

October 1999



Dear Everybody,

Hope, the radio-collared grizzly bear, lead her two golden cubs through the drying alpine meadow. Their criss-crossed trails through the frosted grasses of autumn were like finger paintings on the hillside. Hope reared to her full height, scanning for berries; her breath swirled and was lost in the mountain's mist. This was not a

picnic. The deep snows of winter would soon be upon her. To gain the weight she and her cubs needed to survive until spring, she would have to find food immediately. She was far behind schedule. Already snow cloaked the highest peaks, and wind from the ridges cut through her coat like a knife. But once again, and as forecast by climate change models, the summer had been too long, dry and hot, and the rain too late for the high elevation berry crop. The pickings were slim, and Hope's family was thin.

But Hope knew of another source of rich food - wild strawberries, elderberries, raspberries, and even apple orchards. These luxuries were farther down the mountain, and 'off limits' because the land was being carved up for human real estate development. Bears who foraged there risked being shot. But with winter close behind her, Hope had no choice. Turning downhill, she lead her two cubs toward the forbidden fruit.

Though Hope could not read them, new signs boldly marked the boundaries of this haven. She approached carefully, for she could not know that people who care for bears had purchased this land, and that now, the strawberries, raspberries, and even the apple orchards belonged to her and her kind. Joined by a few other bears, Hope and her family gorged themselves, sweet juice glistening on their chops, as they gained weight daily. No one bothered them. No one ever will again - because this land, this Garden of Eden for bears, was bought by you.

With your help we have begun purchasing and conserving bear habitat, which is also used by elk, mule deer, moose, lynx, and waterfowl. No other conservation initiative is more important, because this is for keeps. We are currently face to face with an unprecedented opportunity to buy critical bear habitat. Some farmers in the Purcell and Selkirk mountains have found these lands uneconomical to cultivate, so they are bailing out. Developers are lined up, but since the area is so remote and rugged, we still have a chance to buy it before they do. Please, if you can help, there is much to do. We must ensure that Hope and her progeny have seasonal range forever - that every autumn can be a picnic.

Sadly, there is some bad news as well. Two grizzlies have recently been shot. In one case, elk hunters hung the mule deer they had illegally killed in their camp, and the odors attracted a female bear. Though the bear was merely investigating the scent, their fear overcame them and they shot her. Another man shot a bear in his apple orchard. No one can blame people for shooting bears in self defense, but educating people about when they are truly in danger, and when they are not, is essential for the conservation of any potentially dangerous animal. The Owens Foundation is sponsoring the Idaho Fish & Game education and grizzly law enforcement officer for the Selkirk Grizzly Bear Recovery Project. More funds are needed to better fund the educational work.

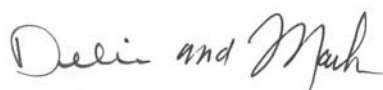
And, of course, the basic research must continue, so that we know how many bears are born, how many die, and why; where they go; and what they eat. When we first began supporting this project, only one bear was radio-collared. Now nine are being monitored from aircraft and horseback. As of now, there are no funds for next year's darting program. As always, anything you can spare is greatly appreciated!

News from Africa: The screenwriter for the movie of our book, Eye of the Elephant, traveled to Zambia not long ago to visit the project. His report was glowing. The villagers of Mukungule under the guidance of Hammer Simwinga and unaware of his arrival, were holding an agricultural show displaying their soybeans, sunflowers, cooking oil, fish farms, and other products and industries we had helped them establish. They no longer had to poach for food, thus our North Luangwa program has proved its sustainability. Elephant poaching is still under control by the game scouts we assisted and equipped. When one scout was asked if he had known the Owens, he pointed to his feet and said, "They bought me these boots."

As you know, 91% of all OF money goes directly to wildlife conservation. This is possible because we have only one staff member, but she is nothing short of amazing. Mary Dykes, who is my (Delia's) twin brother's wife, does everything from buying elephant collars to filing tax returns. She works all hours of all days of the week, and is dedicated to the conservation of bears, elephants, and the squirrels who inhabit her attic. There is no Owens Foundation without Mary. She has a short message for you below.

Thank each and every one of you for your steadfast support. You lift us up and make the success possible.

Cheers,



Delia and Mark

Mary's Notes: If you can advise in advance of any change of address, it saves a great deal of time and money on handling returned newsletters. Also, this gives us a better chance of staying in contact with you. If you haven't seen it, you should check out our beautiful Web page designed and implemented by volunteer Tom Steeb of Fort Worth. Our address is www.owens-foundation.org conservation updates are posted there. If you'd like to receive updates via email, contact me at marydykes@compuserve.com.

CONSERVATION UPDATES

- ❖ **PROTECT 40 MILLION ACRES OF NATIONAL FOREST FROM DEVELOPMENT:** You can write or email the White House, your Senators and Congressmen and support the initiative to save 40 million acres of your National Forest from development of any kind.
- ❖ **WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT ACT:** You may contact your Representatives and tell them you support the continuation of this important Act which is assisting landowners to conserve wetlands and wildlife habitat on private lands.
- ❖ **STEEL JAWED LEGHOLD TRAPS:** The Senate voted to table legislation sponsored by Robert Torricelli (D, NJ) banning the use of these brutal traps by recreational and commercial fur trappers ONLY on National Wildlife Refuges. The Congress passed Sam Farr's (D, CA) similar amendment by a vote of 259 to 166. Contact your representative and ask that they revive this reasonable and much needed action. National Refuges should be free of steel jawed death traps.

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