
“Capturing the beauty of Alice Park”

Mr. Toshiaki Mori

Hiroo Gakuen WA!

Alice in Wonderland

‘Alice Park’. This is what Mr. Mori calls the Arisugawa-no-miya memorial park. Why is this? Mr. Mori explained to us that walking through Arisugawa park is like being Alice, wandering into the enchanted Wonderland. When he enters into the park, his mind shifts from thinking about his work to finding something that interests him in this vast nature.



-Mr. Mori taking a photo

Then, when he steps outside of the park and back into the ordinary again, he told us that he can look at the world in a new light. Even the ideas related to his work that he had before stepping into the park feels fresh and exciting to him. Perhaps, such feelings may be associated with Alice, who found the ordinary to be extraordinary when she returned to the normal world.

This story from Mr. Mori’s hints us that we do not need to fall into a rabbit hole to free ourselves from boredom. Instead, what we need is only the slightest shift in our mind to always look for something interesting. So, if you catch yourself being bored on your daily walk to your workplace, try to look for something interesting; you might find a cicada who just debuted as an adult, or a magpie chatting tenderly to its baby in the distance.

How it all started

At first, he came to Arisugawa to take part in the radio exercise, and started taking photos only on the side of that. However, as time passed by, he got passionate about taking photos. He loved it so much that he has been continuing this for 10 to 13 years. He looks back to the time when he first started taking photos, when the park was less maintained. The park was left to itself for the nature to grow freely. However, there was recently a move to make the park a safer place for the children to visit. To do so, trees were cleared out to make the place brighter and easier to look out. He says that it cannot be helped since the park exists in the middle of the city.

However, he still told us sadly that he fears that animals are disappearing from Arisugawa park because of such human intervention. He told us during the interview that, “If it wasn’t Arisugawa, I wouldn’t have continued taking photos for 13 years.” The reason why he is so devoted to Arisugawa lies in the characteristic of its land. When we think about the most famous parks in Japan, we would notice that most of them are located in plains. The Yoyogi park and the Inokashira park is a great example. Unlike them, Arisugawa Park is an undulating land. Because of this, it allows Mr. Mori to get a shot from varying levels.



-Beautiful scenery of the Arisugawa Memorial Park

There are more personal reasons as well. He told us that the Arisugawa park is his school, hospital, and playground at the same time. Because this park relieves all the stress he gets from work and allows him to

maintain his health from all the walking that he does, it functions as a hospital for him. Furthermore, fishermen or a passerby's that he befriends often tell him, "I saw a snake recently!" or "there was a family of ducks nearby!" as he walks around the park. Since the people and the nature in this park provide him with new information everyday, the park is also like a school for him. However, above all, the park is a playground for him. That is why he aims to visit the park everyday until he can walk no longer.

Natures of Hiroo

His love for animals began ever since he was little. Instead of forcing him into a normal cram school, his parents allowed him to go to a cram school where he can interact with nature. He laughed as he recalled a time where the teacher made him to place a woolly bear caterpillar on his skin to teach him that the poison on its fur makes his skin irritated. He also got to wrap a snake around his neck. He explains that the reason why curiosity comes first in his mind before fear when he encounters with animals in the park may come from such childhood experiences. During the interview, Mr. Mori entertained us with his knowledge of animals that he gained from his endless curiosity to these animals, which we will share with you with his amazing photographs.



This is a magpie. According to Mr. Mori, they are exceptionally beautiful when they are flying. Furthermore, they rarely gather as a family. Therefore, one of his favourite photos of the magpies are the ones that succeeded to capture such majestic circumstances. As he takes pictures of them, Mr. Mori said that he remembers their voices. Therefore, when he steps inside the park, he first listens to the chirping of the birds to find which birds visited the park that day. Not only the types of the birds, but Mr. Mori is able to understand the birds' emotions through their voices. For example, he is able to distinguish the angry voice they use towards the crows, and the tender voice they use towards their children.



This is a picture of a balloon vine. When he first saw them, he was mesmerized at their seeds, which have the shape of a heart printed

on it. Therefore, he named this photograph ♡泥棒: heart thief. To those who may have wondered, none of his photographs are photoshopped, including this one.



This is a cicada. Although we believed that cicadas only emerges on trees, Mr. Mori told us that they can do it anywhere. Whether it be rocks, walls, or even ropes, all they need is something to hang on. Cicadas typically emerge at 7 o'clock in the evening. Therefore, Mr. Mori used to visit the park on his way to his home from his workplace to capture the majesty happening before his eyes. Once, he was so mesmerized that he even brought the larva in his bathroom to see it emerging up close.

To those of you who are interested in Mr. Mori's work, he does not publish his work or upload it on SNS. Because he started his work only as a self-satisfactory hobby, he wants to end that way. However, if you are so keen to seeing more of his work, try visiting the Arisugawa park to befriend a man holding a camera. Maybe he will friendly give you a postcard collection filled with photos that captures all the majesty of the Arisugawa-no-miya Park.

<http://www.arisugawa-park.jp/english/index.html>

