

**Exciting Adventures with Animals Around the World-
6 Tantalizing Tales
by
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**Luther Oaks
Mar 27, 2018**

I. Introduction (Slide 1- Title Slide) It's a pleasure to speak to such a fine group today, and I'm itching to tell my tantalizing animal tales.

Each tale is a result of something that happened when Harriet and I were traveling in different parts of the world, and I hope you find the tales as interesting/funny as we did when we experienced the events.

II. 6 Tantalizing Tales They say when giving a talk, you should tell the audience what you are going to tell them, tell them, and finally tell them what you told them.

So, no secrets, here is what's coming

6 Tantalizing Tales-(**Slide 2, 6 Tantalizing Tales**)

1. Magical Elephants Appearing out of Nowhere in Kenya, Africa
2. Reckless Cavorting Monkeys in Jaipur, India
3. Rattlesnakes Feasting in Phoenix Arizona, U.S.A
4. A Yodeling Bear at Lake Louise (Banff) Canada
5. A Tip-Seeking Horse and Camel in Cairo, Egypt.
6. A Couple of the Oddest Animals on the Galapagos Islands

III. Tale 1- Magical Elephants Appearing out of Nowhere in Kenya, Africa **Slide 3: Tale 1 Magical Elephants**

We took an unusual safari trip to Kenya, Africa, in 1995. I say it was unusual because of an interesting couple from California who were also on the trip.

To put it very mildly, they were fanatically interested in birds. He was the avowed bird watching leader of the whole state of California, and knew the name and disposition of probably every bird in the world.

And they had come to Kenya with one major purpose in mind-- BIRDS! We found ourselves, with a sneaky grin, calling them "Birdman", and "Birdie."

As we began our safari on the second day in Amboseli, we were bummed out because we had not yet seen the majestic Mt. Kilimanjaro (often shrouded in fog), or a single elephant!

Suddenly, at the very start of our day the fog dissipated and there was Mt. Kilimanjaro, in all of its glory! **Slide 4, Mt. Kilimanjaro**

In the presence of all the exclamations and oohs and ahs, Birdman's comment was "Look, everyone, there's a Black-Bellied Bustard!"

Clearly, for Birdman and Birdie, a bird trumped a majestic mountain every time.

As the day wore on, we had searched all over and still had not seen a solitary elephant. It was getting late in the afternoon, and we were resigned to having spent two days of our precious safari vacation in one of the worlds most famous wildlife areas (Amboseli) searching for elephants, but to of no avail.

As we headed home in our open top observation van- with Birdman and Birdie and others, someone shouted "Look Up Ahead!!"

Suddenly our van stopped, and out of a nearby clearing came some elephants,

more elephants, and still more elephants, of all sizes and shapes!

We were feverishly taking photos, and really excited to see so many elephants(The Guides estimated 400), including babies and elders, all in one place, interacting with one another. It was an amazing phenomenon. I'd like to show you a video to illustrate this amazing event **Slide 5, 6 Video: The Elephants Appearing**

Evidently, because of the weather patterns of El Nino, the elephants had changed their habits, and were migrating en masse to a different area.

It was a once in a lifetime experience for all concerned. All except Birdman and Birdie, that is.

Birdman generally ignored the elephants, and had his eye on a White-Bellied Go-Away Bird.

And all the while Birdie was emitting exclamations like "Oh what a sweet little Bee-Eater 2 on that elephants back!"

So birds, as well as taking precedence over Mt. Kilimanjaro, also trumped 400 elephants!

IV.Tale 2- Cavorting Monkeys in Jaipur, India

Slide 7: The Cavorting Monkeys in India

The second tale comes from when we traveled to India so I could attend and speak at an International Conference on Mathematics Education.

After the nine-day conference, Harriet and I traveled on our own, and I must tell you about just one of our travel experiences.

Upon arrival at our scheduled hotel in Jaipur, India (the "Pink City"), we found that our scheduled hotel was full, and no amount of cajoling would get us a room.

Slide 8: The Pink City

Feeling a culture shock and somewhat alone in this strange and very busy city, we finally found a room at a third rate hotel.

Slide 9- Ratty Hotel

After a meal in the hotel restaurant (after nine days of Indian food), I think I had a large bowl of tomato soup, with accouterments--a big mistake, and we retired to our room for a much needed nights sleep.

About four hours into this so-called sleep, the action began!

To tell the tale adequately, I must , in the format of a typical TV sitcoms, tell about the event from different perspectives all going on at the same time.

First time period

My perspective: All at once, I believe I am as sick as I think I have ever been. Suffice it to say that my body is divesting itself of everything possible, from every possible port of exit. Woe is me!

Harriet's perspective : My husband is, inconveniently, here, in the middle of the night, as sick as a dog, and as a good wife, I need to be as helpful to him as I can. Oh brother!

The Cavorting Monkey's perspective: Hey, there's a light in that window. Let's have some fun! Let's cavort outside that window! Let's cavort really loudly! **Slide 10: Cavorting Monkeys in Jaipur**

Second time period

My perspective: After what seemed like a couple of hours of total chaos--me erupting, monkeys cavorting, and Harriet putting up with it and stewing--I find the action continuing unabated, but suddenly realize that there is no toilet paper left in the room! Panic ensues.

Harriet's perspective : I need to help this ill husband... I'll call

the main desk to have some tissue brought up. Oh no! At this third rate hotel, there is no-one at the desk in the middle of the night.

Emergency Plan B- I'll rummage through my purse to find an unused, or even a used Kleenex. Don't panic. But ah, last of many compartments, sweet success!

Monkies Perspective: Let's keep cavorting and having a great, loud, hilarious time, just outside this window! Hi there, sexy.

Third time period

My perspective: Emergency over, kleenex held out just long enough-- now I can get some sleep. Totally worn out, dazed, almost asleep, but gosh, those monkeys are noisy!

Harriet's perspective : Wow! What a mess. How are we going to get enough rest to drive all the way back to New Delhi tomorrow? Can't sleep. What in heck are those monkeys doing?!

Monkeys perspective : Wow! Enough cavorting. Let's start making whoopee! If we bump into their window so vigorously that it they will think it is about to break, that's even more sexy. Oh boy, what fun!

Well, morning came way too soon, and, with very bleary eyes I looked out the window and saw this very relaxed monkey sitting on the edge of the building, who was, I imagined, smoking a cigarette.

Slide 11- Relaxed Monkey-Maybe Smoking a Cigarette

IV. Tale 3 – Rattlesnakes Feasting in Phoenix, AZ, U.S.A

Slide 12: Rattlesnakes Feasting in Phoenix

As Harriet and I returned to Browns Ranch Trail head from a great 3 mi hike, the Scottsdale Arizona area silence was abruptly interrupted by the loudest screams I may have ever heard.

As we got closer to the little area at the trail head where guides stand to talk to their group, the screams turned into sobbing and bawling by two little girls- probably 6 and 8 year olds.

The girls were immediately whisked off by their parents to their car, and we came upon the sight shown in this video I took

Slide 13: Rattlesnake video

V. Tale 4– A Yodeling Bear at Lake Louise, Banff, Canada

A final story is about a trip Harriet and I took in 2003 to the beautiful Canadian National Parks.

We found ourselves one fine morning at Lake Louise, near Banff.

Harriet is a hiker. If there is a destination, high in the mountains up a safe, but steep trail, Harriet must reach it.

Such was the case with the Lake Agnes trail up to the famous Lake Agnes Teahouse. It was a two-hour walk up a pretty steep path with a lot of switchbacks. **Slide 14: Tale 4 A Yodeling Bear**

And to add to the intrigue that morning, there was a sign at the entrance that asserted, “Bears have been sighted on this Trail.”

Slide 15: Bear Caution signs

Now Harriet also does not like the thought of a bear. It is almost as repugnant to her as the thought of a mouse! I think I tried to distract her by pointing at birds (a skill we learned on an African Safari), so that she wouldn't notice the sign.

However, after the dust settled, we found ourselves walking up the trail, and Harriet was thinking about bears.

Harriet had been assured many times earlier that if you make noise, say ring a bell, it is known to scare bears away (except for black bears).

She had also heard the joke. all too often. that the way to tell a black bear from a brown bear is to open the stomachs of the two bears. The one whose stomach has bells in it is the black bear.

On this particular day, we started up the trail at 7:30 a.m., noticed a sign like this, and also noticed that there were no other human beings in sight.

About half-way up, I detected that Harriet was getting more and more concerned about bears, so, being the dutiful, protective, macho husband, I asked her if it would help for me to yodel, so we would not surprise the bear.

I don't know what went through her mind, but she must have weighed the negatives, and decided that hearing me yodel was maybe a smidgen less threatening than being killed by a bear. So she agreed that yodeling would be OK.

A little known fact, however, is that I have a talent for yodeling. It originally grew out of my extensive early experience on the farm where I grew up, with calling hogs. At any rate, I let forth a yodel that would have either utterly charmed a Swiss lass, or totally destroyed her hearing. A yodel, for sure, that would have put the fear of the Lord into even the bravest bear.

(I will now demonstrate this yodel, but shy as I am, I have to turn around to do it.) **(Yodeling Pickle, into mike)**

And, immediately, about two levels up on the switchback trail, came a much higher quality yodel in return.

Slide 16: A Yodeling Bear at Lake Louise, Canada

We never saw "the bear", and had a wonderful time at the teahouse.

I guess bears like to play around a little too.

VI. Tale 5- A Tip-Seeking Camel and Horse in Cairo, Egypt

Slide 17: Tip Seeking Horse and Camel in Egypt

And then there was the trip to Egypt and Israel we took with Herm and Evelyn Harding in 1989.

On a boat trip down the Nile trip, we all agreed that Herm, Evelyn, Harriet, and I would try to look like “Sly Egyptians” and have someone take a photo. And here it is! One of my favorite photos of all time!

Slide 17: Sly Egyptians

Some of us succeeded in looking like sly Egyptians, at least. And I think, after they developed and looked at this photo, security seemed to be watching us just a little more closely on that boat trip.

But these are not the animals that are the main subject of this tale. Rather, it is the horse and camel in these photos.

Part 1 of the Tale- On the Nile River trip, we decided to get off the boat at Aswan and take a horse and carriage to the downtown area.

The Egyptian carriage driver, who had a PhD in Dickering About Price, finally agreed that he would take us there and back for the equivalent of about \$10 U.S. dollars, and that would include the baksheesh (tip).

Slide 19: Tip Seeking Horse on the Nile

So off we went. Upon return, we hopped out of the carriage, and as we were about to take our leave, the grinning driver held out his hand said, in an innocent, but mildly demanding, voice, “baksheesh?”

Ever diligent in sticking with the idea that “a deal is a deal,” I patiently explained that we had agreed that the baksheesh would be included in the agreed upon price.

Slides 20,21 The Baksheesh Carriage Driver

“Oh,” he exclaimed benevolently, but in a powerful voice, “No baksheesh for me! Baksheesh for my horse!”

Needless to say, the humor of it all melted me immediately, and I succumbed to tipping the horse, no less. (More about him later)

Part 2 of the Tale- A different, but related incident happened at the site of the Great Pyramid.

Slide 5B: Tale 5B A Tip-Seeking Camel

As we were planning our day, Evelyn, who was sometimes quiet, boldly asserted that she was not going to come to Egypt without riding a camel. Harriet, equally authoritative, gave the idea its needed momentum, and off we went to find some good camels.

I was watching Herm dicker with their potential camel driver, and by the look on his face, it appeared that he thought he had gotten a sly Egyptian good deal. **Slide 23: Dickering for a Camel**

And as you can see by these photos, a good time was then had by all.

Slides 24, 25 Our Camels

The rub came in, however, after the ride was over. When it came time for Evelyn to disembark from the camel, the camel, encouraged by the driver, would not bend down so Evelyn could get off.

When Herm came to the rescue, the driver asserted that you couldn't get off the camel without giving extra baksheesh. I don't think he said the baksheesh was for the camel, but the camel seemed to think it was.

Slide 26: Dickering to Get Off the Camel

I think in this photo, Herm is dickering again, so Evelyn wouldn't have to spend the rest of her time in Egypt on that camel.

As I thought back on the two parts of this tale, I couldn't help but think that the drivers were complicit, for sure, but that it was the laughing horse and smug camel who were the real culprits. I envisioned them as looking like this as we forked over the extra backsheesh! **Slide 27: Grinning, Richer Animals**

.VII. Tale 6- A Couple of The Oddest Animals in the World on Galapagos Island.

Slide 28: Worlds Oldest Animals

This final short tale comes from a trip we made to the Galapagos islands in 2008

Before telling the tale, I want to assure you that the turtle is not Harriet, and the blue-footed booby is not me. And I can prove it.

Harriet, in reality, is the name of a Galapagos tortoise that lived to be 175 years old, and was moved to a Zoo in Australia late in her life.

Slide 29: Worlds Oldest Tortoise

And I have been called a lot of things, but never a "booby."
Let alone a "blue-footed booby."

The two parts of this tale deal just a little with these two fascinating creatures- the weirdest bird in the world, and one of the rarest tortoises in the world. Amazing!

An Encounter With A Rare Galapagos Tortoise-

It was October, 2008, and we were having a great time exploring the Galapagos Islands. In the words of my grandmother, more interesting animals and birds there than you could shake a stick at!

We wondered if we had the time or the interest to visit the Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz Island.

After all, we had read a lot about Darwin and the Galapagos Islands, and it was, in the words of many travelers, “just another museum.”

But we went, and wouldn't have missed it for the world.

It was there that we met Lonesome George, saddleback tortoise extraordinaire. **Slide: 30 George Gobel, Lonesome George**

Lonesome George was said to have been named after George Gobel, a famous U.S. comedian in the 1950s, who called himself “Lonesome George.” But I think there were also other reasons for saddling him with this moniker.

First, he was a *Pinta Island* tortoise, and has been *the last living tortoise of his species for at least 40 years*- the rarest creature on earth! That's a pretty good reason in itself for being dubbed “lonesome.”

Second, over the decades since George was discovered by a Hungarian scientist in 1971, researchers at the Tortoise Breeding and Rearing Center on Santa Cruz Island have made many attempts to find a mate with whom offspring could be produced to sort of “extend the species.”

Unfortunately, but not necessarily unexpectedly, none of the attempts were successful. So I guess if all attempts over 40 to 50 years to fix someone up with a mate with whom they can have a family fail, it is another good reason to christen them “lonesome.”

Just by happenstance, Harriet and I felt that we were a little part of one of George's serious attempts to raise a family.

When we were visiting Lonesome George in October, 2008, everyone on the staff there were buzzing, sometimes whispering, always seeming to be awaiting a miracle. We were aware that a new batch of 13 eggs were “hanging in the balance.” We did what we could to help, which was “nothing.” Here's what was happening.

George had mated with a female in a species closest to his in July, 2008, and 13 eggs had been collected and placed in incubators.

Soon after we left Galapagos, on November 11, 2008, The Charles Darwin Foundation reported that the eggs had failed to hatch, and x-rays showed that they were not capable of developing life.

Lonesome George died June 24, 2012- well over 100 years old, and until death, still “lonesome” in every respect.

Slide 31: Taxidermied Body of Lonesome George

We understand that these stuffed likeness of Lonesome George now reside on Santa Cruz island at the Charles Darwin Research Station. Sure glad we went there!

Our encounter with Blue-Footed Boobies-

Slide 32: Worlds Wierdest Bird, on Galapagos

Not long after we arrived, we were hiking around on N. Seymour island in the Galapagos chain, near the water, and Harriet suddenly said “Look at those diving birds out there. They look like torpedos!

And they did. We found out that they were blue-footed boobies, and that they were diving for fish. Later, I read that their dive can begin as high as the length of a football field, and they fold their wings into their body, transform themselves into arrows, and hit the water at 60 mph or more- going as far as 82 ft. below the surface. And boy, can they swim. **Slide 33: video of blue footed boobies diving for fish**

Only a few minutes later, as if coming to greet us after its fill of fish, we met this blue-footed booby coming ashore, and I took the photo I’m passing around.

Slide 34: Blue Footed Boobies After the Dive

Before we left Galapagos, we were surprised to come upon a group of several blue-footed boobies, and were fascinated by two, in particular. They were stepping around in a weird way as if trying to keep their feet out of the mud, and were giving each other a lot of attention.

We found out that this dancing around was a courting ritual, particularly the male trying to impress the female with his feet. This video, not taken by me, explains it all. **Slides 35,36 Video, Booby courting**

This next video demonstrates some of my personal activity after witnessing the courting Blue-Footed Boobies. **Slide 37: Video, me in blue shoes, dancing like a blue-footed booby.**

You can ask Harriet, but at the time, it seemed like my valiant attempts produced little results.

VIII. Conclusion

I hope you've enjoyed these tales. I end with some quotes that are inspiring to me. **Slides 38,39,40, 41 With Quotes**