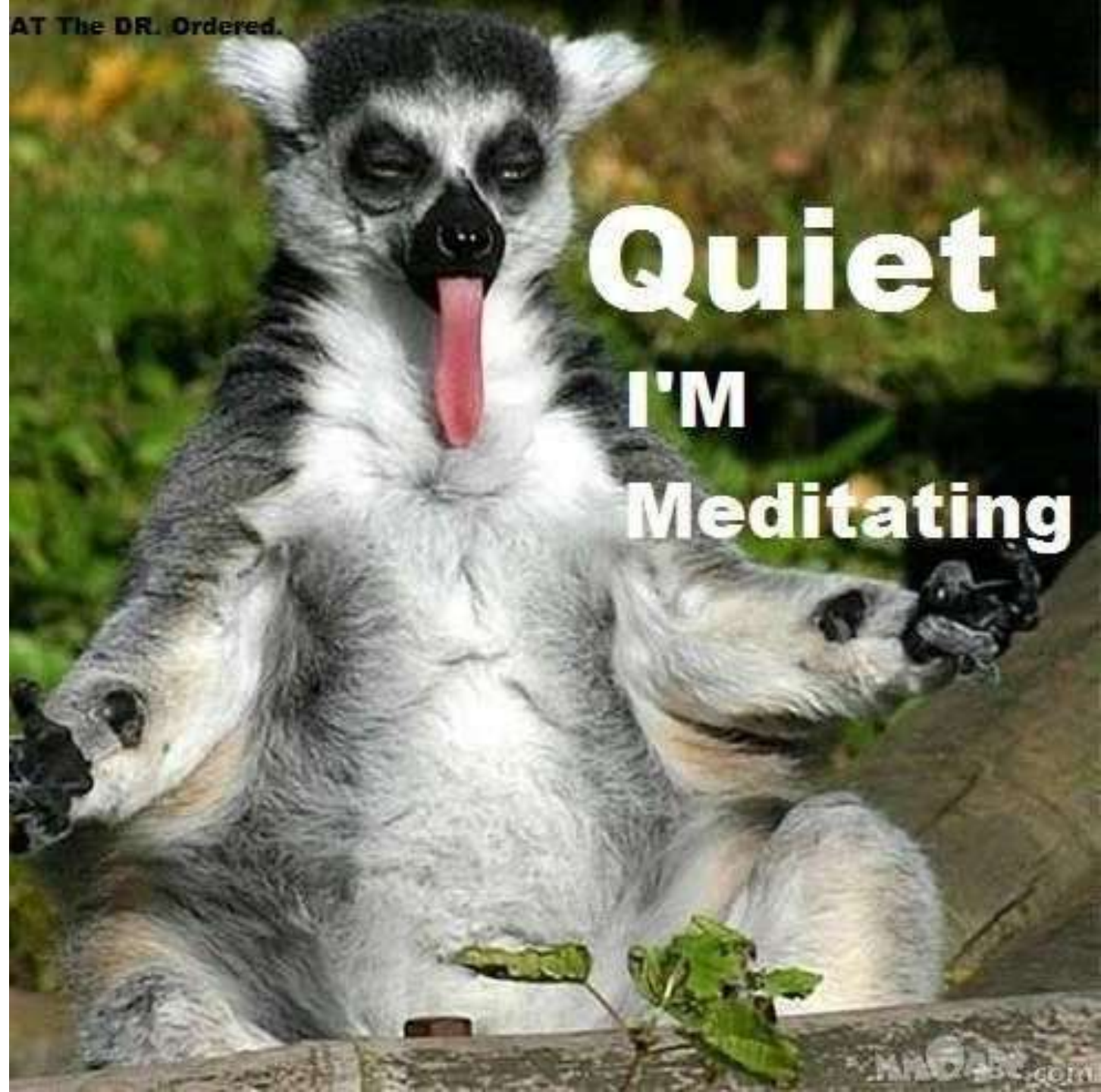
Be Patient & Quiet

- Move slowly
- Wait for calm
- Let the moment come

Animals relax when we do.

Move gently, breathe slowly, and let the moment unfold.

Patience is the difference between a rushed snapshot and a thoughtful photograph.



Quick Bite Challenge

- Eye-level portrait
- Environmental version
- Compare stories

This simple challenge teaches timing, empathy, and storytelling.

Two photos of the same animal - one close, one wide - reveal how composition changes meaning.

It's a lovely exercise for beginners and experts alike.



Shooting Through Glass & Mesh

- Get close
- Wide aperture
- CPL for glass
- Shade lens
- Avoid flash

Glass and mesh are common in wildlife parks, but they don't have to ruin your photo.

Get close to the barrier, use a wide aperture, and shoot at a slight angle.

A circular polariser can dramatically reduce reflections on glass - rotate it until the glare fades.

Mesh will blur away if you're close enough.

Let the barrier disappear.



Photographing Fast-Moving Animals

- Fast shutter
- Continuous AF
- Burst mode
- Track smoothly
- Raise ISO

Fast-moving animals require fast decisions.

Start at 1/1000s and increase if needed.

Use continuous AF and burst mode - let the camera help you.

Movement comes in bursts, so watch for patterns.

Anticipation is everything.



Photographing in Low Light

- ISO 1600-3200
- Wide aperture
- Stabilise
- Avoid flash
- Shoot RAW

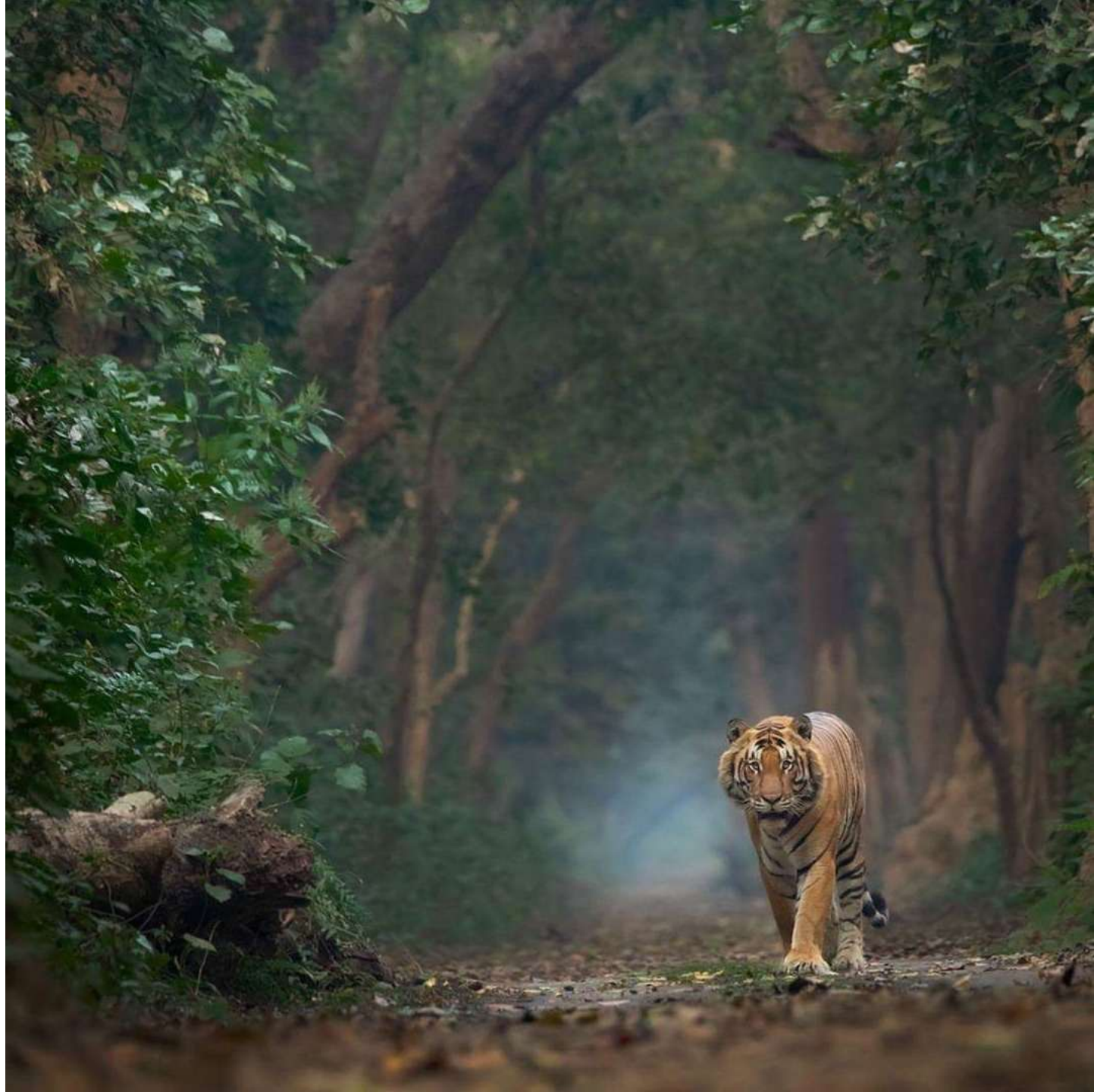
Low light is nothing to fear.

Modern cameras handle high ISO beautifully.

A little grain is far better than blur.

Look for pockets of light - a shaft through leaves, a bright patch on fur.

These small moments create atmosphere.



Composition for Animal Photograph

- Rule of thirds
- Lead room
- Clean background
- Leading lines
- Fill the frame
- Go wide
- Diagonals

Composition is the quiet art behind every photograph.

Leave space in front of the animal.

Watch the background.

Use diagonals for energy and horizontals for calm.

Wait for a clean pose - a turned head, a lifted paw, a moment of stillness.

These tiny gestures make the image feel intentional.



Closing Thoughts

- Slow down
- Observe
- Enjoy

As we finish, remember that animal photography is less about the photograph and more about the moment.

If you come away with one image you're proud of - or one moment you enjoyed watching - that's a success.

Thank you for joining this gentle exploration.



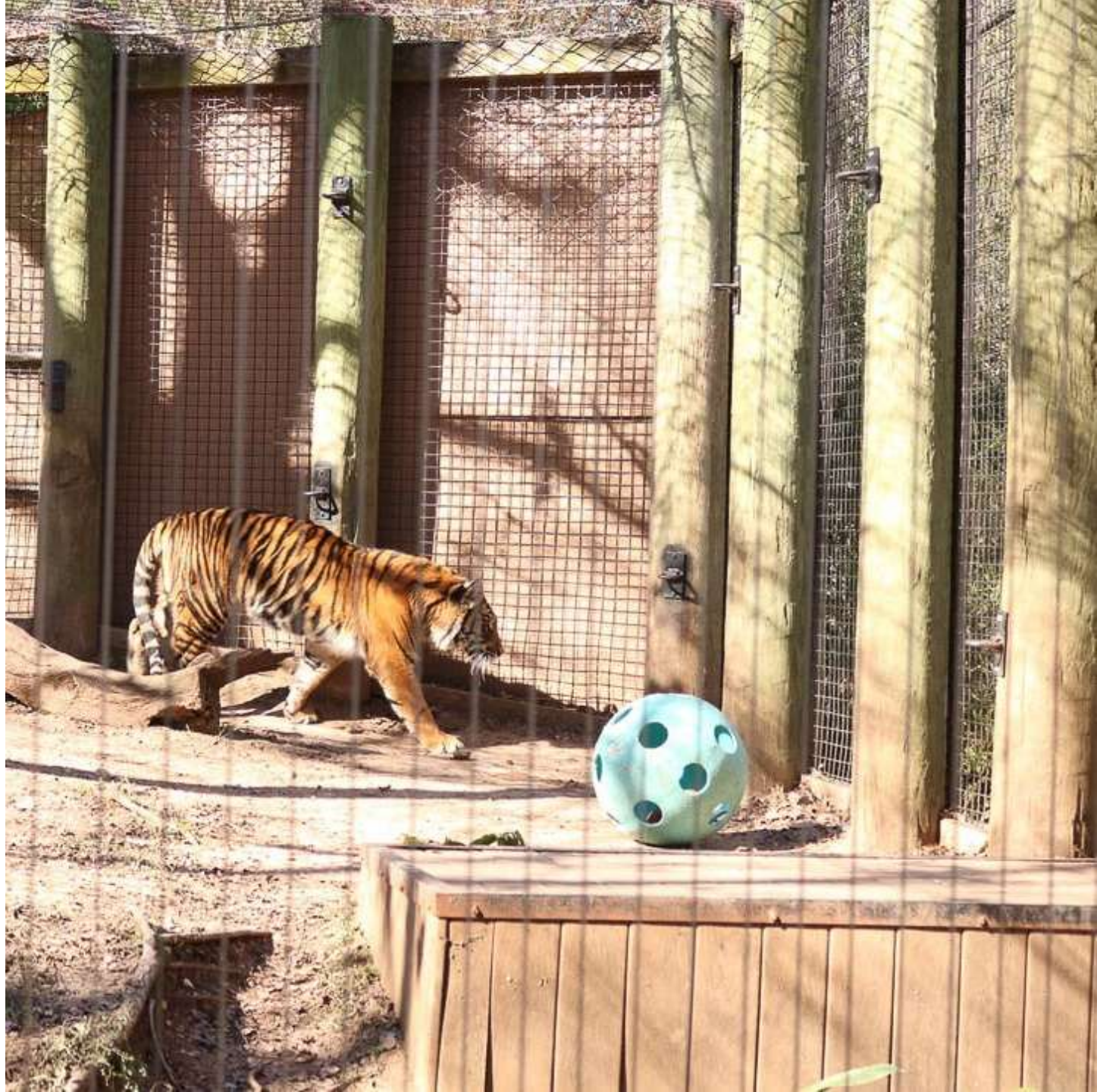
Thrigby Hall Photo Challenges

- 10 simple prompts
- Choose 1-5
- Enjoy the walk

These challenges are gentle prompts, not tasks to complete.

Pick one or two that appeal to you and let the day unfold naturally.

Thrigby Hall is full of movement, stillness, texture, and character - perfect for quiet exploration.





The brief is to submit upto 5 images from the challenges, but only one from each category.

Animal Photography — 8 Challenge Categories

- **Eye-Level Portrait** — Create a portrait taken at the animal's eye-level, with the **nearest eye sharp**. This builds connection and careful focusing.
- **Behaviour Moment** — Capture a natural action: grooming, stretching, calling, feeding, playing, or interacting. Teaches anticipation and observation.
- **Environmental Story** — Photograph the animal **within its habitat** — reeds, branches, water, rocks. Shows context and story.
- **Texture Study** — Emphasise fur, feathers, scales, whiskers, or skin patterns. Encourages close looking and thoughtful light use.
- **Movement Capture** — Freeze or blur movement: a leap, flap, shake, run, or splash. Builds timing and shutter-speed confidence.
- **Hidden Animal** — Photograph an animal partly concealed by leaves, branches, shadows, or mesh. Teaches framing, patience, and mood.
- **Low-Light Confidence** — Take a sharp, well-exposed image in shade or dim light using higher ISO and wide aperture. Builds trust in the camera.
- **Two-Shot Story** — Submit **one** of the pair: either the tight portrait *or* the wider scene. Helps you to think about narrative and perspective.