The Gentle Tusker

Posted on

It was another long weekend and we were in Okanda having explored the surrounding areas. As we were returning back on the sandy terrain of the Kumana-Okanda-Panama road we were suddenly stopped in our tracks where a statue like figure was motionlessly drinking water from the water hole at the side of the road and it was 2.30 in the afternoon!

At first no one could believe that it was an actual tusker because it was standing so still with only its tail moving. We were about to continue on our way if not for the shrieks and shouts within the vehicle stating that it was indeed a live tusker! What a gentle giant, we had two vehicles and as we parked and observed him, he was undisturbed. He continued on his routine, dipping his trunk into the water and back into his mouth. At times he would splash some water on his body to cool himself.

While other vehicles urged us to move forward we allowed them to pass us and continue on their journey. We were mesmerised. This tusker had kind eyes and was not at all bothered by our presence. He continued his rhythmic motions, and at times would pose with his trunk lazily placed on his tusk. As no one wanted to miss a moment by taking the camera out everything was recorded on the iPhone 6 where one of our more adventurous crept through the sunroof to capture the moments.

After drinking and bathing himself, the tusker gathered sand in his trunk and scrubbed against his chest and legs. Then, he scattered some on to his back. He continued this for a while. A large truck stopped behind our second vehicle. The tusker noticed them but did not do anything. After he had finished his ‘powdering’ session he started moving his legs. almost like a dance, swaying this way and that. He was very calm and peaceful. Even though he was only a few feet away we did not feel scared.

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He continued this ‘dance’ for a little while longer and then slowly stepped forward. We realised that he wanted to cross the road, but he soon stepped back realising

that the truck was blocking his way. He again took a few steps forward and the people in the truck started shouting, the tusker too trumpeted but stepped back. It seemed like he was saying “move, I only want to cross the road”. He was not agitated, his kind eyes patiently watching. The truck moved away as they realised he wanted to cross. After the truck moved our second vehicle too came forward giving this tusker ample space to cross.

Within a few minutes the tusker checked the road again–and by this time we had managed to retrieve our camera from the back–he slowly started to cross the road barely a feet away from us. We were all quiet and except for the clicking sound of the camera and our friend on the sun roof cautioning the other to be careful, the tusker calmly crossed the road and headed into the jungle.

What an experience! We were chatting all the way back discussing how we were in the right place at the right time. And to see a tusker at 2.30 in the afternoon on the road outside the national park was simply unbelievable. We had watched him for more than 30minutes. It was one of our friends birthday too and we could not help but feel that this was a gift from the gods.

