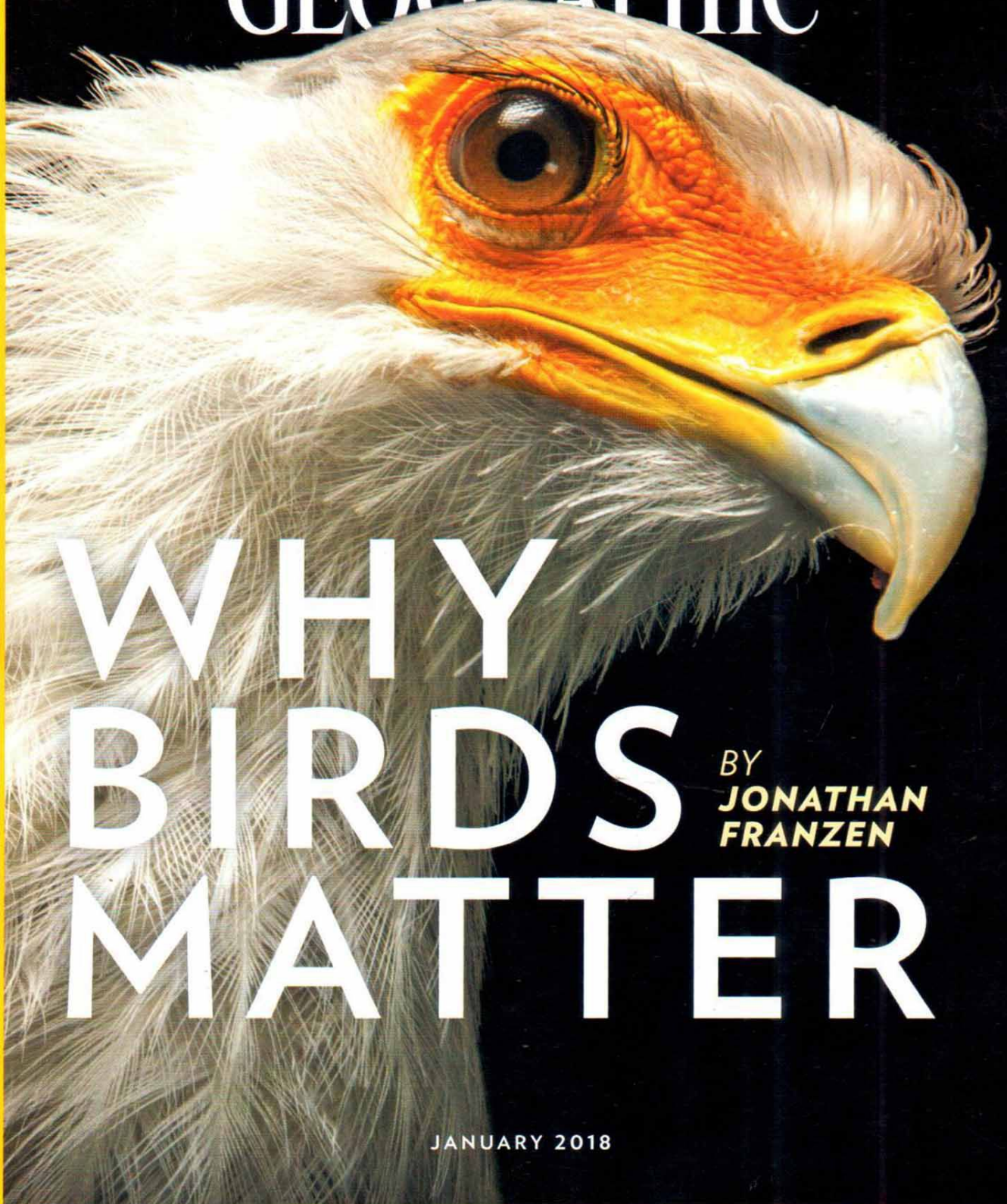


THE ARCTIC'S
LAST SEA ICE

SCIENCE OF
GOOD & EVIL

THE HEALING
OF COLOMBIA

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



WHY BIRDS MATTER

BY
**JONATHAN
FRANZEN**

JANUARY 2018

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JANUARY 2018 • VOL. 233 • NO. 1 • OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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On the Cover Today one in eight bird species is threatened with global extinction, BirdLife International reports. Vulnerable species include the secretary bird, *Sagittarius serpentarius*; this one lives at the Toronto Zoo. Photo by *Joel Sartore*

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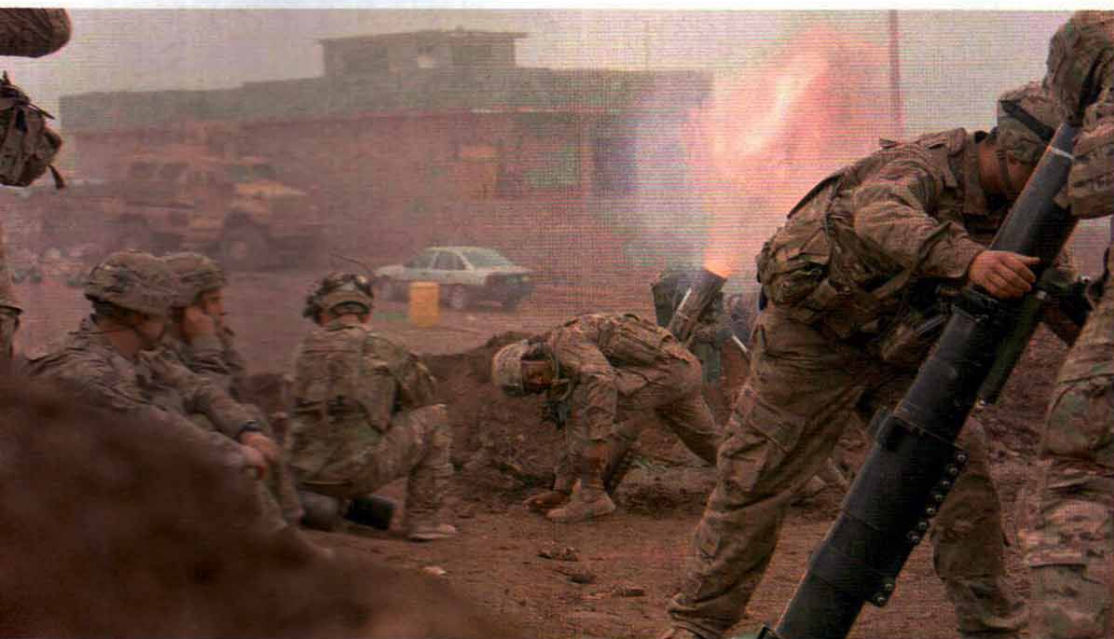
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NAT GEO WILD

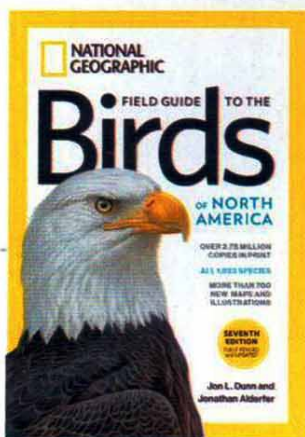
PLANET OF THE BIRDS BECKONS

Besides humans, only one kind of animal can be found on all seven continents: birds, which make their homes from the Antarctic to Africa. Celebrate National Geographic's Year of the Bird by watching these winged marvels in *Planet of the Birds*, airing January 19 on Nat Geo WILD.

BOOKS

KNOW YOUR BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

Kick off National Geographic's Year of the Bird with *Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Seventh Edition*. Completely revised, it's full of hand-painted illustrations, new and updated maps, essential identification details, and more. Available wherever books are sold and at shopng.com/books.



TRAVELER MAGAZINE

EXPLORE THE 'BEST OF THE WORLD 2018'

Discover 21 spectacular places to visit in the year ahead. Find new hues in Oaxaca, Mexico's most colorful state. Go table-hopping on Oahu, the tastiest island in Hawaii. Say "cheers" in Dublin, the world's friendliest city – and more, in the December/January issue of *Traveler* magazine.

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'IF YOU TAKE CARE OF THE BIRDS, YOU TAKE CARE OF MOST OF THE BIG PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD.'

That's what Thomas Lovejoy says, and he should know. The famed biologist and conservationist, a National Geographic-funded scientist, helped introduce the term "biological diversity" to the world. And he long predicted that by early in the 21st century, the Earth would start losing a dramatic number of species—a prediction, unfortunately, that is turning out to be spot-on.

We were taken with Lovejoy's quote about birds and decided to use it as a launchpad for what we're calling the Year of the Bird. In this 12-month multi-platform exploration—with our partners from the National Audubon Society, BirdLife International, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology—we'll examine how our changing environment is leading to dramatic losses among bird species around the globe. And just as important, we'll document what we can do about it.

At *National Geographic* we've been looking at the planet's health from a bird's-eye view for a long time. This magazine has featured birds on its cover more often than it has featured other popular creatures—at least 30 times,

compared with 13 times for apes. And the National Geographic Society has awarded hundreds of grants for ornithology research and projects.

In 2018—the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which protects more than 1,025 species—we'll take our coverage of topics affecting birds to a new level. In this issue we launch a year of storytelling with "Why Birds Matter," an essay by best-selling author Jonathan Franzen. It's paired with remarkable avian portraits created by National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore.

Why is National Geographic focusing so much attention on birds? That's just another way of asking, as Franzen does, Why do birds matter? Among his eloquent answers: "They are our last, best connection to a natural world that is otherwise receding."

Thank you for reading *National Geographic* and joining with us in the Year of the Bird.



Susan Goldberg, *Editor in Chief*

The program *Planet of the Birds* airs January 19 on Nat Geo WILD.

Throughout 2018, look for National Geographic's Year of the Bird offerings: digital content, books, *Traveler* magazine stories, travel adventures built around birds—and community and social media experiences.

NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

PHOTOARK
JOEL SARTORE



JOEL SARTORE PHOTOGRAPHED THESE RED LORIES (*EOS BORNEA*) AT THE INDIANAPOLIS ZOO.