



Animal Abstracts. vol. 1
James Rodewald

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For Sudan, may your passing be the turning point of our awakening.



Black rhino. ed. 4

Animal Abstracts by James Rodewald

From time to time in the discourse of our lives a photographer produces an image that gives us pause. In no particular cadence, in no particular style. The image becomes part of our collective story, sealing itself in our conscience and in our understanding of our place in the world around us. They encapsulate a story in a single frame and with only the most basic of captions we get it. Steve McCurry's "Afghan Girl". "Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath." by Eugene Smith. And Dorothea Lang's "Migrant Mother" all come to mind. Through time they endure, their story and their impact unfading.

That list of images obviously could go on. For me, of recent, Amy Vitale's "The Last Goodbye," reaches that same level. The image of care giver Joseph Wachira comforting Sudan, the last male northern white rhino in the final moments for his species is immensely poignant. It encapsulates the story, draws you in and changes you in ways only bounded by your willingness to listen. It moves me every time. Each time seeing something just a little different. Sudan was the last male Northern White Rhinoceros, a species that had thrived for millennia in Northern Africa. His demise was our creation. In his final years he was cared for and attended to at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya. The two remaining females by his side. Vitale's image of his passing was an alarm call to many. A cry out to those willing to listen that we are losing. We are losing the world around us, the world that supports us and increasingly in ways which cannot be undone despite our efforts. A loss we cannot fix, if only in a concerted effort to prevent further failures.

Sudan's story and Amy Vitale's picture stuck with me. A month later I found myself at the San Diego Zoo. It was an overcast day and I had accidentally brought the wrong lens with me to photograph my family. The long telephoto zoom wasn't meant for family pictures in tight settings. Better for things like birds or distant scenes. Later in the day we came across the habitat for the black rhinoceros and that

was when it all struck me. I managed to get a close position to photograph one of them and was captivated by what I was seeing through the eyepiece. What I had always thought of as a cantankerous, kind of ugly looking animal was actually intricately protected by an array of beautifully folded plates. So I framed it up close and tight with the camera and began making images of its skin. From there I was drawn in, I began to create tight images of every animal I could get close enough to in what remained of the day.

The goal with each image that day was to attempt to capture the essence of the creature as if you could actually reach out and touch it. To create a personal connection and recognize each for its own inherent beauty. So maybe that was it. Maybe there was a path forward. A path to help by enabling people to better understand what could be lost. And maybe that path could help us avoid doing to other species what we did to Sudan and his kind.

This collection has been an honor to produce. I've enjoyed coming back to them and exploring them over time. Certainly I've enjoyed sharing them and showing them in various galleries. It's my hope that through these images you can feel these animals, too. To understand them better and to hear their stories. We've lost much over the past few centuries and so maybe with a greater appreciation we can halt or reverse some of our course. After all, it's clear they are trying to speak to us. We just need to listen.



Flamingo.

Edition 1

[f5.6 1/320s @ ISO 100]



Flamingo.

Edition 3

[f5.6 1/250s @ ISO 100]



Flamingo.

Edition 2

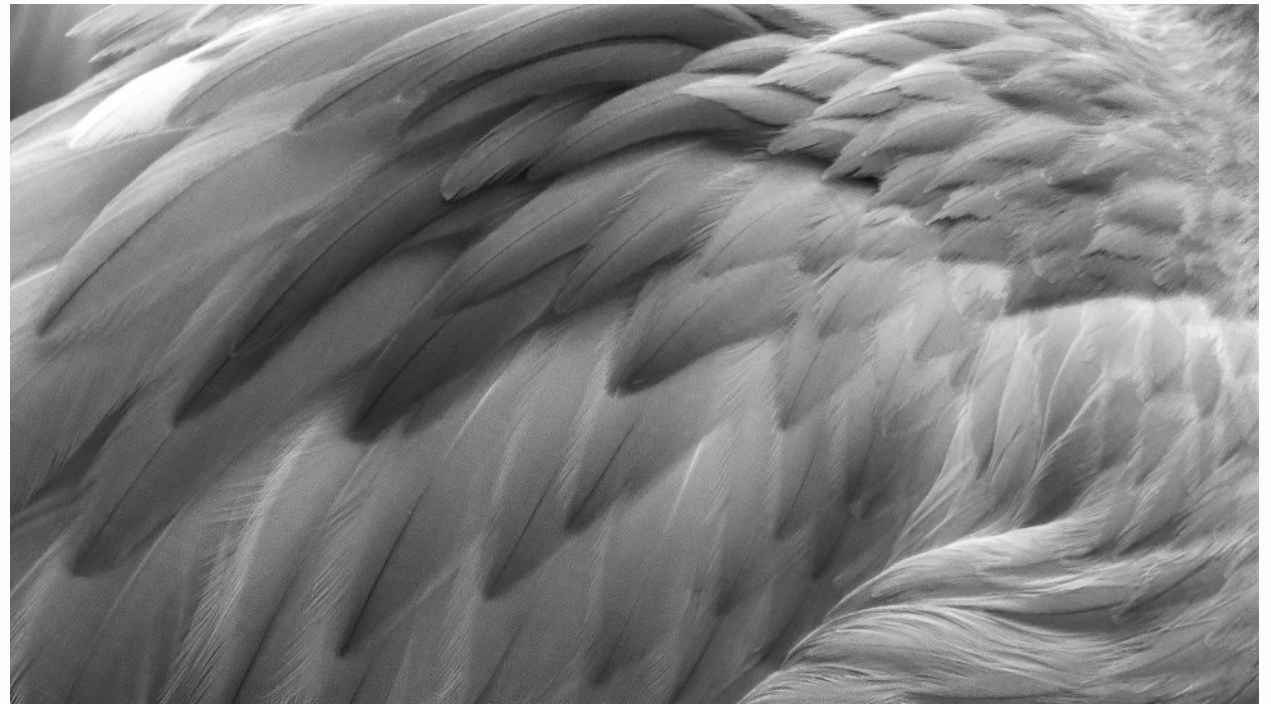
[f5.6 1/250s @ ISO 100]



Flamingo.

Monochrome couplet.

[f5.6 1/250s @ ISO 100]



African elephant.

Edition 2

[f5.6 1/400s @ ISO 400]



Polar bear.

Edition 1

[f5.6 1/500s @ ISO 400]



Polar bear.

Edition 6

Monochrome.

[f5.6 1/400s @ ISO 400]



Polar bear.

Edition 4.

Monochrome.

[f5.6 1/400s @ ISO 400]



Polar bear.

Monochrome couplet.

Edition 5 (top)

Edition 4 (bottom)

[f5.6 1/500s @ ISO 400]

[f5.6 1/640s @ ISO 400]



Polar bear.

Edition 2

[f5.6 1/400s @ ISO 400]

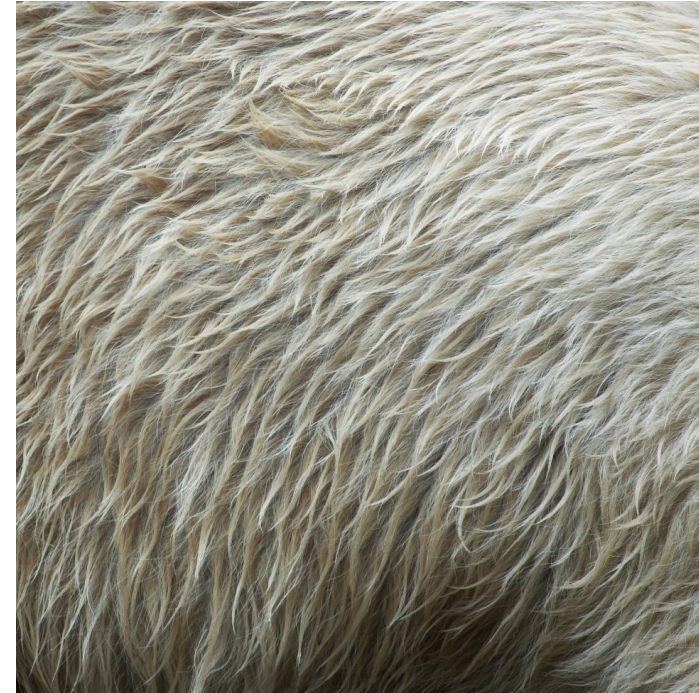


Polar bear.

Edition 3 color study.

[f5.6 1/400s @ ISO 400]

Color can both instruct and distract our perception. It can tell the story, or hide another message. Here, two different tales from the same image.



Panda bear.

Edition 1

[f5.6 1/160s @ ISO 400]

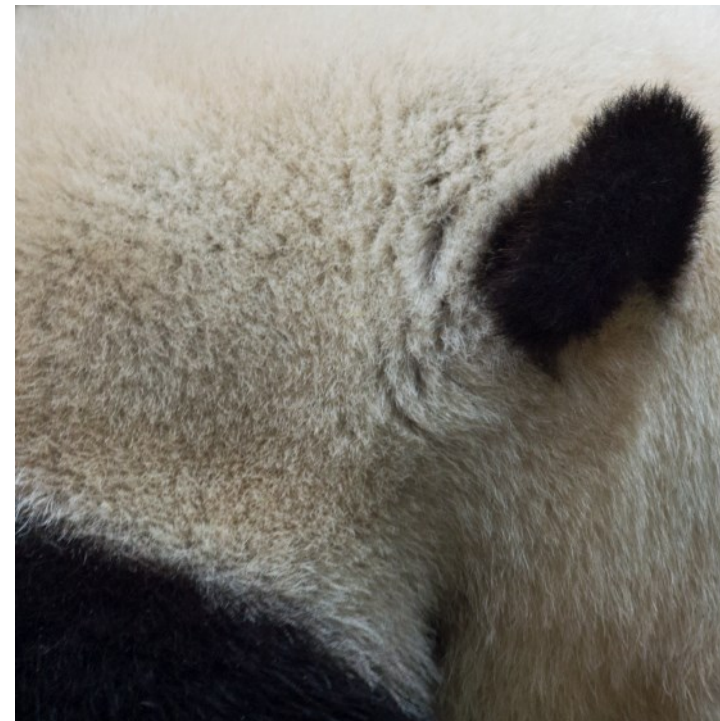
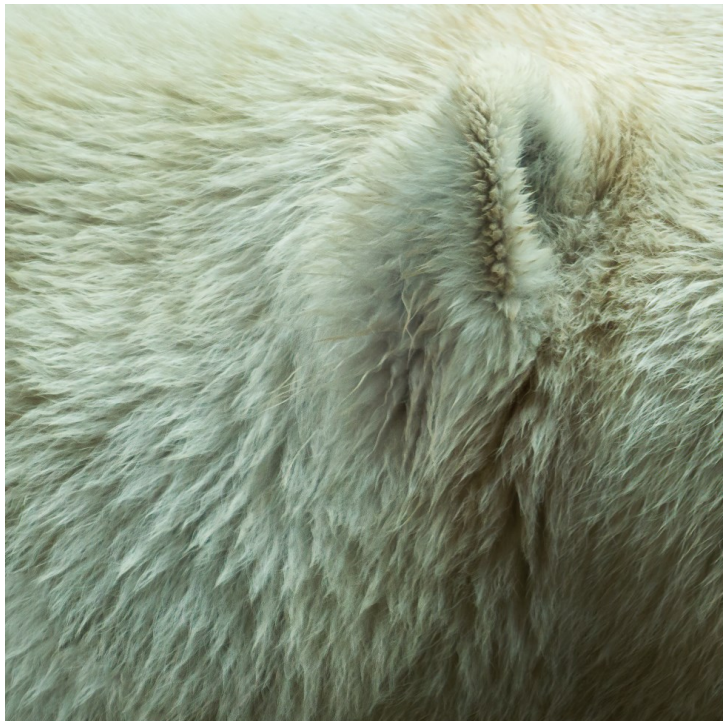


Koala bear.

Edition 1

[f5.6 1/25s @ ISO 100]





“Tres osos.”

Black rhino.

Edition 1

[f5.6 1/60s @ ISO 100]



Black rhino.

Edition 3

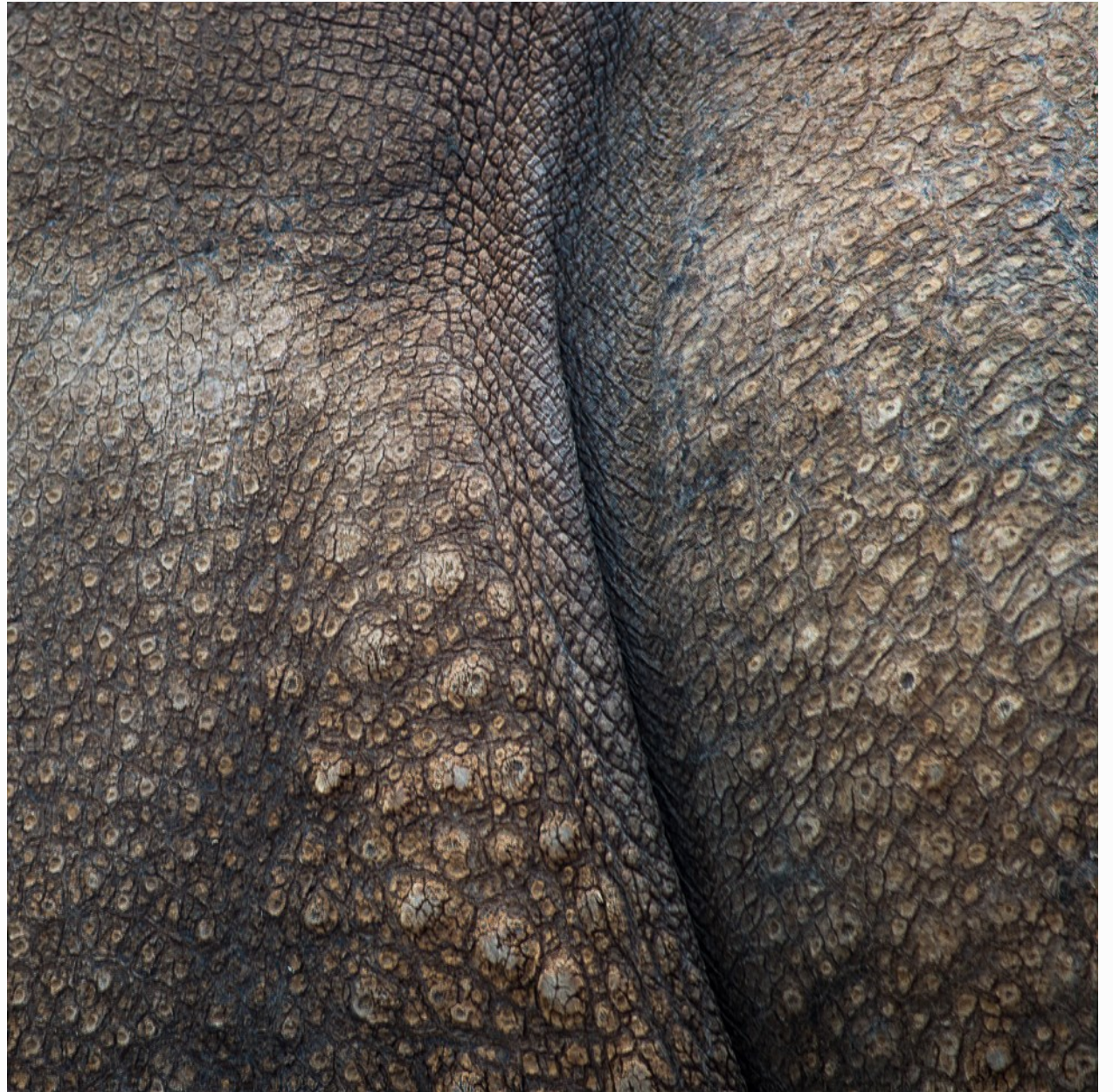
[f5.6 1/60s @ ISO 100]



Black rhino.

Edition 2

[f5.6 1/60s @ ISO 100]



Black rhino.

Edition 4

[f5.6 1/60s @ ISO 100]



Black rhino.

Edition 6

[f5.6 1/60s @ ISO 100]



Black rhino.

Monochrome couplet.

Edition 4 (top)

Edition 6 (bottom)

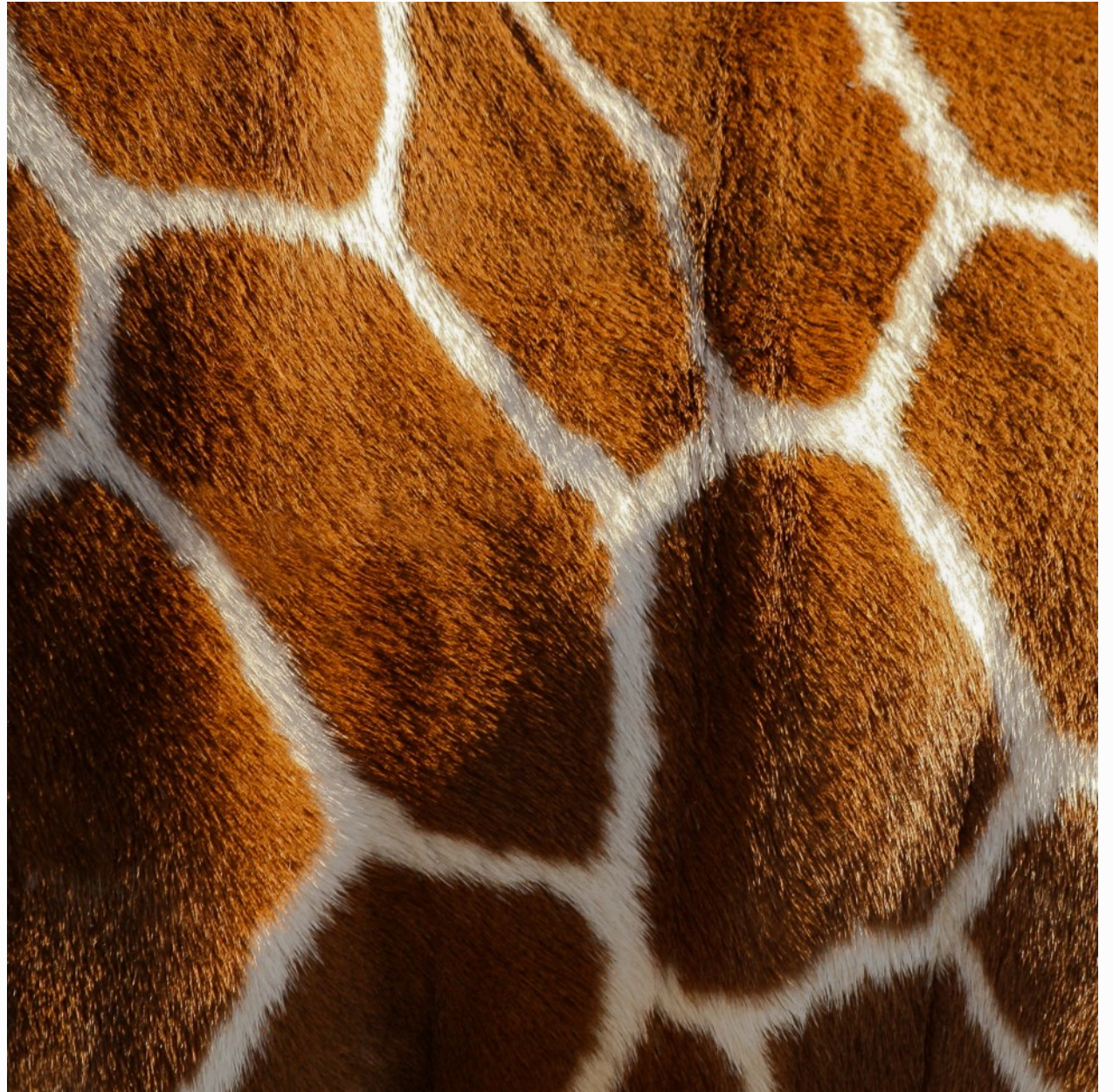
[f5.6 1/60s @ ISO 100]



Giraffe.

Edition 1

[f5.6 1/250s @ ISO 100]



Grévy's zebra.

Edition 1

[f5.6 1/100s @ ISO 100]



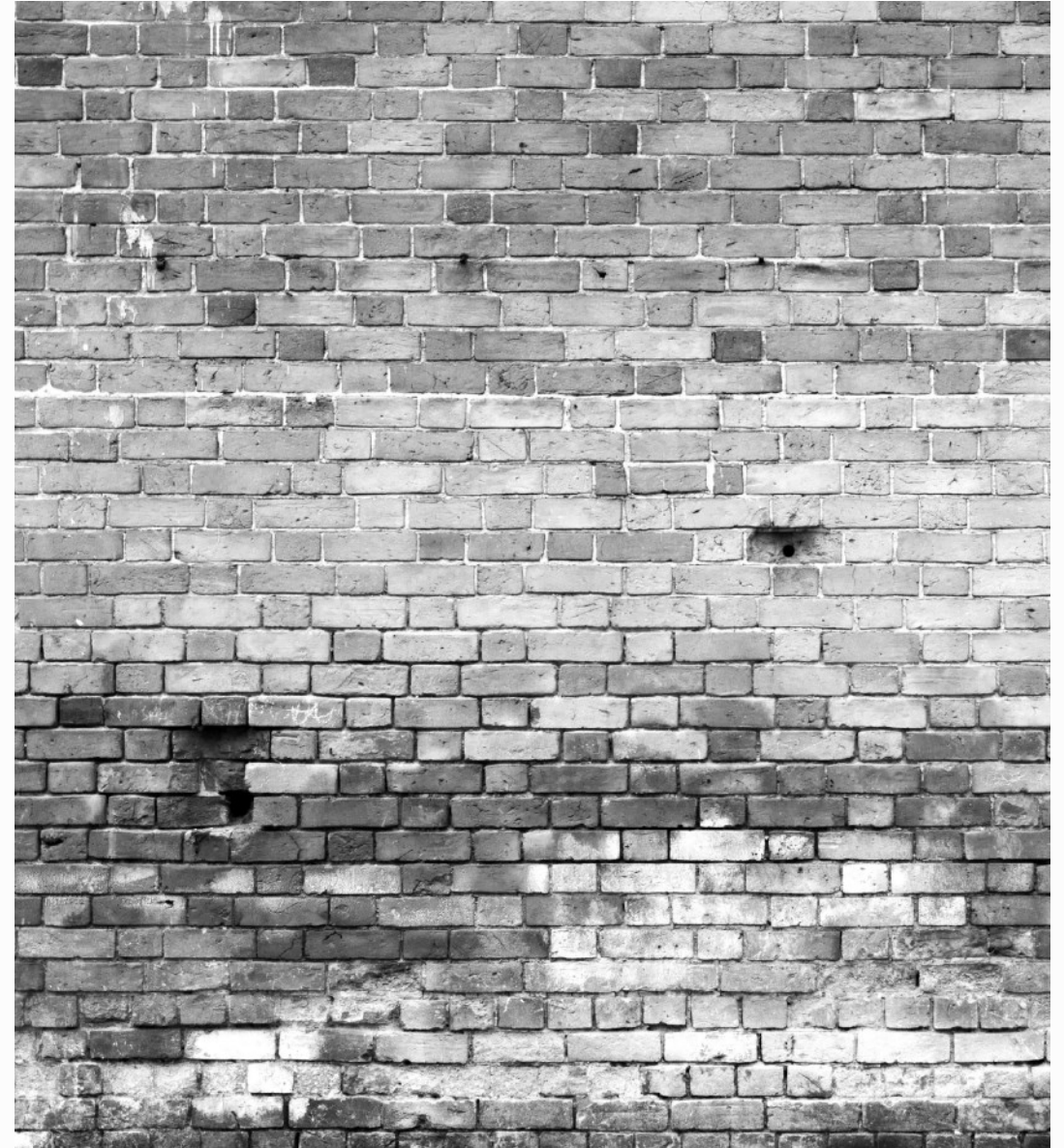
Why Species Diversity Matters

Imagine, if you will, that the total sum of species diversity on the planet today was a giant brick wall with each brick within it representing a different species. The wall would be constructed of millions of bricks all interconnected forming one stable system. As big and impressive as that wall may be, it's vulnerable to collapse. Not through poor construction but by the mere fact that it is interconnected. Left alone it is strong and resilient to the forces that could act upon it. If a brick was removed, representing an extinction, the wall would in theory be weakened. It may not be much, but it would. Those bricks closest to the one which fell out would be the most influenced. Nature is a great mason, however, and through its own inexorable work that species could be replaced in time. Such is the story of biological evolution.

Remove several bricks, then many others would be influenced. Some may be at risk of falling off the wall themselves. Remove even more bricks, then large sections of the wall would be at risk of collapse. Species are inherently connected to each other.

The natural world reflects this principle, we have seen it happen before. Loss of one species may have only a small impact. Sometimes, as in the case of Yellowstone's wolves, the loss of one species can have a large impact. And yes, loss of multiple species can lead to the loss of many others. The greater the disturbance, the greater the impact.

At the hands of humanity we are currently witnessing multiple bricks being removed from our collective wall on all of the continents and in our seas. The pace of extinction is unprecedented in the history of our species. Our species is merely one brick in that wall. We depend upon the wall's stability for our survival. We can halt the weakening of the wall, but we must act now. By working together to ensure its strength we guarantee a future for others to entrust and benefit from it, the way we have for millenia.





OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY

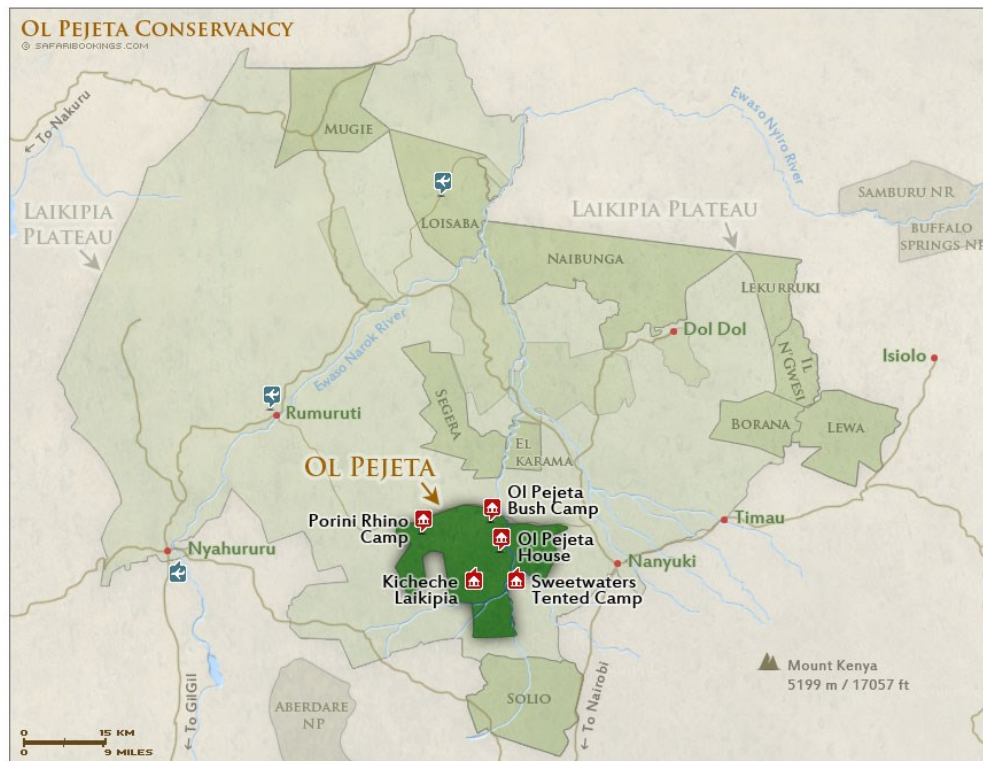
When I started this project in April, 2018 I began a search to find an organization that I would feel comfortable supporting with this collection of conservation images. Ol Pejeta Conservancy rose to the top of that list almost immediately. Sudan had passed the month before and the story of his conservation and that of the two remaining female Northern White Rhinos made a big impact upon me. Dedicating these images to Ol Pejeta's efforts made the utmost sense and I am honored to continue this commitment.

Ol Pejeta's mission is to become an innovative and sustainable development model that conserves biodiversity and contributes to economic growth and the improvement of the livelihoods of rural communities within its region. The conservancy works to conserve wildlife, provide a sanctuary for great apes, and to generate income through wildlife tourism and related enterprise for reinvestment in conservation and communities.

Today Ol Pejeta is the largest black rhino sanctuary in east Africa, and is home to two of the world's last remaining Northern White Rhino. It maintains a significant chimpanzee population from rescued and rehabilitated animals. Ol Pejeta also hosts some of the highest predator densities in Kenya and manages a successful livestock program. Rather than operating as an isolated entity in central Kenya, Ol Pejeta also seeks to support the people living around its borders, to ensure that wildlife conservation translates to better education, healthcare, and infrastructure for future generations.

As a non-profit organization Ol Pejeta's efforts are supported through ancillary services, donations, and tourism. Its accommodations are beautiful and bookings can be done directly through their website. Please consider supporting their efforts if you are in a position to do so.

For further information please visit olpejetaconservancy.org.



Prints

I am proudly donating 30% of the proceeds from all Animal Abstract print sales to the Ol Pejeta Conservancy.

All of the animal abstract images are available as open-edition prints through my website. They can be purchased as loose prints for you to frame on your end or pre-framed by me to your specifications. There are a number of different sizes available and of course custom orders are always welcome. The detail and colors look fantastic across the three main media I use: giclee prints, high definition metal prints and museum-grade diasec acrylic.

Special limited-edition box sets of the fifteen top images are also available.

For print orders or image licensing please go to naturessakephoto.com/pejeta or reach out to me directly at jrodewald@naturessakephoto.com.

Gallery showings and temporary workplace displays are welcome.

Your support and interest are truly appreciated.

Thank you,



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*“Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty.
It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet
uncaptured by language.” — Aldo Leopold*