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A Spot of Hope

A coffee table book, *Jawai: Land of the Leopard*, celebrates a region where man and the big cat have lived peacefully for 150 years.

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Written by [Catherine Rhea Roy](#) | Published: September 28, 2016 12:32 am



Different moods of the leopard have been captured in the coffee-table book *Jawai: Land of the Leopard*

In one photograph, a leopard stands alert behind a profusion of leaves, its golden eyes throwing daggers at the camera. In another picture, another leopard displays its sinuous form as it glows like fire in the dark tangle of jungle trees. Yet another image is of a pair of wolves caught on camera as they turn their heads mid-stride. These photographs, from the coffee table book, *Jawai: Land of the Leopard*, showcase an unusual aspect of an animal in the wild — coexistence with humans. The land of *Jawai* in Rajasthan is shared by the Rabari herdsmen, an agrarian community, and the leopards that live in the area, beautifully camouflaged by their habitat.

“There are few places where humans and big cats coexist peacefully; *Jawai* is a unique example because there has been no significant incident of man-animal conflict in more than 150 years,” says Jaisal Singh, author of the book with Anjali Singh. The book was launched at Bikaner House in Delhi by the Chief Minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje. The venue was bedecked in large prints of the sweeping landscape of *Jawai*, greater cormorants in formation, colourful Rabari herdsmen with their magnificent moustaches coexisting with a thriving leopard population as well as of leopards in their natural habitat. Natural sounds of the *Jawai* landscape complemented the displays.

The Chief Minister also participated in a panel discussion with wildlife conservationist Dave Varty and wildlife enthusiast Anshu Jain. Moderated by Jaisal Singh, they discussed the way forward for Rajasthan as far as conservation tourism was concerned, citing examples of Botswana and Namibia where the governments worked along with the people of a certain area and created a sustainable format.

Raje stressed on the need for education and awareness and used the example of Sonkhaliya in Ajmer which has the unique privilege of witnessing the breeding displays of the Lesser Florican. “Due to the utter lack of ethics among some wildlife photographers, a ban had to be placed on photographing their breeding displays. To get better shots the photographers would inch closer to the birds eventually scaring them away, threatening their habitat and jeopardizing their breeding cycles,” said Raje.

The photographs in the coffee-table book have been contributed by friends of the Singhs, members of the *Jawai* Field Team, guests of the *Jawai* Camp and wildlife enthusiasts from the area.