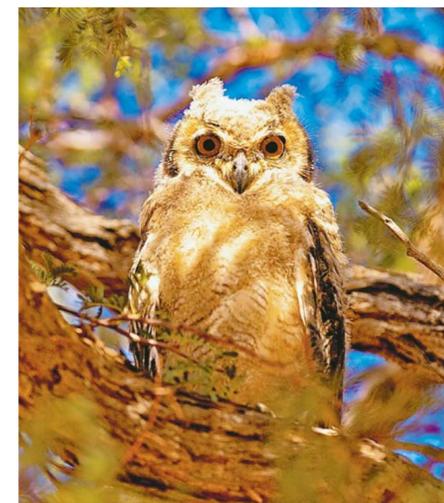




小規模な群れで生活するオリックス。砂漠や草原に適応し、水を飲まなくても長期間生きられる



平原上で斑点のように見えるのが「フェアリーサークル」。なぜできるのかには諸説ある



木の枝にとまるアフリカワシミミズク



四輪バイクで砂漠探検に出発



ガイドと共にトクトッキー・トレイルを歩く一行



トレイルで見つけたクモ。通称は Dancing White Lady Spider

Fascination in 'the land God made in anger'

ナミビア・ナミブランド自然保護区
Story and photos by Stephen Cunliffe

■ 「神が怒って作った土地」に見る絶景

Namibia is sometimes called “the land God made in anger” — a seemingly appropriate description for what at first appears to be a country made of sand and rock, where only the strongest plants, animals and indigenous people survive. But, once you are there, you’ll find it’s actually a fascinating land, perfectly suited for adventurous travelers and wildlife lovers keen to explore Africa’s most exotic desert wilderness.

Stretching across western Namibia, the Namib Desert runs parallel to the coast of the country. Capable of sustaining life despite its dry conditions, it is home to some of the strangest and most beautiful landscapes on earth. The chief tourist attractions are the Sossusvlei sand dunes and the neighboring NamibRand Nature Reserve, which entice travelers to escape the crowds and embrace the ultimate desert safari.

The waterless environment has an inspiring array of desert wildlife, including endangered cheetahs, secretive leopards and shaggy brown hyenas, along with jackals, bat-eared foxes, oryx, mountain zebras and springboks. Wildlife is most plentiful in the 215,000 hectare NamibRand Nature Reserve, which claims to be the largest private nature reserve in southern Africa.

Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, on a hillside below the Nubib Mountains in the northeastern corner of the NamibRand reserve, is the ideal spot for appreciating the awe-inspiring beauty of the landscape. Hundreds of kilometers from the nearest light pollution, the lodge employs resident astronomers to explain the star-studded sky to visitors. After a stargazing session, my wife and I retreated to our room and drifted off to sleep staring up at the heavens through a large skylight above the bed.

■ 高所から見下ろす不思議な「フェアリーサークル」

After a couple of days soaking up the atmosphere of the camp, we wanted to explore the nature reserve ourselves. Peter Nuugonya was our friendly and professional guide. We decided to use small and mobile quad bikes that would allow us to get into the dunes to access spectacular lookout spots high above the dry grass plains.

Stopping at a particularly memorable viewpoint, we were treated to a panoramic view of the plains. From our high viewpoint, we looked down upon the most interesting phenomenon of the Namib Desert: the “Fairy Circles.” Many mysterious circular patches of ground peppered the landscape below, appearing as if there had been a massive meteor shower. Despite many

scientific studies, researchers remain puzzled about what causes these strange circles. Many theories have been devised, although none have been proven. My favorite involves UFOs and aliens!

■ 砂漠に適応した生き物たち

After five days at the lodge, we felt a need to stretch our legs, and Tok Tokkie Trails in the southern sector of the reserve provided the perfect opportunity for us to really appreciate the desert’s beauty. The three-day walking safari took us strolling across surreal landscapes, while expert guiding revealed the mysteries of the desert and its amazingly adapted inhabitants.

Having worked in the Namib area for 12 years, Domingo Tjambiru was very knowledgeable, but sharing his wisdom enthusiastically is what made him a great guide. We learned that the red sands are actually filled with life. The creatures of the night left tracks as they traversed the dunes, and each morning Domingo unraveled the activities of the previous night with an energy I’ve seldom experienced on a safari. He picked up on everything from a fox looking for food to a dust-bathing ostrich. When I commented on his passion — the desert — he replied: “There are always fascinating things to see in nature, just so long as you have the time and patience to appreciate them.”

KEYWORDS

fascination 魅力 (後出 fascinating は魅力的な)
seemingly 一見したところ
indigenous people 先住民
(be) suited for ~ 向きである
(be) keen to ~ したい
stretch across ~ ~に延びる

parallel to ~ ~と並行して
sustain 維持する
(be) home to ~ ~がある
landscape 風景、景観
chief 主要な
(sand) dune 砂丘
(nature) reserve 自然保護区
entice 誘う
embrace 享受する

ultimate 究極の
safari 動物観察旅行
inspiring 感激させるような (後出 awe-inspiring は畏怖の念を起こさせるような)
an array of ~ 数々の~
endangered 絶滅の危機に瀕した
secretive (ここでは) なかなか

姿を見せない
leopard ヒョウ
shaggy 毛むくじゃらの
brown hyena カシヨクハイエナ
bat-eared fox オオミミギツネ
oryx レイヨウの一種 (後出 springbok もレイヨウの一種)
plentiful 豊富な

claim to be ~ (ここでは) ~であるとする
appreciate 味わう、楽しむ
light pollution 光害
resident astronomer 常勤の天文学者
star-studded 多数の星がきらめく
stargazing session 星の観察

retreat ~ (ここでは) ~に戻る
drift off to sleep いつの間にか眠ってしまう
the heavens 天空
skylight 天窓
soak up ~ ~を吸収する
mobile 動きやすい
quad bike 四輪バイク
spectacular あっという間

(grass) plain (草の生えた) 平原
memorable 忘れられない
(be) treated to ~ ~を楽しむ
phenomenon 現象
circular patch 丸い模様
pepper ~ (ここでは) ~に散りばめられる
meteor shower 流星群
puzzle 悩ます

devise (ここでは) 考え出す
stretch one’s legs 少しく歩く
stroll 散歩する
surreal 現実離れた
adapted inhabitant 適応した生物 (後出 desert-adapted は砂漠に適応した)
enthusiastically 熱心に
track 足跡

traverse 横切る
unravel 解明する
dust-bathing 砂浴びをする
ostrich ダチョウ
patience 根気
encounter 出会う
breathtakingly 思わず息をのむような
diverse 多様な

NamibRand Nature Reserve, Namibia

ナミブ砂漠の「ナミブ」とは現地語で「何も無い」の意味だが、美しい景観と砂漠に適応した生物が見られる。同砂漠の海岸近くの砂は白く、内陸に行くにしたがって赤くなる。ナミブランド自然保護区は個人によって設立された、アフリカ南部最大級の民間の自然保護区。「トクトッキー・トレイル」のガイド付きウォーキングツアーは3~11月に開催。同自然保護区のウェブサイトは www.namibrand.com

Photojournalist Stephen Cunliffe’s love of adventure and wildlife has taken him to over 75 countries, and his stories and photographs have been published widely. He lives with his wife and two sons in the world-renowned Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, where the wilds of Africa are a stone’s throw from his doorstep. Website: www.stevecunliffe.com

多読チャレンジ 「トクトッキー・トレイル」のツアーは何日間? [本文 - 682 words]

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