

Living With the Forest

C.W. ニコル

C.W. ニコルさんが理事長を務める「アフアの森財団」では、森林保護活動をサポートして下さる会員を募集しています。詳しくは <http://www.afan.or.jp/> をご覧ください



写真は高橋弘司

14) Simien Mountain National Park, Ethiopia — part 3 アイベックスとの出会い

アイベックスという珍しいヤギと出会った。切り立った岩壁をいとも簡単に移動するその姿は優雅だった。

夜明けにアイベックスと出会う

(My assistant Ermias, three rangers and I were on patrol on Sankabar Ridge, where I had decided to build a base camp for a new national park. The area was famous for its spectacular scenery and for its unique flora and fauna. The Walia ibex, in particular, was the most southerly and rare of all the ibex and the symbol of the Imperial Ethiopian Wildlife Department. It is 1967.)

I was awakened just before dawn by ranger Mitiku calling softly at the door of my tent. Scrambling into my clothes, I fumbled for my binoculars. At the edge of the cliff, Ermias and the two other rangers sat watching and whispering. Mitiku pointed.

The Walia were clear through the binoculars: large, reddish-

brown, goat-like animals. The big males had massive, knurled, back-sweeping horns. The females were daintier and their horns quite small. The kids were darker in color. The Walia moved with ease on the cliff, running lightly up the rock faces. They browsed on the small ledges, choosing plants carefully, chewing slowly. We counted 11 animals scattered over one cliff face.

切り立つがけに生息する

Of themselves, the Walia did



イタリア・アオスタ地方で放牧されている、アイベックスのような角を持つヤギ (写真提供: ヨーロッパアルプス峠ドライブ 写真紀行)

not fill me with awe and wonder, as other wild animals have done. They are attractive enough, especially the big males, but they are too close to goats to induce that special sense of wonder. The fascination of the Walia lay not in themselves, but in the fact that they lived and moved with such easy grace on those terrible cliffs. Those cliffs seemed more suitable for soaring birds than for walking, hoofed animals.

My scalp tightened and tingled. I knew this feeling from my childhood and from expeditions to the arctic, but now I felt it more powerfully. The Walia, the cliffs, the birds, plants, streams and all the living things here were part of a unique pattern that must be kept and nurtured — and perhaps eventually understood. Here was my mission.

After sunrise, we rode up from Sankabar ridge over the erosion-

scarred slopes of Geech village. Dusty, dried-up gullies spread like a disease over the hills. There were red and blue-grey scabs of bare volcanic rock and great patches of sterile subsoil all over the slopes. Not even thistles or weeds grew on those patches. Here and there a few small trees remained, each tree holding a little island of soil and grass in the mesh of its roots. They were sad little islands with sad, little, withered flowers.

The people of Geech had tried to grow barley in this place. They had hacked down the heather forest and exposed the thin skin of soil to the sun, wind and torrential rains of the rainy season. As we rode up, fine dust got in our eyes. Geech, with its scattered *tukals*, or round houses, was a place of dire poverty. The mission of conservation would not be a simple one. CD

C.W.ニコル

1940年英国・南ウェールズ生まれ。作家、ナチュラリスト。カナダ政府技官として北極などを調査、エチオピア・シミアン山岳国立公園初代園長。80年から信濃町に住み、95年に日本国籍取得。02年、財団法人「C.W.ニコル・アフアの森財団」を設立し、理事長に。

WORDS 単語をチェック

ranger 警備隊員 (be) on patrol 巡察任務につく ridge 尾根 spectacular scenery 壮観な景色 flora and fauna 動植物 Walia ibex アイベックス(ヤギの一種) the most southerly 最南に(生息する) rare 珍しい (be) awakened 目が覚める dawn

夜明け scramble into clothes 急いで服を着る fumble 手探りでつかむ binoculars 双眼鏡 at the edge of the cliff がけのふちで(後出 cliff face は岩壁) goat-like ヤギのような male オス knurled ギザギザの back-sweeping 大きく反った horn 角 female メス dainty きゃしゃな move with ease やすやすと移動する

browse (草を)食べる ledge 岩棚 chew かむ scatter over 分散する with awe and wonder 畏敬の念と驚きで attractive 興味深い induce that ... wonder 驚嘆させる fascination 魅力 with easy grace 軽々と優雅に soaring 空を舞う hoofed ひづめのある scalp 頭皮 tighten 突っ張る tingle ぞくぞくする arctic 北極圏 nurture

育てる ride up 馬に乗って行く erosion-scarred 侵食の傷が残る slope 斜面 gully 水路 scab かけら bare むきだしの sterile 不毛な subsoil 下層土 thistle アザミ weed 雑草 mesh 網目 withered しおれた barley 大麦 hack down 切り開く heather ヒース expose さらす torrential rain 豪雨 dire poverty 極貧

* 「Living With the Forest」は毎月第3週に掲載します。