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They are the moments that have impacted our lives... the indelible images that become etched into society's collective mind. In the relatively short time that man has used the power of photography to educate, inspire, document and shape modern culture, Nikon cameras have captured some of the most powerful and poignant moments ever witnessed. Evoking emotion and provoking thought, long after first view – a powerful photograph can render a poet's adjectives pallid; here then is such an image, "a picture is worth a thousand words..."

## DANIEL J. COX



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An internationally acclaimed nature and wildlife photographer, Daniel J. Cox has ventured to all seven continents—from harsh Polar regions to America's woodlands to the African plains—to create extraordinary images of animals in their natural habitats. His incredible saga began in 1981 when he made the crucial decision that shaped his life. "Back then I was shooting for a small local newspaper and doing commercial studio work to pay the bills," he explains, "but I gave it all up to pursue my passion—exploring the wilderness and creating pictures that convey something of its primordial power and majesty." The results of Cox's dedication, love of nature, raw talent, and the insights gained from long experience are impressive indeed. His extensive list of credits includes 10 books as sole photographer, two cover stories for National Geographic, and perhaps the most extensive and compelling documentation of polar bears and their fragile ecosystem ever undertaken (he's an Advisory Board Member of PBI, Polar Bears International).

"Ever since my National Geographic articles hit in 2002 and 2005 I've been working a lot more closely with conservation organizations like PBI," says Cox. "I hope that my images of polar bears in the wild have helped position these awesome mammals as the icon for climate change. People are finally getting the message that the environment is a seamless vital connection—that we are all bound to the natural world, which is ultimately what determines the survival of our human species. Ironically, the photojournalistic skills I acquired early on have helped me immeasurably in documenting the lives of polar bears and other endangered species as well as less threatened animals like black bears and caribou."

"Another place that's very close to my heart is East Africa, where the cool nights and warm, dry days, grasslands and plains remind me of my home turf in Montana," Cox recalls. "When I first went there in the mid '80s I realized that it was an incredibly diverse environment, but declining rapidly from its natural state. When I went back in the late '90s that process was, sadly, well underway and I promised myself to get back there with my cameras at least twice a year until it's dead and gone, or I am. It's a self-assignment that's essential for my own fulfillment. In some ways Africa is like the United States, with islands of life, pockets saved from humanity, in areas designated as national parks and wildlife refuges. In Tanzania I had the rare opportunity to pitch my tent in the midst of a 3-million-strong wildebeest migration. Nobody really wants pictures of this common member of the antelope family, so there was no 'return on my investment,' but experiencing and capturing what the great American bison migrations of the 19th century must have been like was priceless."

"Kenya has done a great job of preserving some of its wild areas, and I shot the dramatic close-up of a White Rhino shown here in Kenya's Lake Nukuru National Park," notes Cox. "This species is a plains animal that's not indigenous to this woodland park—it was introduced as a kind of decoy to protect the rarer endangered Black Rhino from poachers by acting as an early-warning system for the park rangers. Although this magnificently ponderous tank-like critter looks like he's heading ominously toward my camera, I actually took the picture from a considerable distance, and from the safety of a robust off-road vehicle—in effect, a movable blind. Weather is a huge part of creating interesting animal pictures that convey a true sense of their lives in the wild, and that's why I often shoot in foul weather when other photographers are back at the lodge. Frankly, this picture would not have happened without my super-rugged Nikon D2Hs. It's practically impervious

to the elements, and the blazing speed of its motor drive let me fire off 4-5 frames of the rhino in about half a second! Much of the credit also goes to my 70-200mm f/2.8 VR Zoom-Nikkor lens that allowed me to capture this crisp, graphic image handheld, shooting wide open at 1/15 sec at ISO 200! Here's proof that Vibration Reduction (VR) technology can deliver critically sharp images at slow shutter speeds with long zoom lenses—an awesome capability of immense value to nature photographers."

"I've been a Nikon shooter from the beginning, so it's not too surprising that my current stable includes Nikon D2Xs's and D200s. A really incredible feature of the D2Xs is the High Speed Crop mode that switches the sensor from 12.4 to 6.8 megapixels, increases the frame rate from 5fps to 8fps, and provides a 2X crop, doubling the effective focal length of any lens. My all-time favorite lens, the 200-400mm f/4 VR Zoom-Nikkor, becomes a 400-800mm with Vibration Reduction, so this combination is unbeatable for a natural history photographer like me. The D200 is also great for handheld wildlife shooting based on its minimal weight, superb ergonomics, and outstanding field performance alone. But the thing I really love is its autofocus flash capability and the fact that you can wirelessly control the output of a Nikon SB-800 speedlight via the commander mode. This comes in very handy when taking portraits of scientists and support people in the field. I chose a D200 outfit—two Nikon D200s, a 12-24mm f/4 Zoom-Nikkor and an 18-200mm f/3.5-5.6 Zoom-Nikkor—when I was shooting from a helicopter over the Beaufort Sea in Northern Alaska. It provided amazing flexibility and performance for such a lightweight kit, and that 18-200mm Zoom-Nikkor is incredibly sharp—it's close in quality to my trusty 70-200mm f/2.8."

How does Daniel J. Cox see his mission going forward? "The outdoors and nature are such an integral part of my life I can't imagine living on a planet where this ultimate resource is gone. I've been fortunate to earn a reasonable living following my passion and I hope I'm making a difference—not just in the short term by motivating a person to turn the page, but far into the long term by inspiring ideals more harmonious to protecting our planet and its amazing creatures."



At the heart of the image™

