



It's impossible to tire of Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve. It is, of course, well known as a staging post in the annual 'great migration', but it's also far more than that – as wildlife photographer **Albie Venter** knows very well. Clean, open horizons, a park-like appearance and uncountable herds add to its appeal, but perhaps most attractive is the combination of the expected and the surprise.

ALBIE VENTER (5)

# mara revisited



**As probably the most photographed animal in Africa**, the elephant has become a really tricky subject for the camera – how do you capture its essence in a way that is fresh to the viewer? Occasionally it takes no more than an instinctive release of the shutter, as happened when a weak sun filtered through clouds and lit up this bull against an approaching storm. It was only when reviewing the image on computer that I realised how the colours and textures of the landscape were mirrored in the animal.

**Most wild cats** share a similar way of life in that both the male and the female are solitary and territorial, only linking up for a few days when mating. This makes an encounter with more than one of them very rare, especially in the case of the low-profile smaller species that try to avoid being seen by either their prey or another, larger predator. Photographing this female caracal with her cub was thus a particularly rewarding experience.



**For young mammals**, play is a means of acquiring skills they will need in their adult life. Juvenile impalas and gazelles dodge and swerve as they chase one another, honing their proficiency in outsmarting predators. And in turn, predator cubs – like these cheetah siblings – spend time tussling to learn techniques for subduing their prey.



**The social structure of zebras** centres on the herd stallion and his harem of females. It isn't easy being a stallion: whenever he wants to recruit a new mare, he has to face up to the leader of the harem she's in, and the fight that ensues is invariably fierce, involving teeth and hooves.

**Good safari guides** are a valuable asset to Kenya's tourism and a number of role-players in the industry are leading a major drive to develop the skills required. There is a wealth of raw material, and the best of the trainees are self-motivated and determined to learn all they can about not only wildlife, but also guest relations, skilful driving and ethics at sightings.

