Naturalist who loves to wear several hats

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Lighter (a rat snake) and Cracker (a mongoose) are counted amongst Bikramaditya Guha Roy's best friends. The naturalist-turned-author was all of two-and-a-half-years-old when he composed his first poem about the squabbling between common mynas and sparrows. All these delightful little observations find place in his book — Backyard Wildlife.

The book reads like a diary of his experiences, beginning from childhood, with all kinds of creatures, from reptiles, amphibians to birds and mammals. Anecdotal in nature, it does not spout gyan, but instead presents facts corroborated with pictures. An element of humour also runs through it, like his mother wearing a helmet to withstand pecks from an aggressive crow guarding her nest. The language is easy and lucid, targeted towards nature enthusiasts; Bikram's Backyard Wildlife is slowly finding its footing among senior school students as well.

With more matter than he cared to sift through, the challenge in writing the book was paucity of time, having to juggle a demanding job to sourcing photographs from nature lovers and making innumerable field trips. "Every Sunday at 5 am, my friend Sajal and I would take off to the woods and lakes to do a bit of 'frogging' as I did not want to miss even a single species," says Bikram.

His non-partisan nature is reflected in the book as he gives due attention to all the species, but in an unguarded moment reveals that he is "very attached to civets".

Bikram grew up in the sprawling campus of IIT-Kolkata amid jheels (lakes) and woods. He and his sisters would often take home orphaned puppies and kittens. Soon they started attending to wilder species like kites and turtles.

President of Nature Mates, an NGO that works for nature conservation and a member of Butterfly India and Reptile India among countless other web forums, his message to nature enthusiasts and others is: "Observe to conserve."

When not photographing butterflies, birds and a plethora of other creatures, Bikram is busy writing soulful poetry or involved in his drama/film-making activities. "We won a nomination for our film on poetry at an international competition in Berlin and ended up making it to the top 10 list," he reveals.

Any other literary efforts, we could not resist asking. "Of course," Bikram says and elaborates, "My short story collection should come out in 2012 or 2013 and I am also planning a thriller movie apart from getting ready to translate around 10 songs of Rabindranath Tagore to English."

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