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Article :**Ryohei Ito is 1st Japanese to Win Int'l 'Underwater Photographer of the Year' Contest**

Directions: Read the following article aloud.

An underwater image taken by Ryohei Ito, a hairdresser living in Yoshikawa, Saitama Prefecture, has won first prize in the Portrait Category of the world-famous Underwater Photographer of the Year (UPY) Competition 2021.

The 36-year-old is the first Japanese who has ever been ranked first in any category of the UPY contest. Thrilled at the news, Ito said, "I am overjoyed to win this prize and honored to be lined up with the prominent overseas photographers who I have looked up to for so long."

The prize-winning photograph is an image of an Asian sheephead wrasse, known as kobudai in Japanese. Ito shot the fish, a member of the Labridae family, in the Pacific Ocean off the city of Tateyama, Chiba Prefecture. The moniker of the fish comes from the big bump on its head, after which it has been named kobudai or bump red sea bream, and its characteristically large chin.

Adopting kobudai as the theme of his photography on the belief that the fish might be a curiosity to people abroad, Ito employed a daring composition, taking more than a dozen head-on shots. He selected the one he thought "best suited to expressing the bulkiness" of the creature to enter into the annual UPY competition, he explained. He also submitted an image of a manta shot in waters off Maldives in the Indian Ocean, which placed second in the Up & Coming Category of this year's UPY contest.

Ito experienced diving for the first time nine years ago when he visited the Pacific island of Saipan. He recalled: "I was fascinated by the beauty of the sea. I was impressed with the splendor of coral reefs and colorful fish. I was born and grew up in Saitama Prefecture, which is not along the coast, so I had a natural longing for the sea."

As photography has been his hobby since his junior high school days, he eventually became immersed in underwater photography.

"Shooting in the sea is a once-in-a-lifetime experience since you will never see the same underwater scene twice. The scenery changes depending on the season and the flow of the tides," Ito added.

While running a hairstyling salon in Yoshikawa, he has been taking underwater photos in the sea off Chiba and Shizuoka prefectures at least once a week, and traveling abroad around twice a year.

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‘Humans Not So Important’

One of the most impressive moments during his various diving experiences was his encounter with a humpback whale in the sea off Tateyama two years ago. He relates how a huge shadow came into view while he was attempting to shoot an Asian sheepshead wrasse. He turned his eyes toward something large, finding it was a massive humpback whale measuring more than 10 meters in length.

“The whale’s eyes were as large as the head of a child. The eyes, in addition, were far from emotionless, but instead were very expressive in communicating with me. With the body of the humpback whale being vastly larger than mine, the thought came to me that human beings were not such a big deal,” he recalled.

His current ambition is to shoot a sand tiger shark, a shark variety that lives in the waters off Japan’s Ogasawara Islands in the Pacific about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) south of Tokyo. There are a lot of other fish he wants to photograph in the future, too, he said.

“Underwater photography can convey to everybody the beauty of the sea, where only a limited number of people can go. So I’d like to take photos that are good enough to make people overseas feel like diving in Japan’s seas.”

Source: Ryohei Ito is 1st Japanese to Win Int’l ‘Underwater Photographer of the Year’ Contest
<https://japan-forward.com/ryohei-ito-is-1st-japanese-to-win-intl-underwater-photographer-of-the-year-contest/>

2 Key phrases and vocabulary

Directions: First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. win first prize 1位を取る、(競技会などで)最高の賞を取る

I would buy a new car if I won first prize in lottery.

2. thrilled 興奮した、感激した、(喜びで)ワクワクした、

He is thrilled at his record-breaking achievements.

3. eventually 最終的には、結局のところは、いずれは、ゆくゆくは、(色々あったが)ようやく・最後には

Going to a new school can be difficult, but the kids will eventually adjust.

4. once-in-a-lifetime 一生に一度だけの、二度とない

It was a once-in-a-life-time opportunity, so I could not pass it up.

5. feel like ~ing ~したい気分である、~に気乗りする

I feel like staying home all day and watch movies or something.

3 Questions

Directions: Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. Where did Ryohei Ito take the prize-winning picture?

2. What experience made Ito think that human being were “not such a big deal”?

3. Have you ever been scuba diving? If yes, where? If no, would you like to do it?

4. What picture would you take to win first prize in UPY contest?

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日本語関連記事：

世界的な水中写真コンテスト「UPY」で日本人初優勝 埼玉の伊藤亮平さん

世界的な水中写真コンテスト「アンダーウォーター・フォトグラファー・オブ・ザ・イヤー（UPY）」の2021年大会で、埼玉県吉川市の美容師、伊藤亮平さん（36）の作品がポートレート部門で優勝に輝いた。日本人の優勝は全部門を通じて初めてとなる。伊藤さんは「目標としてきた海外の写真家たちと名前を並べることができ、信じられない気持ちだ」と喜びを語った。（内田優作）

撮影は一期一会

優勝した作品は、千葉県館山市沖の海で撮影したベラ科の魚「コブダイ」の写真だ。名前の由来である頭のこぶと大きなあごを迫力ある構図で表現した。海外の人にとって珍しい魚だと考えて題材に選び、十数回の撮影を重ねた末、「最も『質感』が伝わる」と感じた1枚を選んだ。今大会にはモルディブ沖の海で撮ったマンタの写真も出展し、新人部門で2位となった。

9年前に旅行で訪れたサイパンで初めてダイビングを経験し、海的美しさに魅せられた。海のない埼玉県の出身だけに「海に憧れがあった。サンゴ礁やカラフルな魚にきれいだなと感動した」。中学生時代から写真が趣味だった伊藤さんは、やがて水中写真にのめり込むようになった。

「海での撮影は一期一会。同じ海は二度と見るができない。季節や潮の流れによって違う景色を目にすることができる」

吉川市で美容室を経営するかたわら、週1回は千葉県や静岡県の海で水中写真を撮影し、年2回ほど海外にも出向く。

「人間ってたいしたことないな」

多くの潜水経験の中でとりわけ強く印象に残っているのは、2年前の館山市沖の海でのザトウクジラとの邂逅（かいこう）だ。コブダイを撮ろうとしていたとき、大きな影を感じて目を向けると、体長10メートル以上の巨大なザトウクジラが視界に入ってきた。

「目玉だけで子供の頭くらいある。しかも、無機質な目ではなく意思疎通ができそうな目…。ザトウクジラの体は自分よりもはるかに大きく、『人間ってたいしたことないな』と思った」

今は、小笠原諸島沖に生息するサメの一種「シロワニ」を狙っている。まだまだ撮りたいものは多い。

「水中写真は、限られた人しか行くことができない海的美しさを誰にでも伝えられる。海外の人に『日本の海に潜ってみたい』と思ってもらえるような写真を撮りたい」