
HUMANS AND WILDLIFE MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Part 2

BY KŌKI YAMADA
WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER
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HOW WILDLIFE AND HUMANS CAN COEXIST TOGETHER

(Continued from part 1)

Common issues between Ranthambhore and the Galapagos Islands

In terms of not being able to survive without protection by humans, both tigers in Ranthambhore, India and giant tortoises in the Galapagos Islands share the same issue.

For example, even in India, which has an enormous amount of the world's wild tigers, the forests that they inhabit are divided and scattered across the country.

These forests are being cut by roads and cities, and as tigers cannot roam the forest freely, it is causing territory

fight and affecting mating. This can directly lead to a decrease in the number of an already precious number of tigers. Therefore, in some cases, unless the tigers are relocated by humans, they will face injuries sustained by other tigers and the advancement of inbreeding.

(That being said, to move a wild tiger, they need to be sedated with a tranquilizer gun. However, even if an expert conducts the procedure, finding the perfect amount of sedative is quite challenging. And an excessive amount of sedative can even unintentionally kill the tiger. There is another issue: even if a tiger can be successfully transported to a different sanctuary, the tiger may attempt to go back to its original forest. This means that a wild tiger may suddenly appear in cities and on roads.)



Additionally, due to the increase in the human population, the area where tigers live overlaps with human habitats. This overlapping causes tiger attacks. A tiger sees humans as aggressors violating its territory and attacks them. But in return, tigers are killed as retaliation. So, to begin with, there should be a buffer zone between where tigers and humans live in order to prevent these types of confrontation. At Ranthambhore, an effort is being made by individuals with expertise, and regulations are being implemented to protect the tigers.

For instance, to prevent retaliation, the state government compensates financially for any loss, such as humans and livestock, by tiger attacks. And the state government also offers relocation benefits to residents who live too close to the tiger habitats. Residents who may be required to relocate in the future are also being persuaded through negotiations by the state government.

These slow but steady efforts are sustaining Ranthambhore's wildlife.



On the other hand, there is a reason why the Galapagos Islands' giant tortoises cannot be left as a wild animal.

Giant tortoises, which were already in danger of extinction, are currently being protected through human efforts, and the reality is that their numbers are gradually recovering in several breeding centers. *(The Charles Darwin Research Station, which I visited on an IWC field trip, has one of these breeding centers.)*

The key to this success is gender control. The gender of the giant tortoise is determined by the temperature of the sand beach where the eggs are laid *(low temperatures produce males, while high temperatures produce females)*. The number of males and females can be controlled at the breeding center, as the incubation is performed under human-regulated temperature control.

However, for wild giant tortoises, the current problem is that if the temperature of the sand beaches rises due to the effects of global warming, there will be more female giant tortoises born in the wild in the future. In other words, without human control, the giant tortoise will face a harsh reality where their survival will be extremely difficult.

Darwin found out about evolution by using the term "natural selection" to refer to animals that gradually evolve in response to changes in the environment.

Natural selection results can be seen in the living species of each island of the Galapagos. An example of this are Darwin's finches, where despite being the same birds, the size of their beaks differs depending on the food they eat on each island.



Until the 19th century, giant tortoises were being consumed as a food source or as fuel. And due to this overfishing, they were nearly extinct. Even to this day, they are being threatened by non-native species brought by humans.



There are about 14 types of Darwin's finches. Their size is mostly around 15 cm, and the shape of the beak is diversified for each species based on their diet.

On the other hand, tigers are scattered all over the Eurasian continent, Indonesia, and Bali. From the ice-cold Himalayas to the tropical wetlands with thick mangroves, tigers' physical characteristics vary by adapting to the local environment.

And because of the competition of survival, they have been focusing on leaving their offsprings.

As Darwin has said, they went through natural selection.



However, they are now exposed to their most difficult challenge, co-existence with humans, which is more critical than the time that it takes for natural selection to occur. But even in this situation, there is a role model for human-wildlife co-existence established in the Galapagos Islands and Ranthambhore.

What these two places have in common is that, although there are complicated issues, tourism is being developed on a certain scale, and it is the primary source of income under the government's leadership. There are many locals involved, attracting global attention and many

tourists. In addition, researchers are tackling new issues that have arisen.

Through this system, both parties are able to sustain wildlife protection activities.

To reiterate, it is true that redevelopment for tourism and an increase in tourists bring about new problems. I feel that it's essential not only to expand but also to establish legal restrictions and certain limitations. And it is necessary to incorporate these approaches for wildlife protection at the same time.



PURPOSE OF MY ACTIVITIES AS A PHOTOGRAPHER

Through my first-hand experiences in Ranthambhore and the Galapagos Islands, I have witnessed the tough and clever nature of the creatures, the daily life-and-death struggle taking place at every moment, and the devoted affection that animals have when protecting their children. After witnessing all of these dramas, I feel that they are no different from us and that their lives are equally precious.

My goal is a world where my beloved tigers and creatures in the Galapagos Islands – and, if possible, all wildlife – can be protected by co-existing in harmony with humans.

To accomplish this, the first thing I can do is show people the moments that have captivated me through photos, and hope it leads them to have empathy. What initially sparked my interest in wildlife and the world of nature was being mesmerized by documentaries and photos that captured the beauty of animals.



The breathtaking moment when I first visited Ranthambhore. This nano-second image will forever be engraved in my memory.



Until the cubs become around two-years-old, mother and its cubs and siblings snuggles and rubs their body with each other to express their affection. But this heart warming family behavior will be short-lived. After young tigers separate from its mother, they never form a group and live and hunt alone.

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That's why I believe the most important thing is for people today, who are almost disconnected from wildlife, to look at them through whatever means. To find them beautiful and fascinating. To want to see them with their own eyes, to take an interest in them, and to even be willing to spend time and money on them. This is essential. This empathy will become the most important first step and ultimately lead people to learn about or look into these animals, find ways to help change the situation, and share their stories.

I want as many people as possible to go on a journey to experience a world where wild animals thrive. To make this happen, I want to continue taking photos that convey the moments that I've seen and experienced, the facial expressions of animals, their harsh survival, their endurance and fragility, their deep love and caring nature.



Even though living creatures come in different forms, sizes and levels of deadliness, they are all unique. The more you learn about them and see them, the more you can feel the dignity they carry. All of their actions are purposeful and never excessive, and they are just simply breathtaking.

I hope that this beautiful and infinite exchange of life will continue to be protected by human hands. If people take an interest in themselves, go out and get in touch with

nature, make fond memories, and experience these beautiful moments for themselves, they will develop their own compassion for nature. And if they can be compassionate toward nature, it will ultimately lead to a more friendly environment for humans.

As I believe there will be more and more people who have these feelings, I want to continue my mission as a photographer.

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Blue-footed boobys' mating dance always makes people amused. These boobies' blue color sneakers come from carotenoid pigments from fish that they eat.



A male frigatebird inflates its throat pouch to attract females. With their broad wings, they can be airborne for long hours. If they decide to tag along with a ship, they can follow the ship forever.

PRESERVING WILDLIFE SCENERY AFTER THE PANDEMIC

As the world is suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic, countries and local areas that rely on the irreplaceable natural scenery of wildlife as their tourism resources are presumably facing serious issues in maintaining the environment. This is because all the monitoring systems are undoubtedly weakened, not to mention the financial income loss due to absent tourists. *(In South Africa, there are reports of increased poaching for rhinoceros horns, with these criminals using this pandemic chaos as their opportunity.)* In addition, there is a possibility that those who are unemployed due to the recession may turn to poaching. If this situation continues on longer, parks and facilities will see increased financial difficulties and problems maintaining the environment for the animals. Even if humans alone can overcome this pandemic, if humans lose animals, then the people who rely on them as a tourism resource will still continue to suffer from the recession.

That is why when envisioning wildlife scenery five years or ten years from now – and in order to preserve these

irreplaceable animals even in a situation like the COVID-19 pandemic where tourism cannot be sustained easily – I'm sincerely hoping that a continuous scheme, through product and service purchases that help support animal protection activities, will spread throughout all areas. *(On top of that, I think that this scheme should become the mainstream after this pandemic, especially among developed countries!)*

Throughout the history of the world, nature and wild animals have been an indispensable source of inspiration for the many legends and tales passed down over the centuries and the countless stories and artwork created. And so, to pass on the most precious and crucial treasure of this planet, I would like a system to be created where one person's consumption activity can give back to the preservation of this treasure, which will lead to the hope of a better future.

The most important thing is that both humans and wild animals move forward into the future together. And I am hoping that we can see a beautiful world where these creatures thrive.





As they roam through the forest with dominance, they are at the top of the ecosystem hierarchy. On the other hand, a tiger sleeping soundly in a forest makes us feel that they are vulnerable and fragile living beings.

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THINKING ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD LIVE

The reason why I continue to choose IWC is that its brand philosophy matches my lifestyle. For example, the Tribute To Galapagos model, a product inspired by the Galapagos Islands' creatures and environment, supports the Charles Darwin Research Station, the symbol of the Galapagos Islands' nature.

This concept was easy to understand and motivated me to contribute. Because in a modern society where the amount of products are overwhelming, learning new things through purchases and products that reflect end-users' values is now a purchase motivation. In other words, end-users are finding meaning by sharing the background stories, ideas, and philosophy of products.

I think these types of people will increase considerably.

Like the tigers that I follow, thinking about saving red-list^{*1} wild animals facing extinction is also the same as thinking about how we live our daily lives, which we feel is disconnected from nature and wildlife. And this is synonymous with thinking about the preservation of nature. In the future, nothing would make me happier than if IWC developed a watch model conveying messages from threatened creatures and it received lots of support.

And finally, please remember this.

There is no mistake that we humans are endangering many wild animals. But only we humans can help bring these animals to the future.

*^{*1}As of July 2020, 31,000 species are on the list of endangered wild animals, the so-called "Red List" compiled by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)*



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PROFILE OF KŌKI YAMADA

Born in 1979. He is a wildlife photographer based in Tokyo. He specializes in Royal Bengal tigers in India.

His true calling as a photographer was relatively recent. He started photography in 2012.

Strongly motivated by a documentary called “BBC Earth,” he was mesmerized with nature that was beyond human imagination found here on this very earth, just waiting to be captured through the lens.

With that as a starting point, he felt the significance of actually setting his foot in the most remote places on earth and seeing things for himself with his own eyes. He has traveled to places such as Antarctica, the Arctic, Alaska, India, Africa, and the Galapagos Islands and photographed various animals. Through these excursions, he has been captivated by Royal Bengal tiger families that inhabit the Ranthambhore National Park in India and has been following them for several years.

Through photography, he is trying to show the tough but also fragile aspect of wild animals and their mesmerizing beauty as he sees them.

AWARDS

The 8th Nikkei National Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year (2020).

Bronze Award in the 52nd Canon Photo Contest, Landscape Division (2018).

EXHIBITIONS

“The Fragile Existence of the Royal Bengal Tiger,” at the Fujifilm Photo Salon Tokyo (*Tokyo Midtown Roppongi*). Over 10,000 visitors attended in one week.

Since then, he has held exhibitions at Fujifilm Salons in Osaka, Fukuoka, and Nagoya throughout 2019.

ATELIER

In March 2021, his atelier called “Atelier Rantham” opened in Daikanyama, Tokyo.

Address	#A2 Hillside Terrace, 29-18, Sarugakucho, Shibuya-Ku, Tokyo, 150-0033, Japan
Email	info@kokiyamada.jp
Website	https://kokiyamada.jp
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/koki_yamada_photography/