

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2020

Panvel photographer's pic gets special mention

Aishwarya Sridhar's photo of a tree with fireflies bagged the 'Highly Recommended' acclaim; it will be a part of the Natural History Museum's annual show from Oct 16

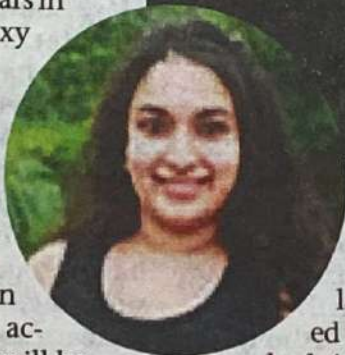
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A video of commended images from the 56th Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2020 show, organised by the Natural History Museum, has garnered nearly 20,000 views since the announcement of the awards on October 13. Among them is a picture of a tree illuminated with fireflies, the stars in the sky forming a surreal galaxy around them.

Aishwarya Sridhar, a wildlife photographer from Panvel, shot it during a trek in Bhandardara in June last year. Titled 'Lights of Passion', it was one of the 49,000 entries and has won the 'Highly Recommended' acclaim from the museum. It will be on show from October 16 to June 6, 2021 on the museum website, nhm.ac.uk, and will also feature in their global tour for the entire year.

"It was a dream come true when my name was announced at the virtual awards ceremony on Tuesday night," said Aishwarya, who was introduced to photography by her father Sridhar Ranganathan, a naturalist, when she was 12 years old. Now 23, it's her full-time occupation and passion. For 'Lights of Passion', she used her Canon 1DX Mark 2.



Aishwarya (left); her firefly tree in Bhandardara

"During a trek last year, I had decided to click fireflies but hadn't planned any particular frame," said Aishwarya, recalling how within hours she stumbled upon this particular tree. Not satisfied with the results, she decided to widen the frame and include the stars and the sky. "It's a short two-week window when one finds fireflies in this area," she said of her photograph that found a special mention in the 'invertebrate behaviour' category.

When her father gave her a camera for the first time, Aishwarya started clicking and documenting whatever she saw during their frequent

forest treks. She won the Sanctuary Asia young naturalist award at the age of 14, and the Princess Diana award last year.

A graduate in mass media from Pillai College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Aishwarya shot the flamingos in their full glory in April, and made an eight-part series for the World Wildlife Fund, India, on teaching children wildlife conservation through origami.

"I wanted to join the Indian forest service and bring about policy change in wildlife and conservation. As my passion for photography grew, I realised I could also make a difference using media," said Aishwarya.