

# The Sometimes Coherent Ramblings of an Average <sup>nature</sup> Photographer

SCRAP # 02



“What do you do with yours?”



When photographers meet and engage in small talk there are a few standard questions that help to keep the conversation flowing. One that sometimes made me feel uncomfortable was the seemingly innocent enquiry of, “What do you do with your photographs?” It’s a stock question and I’d reply with the stock answer; slide shows / prints / stock sales / competitions / exhibitions / magazine submissions / web site (delete as necessary).

After being forced to think about this for a while, (because people kept asking me the question) I began to realise that there was common ground in all that I was doing. And that is that I would be using my photographs to be doing something for me. They were tools for enhancing my (self-delusion of) perceived status, getting my name out and about, and getting pictures published along the way. There is nothing wrong in any of these endeavours of course, but I began to realise that I was answering the wrong question.

The question I really needed to answer was not, “What do I do with my photographs?” but, “What do I want my photographs to do?”

So, what do I want my photographs to do? I realised that I wanted my photographs to go beyond the usual things mentioned above and make a positive contribution to the conservation of our natural history treasures. A number of such initiatives are already active, such as the International League of Conservation Photographers ([www.ilcp.com](http://www.ilcp.com)). But these are big hitters that are only interested in big fish; the efforts of tiny minnows such as me don’t seem to be worth anything. Anyway, I felt that I wanted to be

involved more locally than that.

It didn’t take me long to find a whole heap of conservation charities that are active in the area where I live, each working towards completion of their own core tasks. I picked out a few that particularly interested me and contacted them, offering the use of my photographs for their publications etc. By concentrating on projects that I personally find interesting my photography becomes more engaging and purposeful and, (dare I say it) more worthwhile.

I do receive enquiries from other charitable organisations looking for pictures to meet their needs. These are dealt with on a case by case basis. I’ll check them out as best I can before answering, so far I’ve said no more than yes. If there is any hint of commercial activity connected to the request, the answer is definitely no - unless of course they are prepared to talk terms.

There have been unexpected upsides to this arrangement. Photographs used are always credited, (not something I’ve found to be the case in my editorial stock sales) and a number have been used on magazine covers, my web site is advertised more widely and results from my efforts in the field have even fallen into the category of “competition winner”. What’s more, I feel more content with my photography in general and that’s worth more to me than any amount of Sterling.

