



That Bothersome Ethical Stuff ...

I am so lazy recently ... at least when the sun is shining! I told you the other day about spending a 'bit' of time each day down at the river behind my workshop, and I would be truly embarrassed if you were to find out just how long I stay there on some days.

I tell myself that it's 'OK', because I do usually start work quite early in the morning, and then stay busy on various projects right up until it's time to go to bed, so I guess I can't be faulted for taking a break like this in the afternoon, but that attitude doesn't help me get through the stack of work waiting!

One of the main attractions for me down at the river has been the fish. Something is different this year - perhaps the weather, perhaps the lack of maintenance from the water board, which has resulted in many deep shady pools forming - and there are far more fish in the stream than I have ever seen before. Small fingerlings make up most of the population, but here and there lurking in those deeper areas, are some quite sizeable specimens, upwards of 20 cm long.

And they are so hungry! This river is quite clean and clear-running, and I can't imagine what these fish are eating. There are tiny crabs in the water, scuttling out now and again out from under the large stones, and when I look closely I can see some quite small creatures crawling over the gravel. Perhaps these are food for the fish?

But whatever it is that they are eating, there is clearly not enough of it, because when I toss some bread crumbs or other 'treat' into one of the pools, the water actually begins to boil, as the mass of fish lunge towards it and frantically fight to get a nibble of the scrap. Some days I have felt so guilty at their hunger that I have 'sacrificed' a lot more of my lunch than I should, and am still hungry myself when I come upstairs!

Today though, something happened that has left me in an ethical dilemma, and I'm not sure which way to turn.

There is a kingfisher (or kingfisher family) patrolling this stretch of river, and over the past few weeks he (I think of it as a 'he', without no actual knowledge of the actual gender involved) has gradually become acclimated to seeing me sitting in the water. A month or so ago, he turned and flew away instantly at any sight of me, but he has been coming closer bit by bit, and today he perched in a tree not more than a couple of meters away, studying the water below looking for a chance to catch something.

As it happens, the fish and I had already finished my lunch, but seeing him there instantly raised an idea. If I *had* still had some food left, and tossed a scrap into the water below his perch, surely I would get to see him dive down and catch something!

But ... can I do such a thing? These fish are my 'friends' ... perhaps they have come to trust me. I have been giving them food, not 'bait'. What a horrible trick it would be to suddenly change the situation. They would come up to nibble my bread crumbs, and ... BANG! ... a rocket from the sky would suddenly splash into the water and carry somebody off.

As I said, today I had no food with me at that moment, so the question remained hypothetical. The kingfisher stayed only a minute or so, and then moved to another location further down the stream. But tomorrow is another day ...

What should I do? What would *you* do?

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>