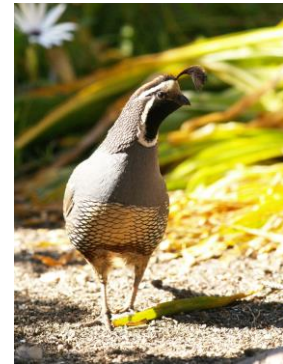


Before It's Too Late

Like most people active today in nature and animal conservancy, I was raised to appreciate the world beyond video games and the TV. I grew up spending most of my life outside of walls and in the world of animals. By age of ten I had become focused heavily on birds, whales, sharks, and snakes. By the time I had my driver's license I had enough biology knowledge to be correcting my science and biology teachers. I became active in high school with environmental and conservation groups as I began to see the writing on the wall...the future of nature was in danger. I organized petition drives against oil drilling off the California Coast among many other endeavors to play my part in preserving the future of our wild world.



California Quail © Chris Hartzell



vows on top of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Several years later now, we are known for our world traveling and great photography. We share our experiences through our company PhotoStrokes.net. Hauling our cameras around the globe together, we have been lucky to explore first-hand, places that most people dream about. A Cheetah stalking in the Serengeti, a Meerkat perched atop my head in Botswana, an Andean Condor soaring above us, Musk Ox in the Arctic Circle, a Great White Shark following us with his eye as he passes a couple feet in front of us, rubbing the belly of a Manatee, fending a curious Tiger Shark off with just a camera, and laughing at the squirting sounds of Marine Iguanas spitting salt in the Galapagos are among a few of our experiences.



Tiger Shark - Bahamas © Chris Hartzell

Then, just after graduation, I took a sudden turn in direction and became a Firefighter. Although the natural world still held a solid place in my heart, my new career was where I dedicated my enthusiasm. As the years went by, I felt fortunate to have a job I enjoyed which would also support my love for animals. Fate further gifted me with a wife who, as a nurse, would not only understand my work, but also share the same adventure and love for nature. We sealed our destiny together with an African Safari that included exchanging marriage

Through all of that, one thing we have grown to appreciate is how wonderful the feeling is to be around these creatures. There is no food, no drug, nor roller coaster...nothing...that can duplicate that feeling. It is an addicting one-of-a-kind rush.

However, the other part of the experience which has been unavoidable is realizing how fragile these creatures are. Everywhere we go we are bombarded by the impacts and threats to them. Many, most people don't even know about.



Maasai Giraffe - Serengeti
© Chris Hartzell

If you include insects and plants with animal species, there have been more extinctions than discoveries since the time of the Vietnam War. If you view the numbers collectively, overall, the planet's animal populations have reduced more than 50% since Darwin set foot on the Galapagos Islands. In 1885, just one shipment from South America to North America contained 60,000 hummingbirds to be used for women's feathered hats. And it has gotten worse in the last decade: 85% reduction of the Giraffe population in Kenya's Maasai Mara due to habitat loss in just four years, 70% loss to shark populations by shark finning in 10 years, 30% loss of Polar Bears to climate change in 10 years, and 60% loss of Gorillas and Rhinos to poachers in 10 years. In fact, just shortly after the Human Race celebrated the "next millennium", the Northern White Rhino went extinct from the wild.

In 2008, my wife Ame and I ventured to the Galapagos Islands. On that trip, there was one person who we seemed to bond with rather well, Joe Romeiro. Joe is an avid cinematographer and is dedicated to shark conservation through short films created by his own production company, 333 Productions. Over the years, he has become a good family friend and we have been on numerous adventures with him. I have been making home movies of our travels for some time now, but nothing that would be a stand-alone short movie. Shortly after returning from three weeks in Florida with Joe, he convinced me to put together my first short film.



Ame, Chris, & Joe in Mexico



Red-Eyed Tree Frog - Costa Rica
© Chris Hartzell

I had recently heard Timbaland's song "Apologize", and like many movie makers, started associating the song's lyrics and rhythm with a story I wanted to tell visually. I had originally wanted to use the song for an upcoming Africa movie, but was having difficulty working out how I could place and use it appropriately. When this new short film project came about, using the song was the first thing I thought of. As my first short film, I am pleased with how it turned out; creating both a visual and thought-provoking educational film that brings awareness to the plight of animals. By airing it, I hope it educates...then inspires people...to realize NOW is the time to take action...or it will be too late.

-Chris Hartzell

If you're unsure or have questions about how you can help, you can always contact me through our website, *PhotoStrokes.net*, and I can help you find a way to play a part.

