

November 2000



Dear Everybody,

Summit, Mark's horse, scrambled for footing on the scabble and scree of the steep trail - just two feet wide. His hind hoof kicked loose a brick-sized rock; it ricocheted down-slope for 200 feet, then skipped into thin air. Summit lunged forward, his eyes white. Mark held his leg tightly against his horse's flank, pushing him into the rock face, away from the cliff. The

big horse tried to spin around to escape back down the trail, but it was too narrow. His rear quarters dropped from under him. Mark threw himself forward on Summit's neck as his horse pawed wildly at the mountain. He grabbed a root dangling from the bank above the trail -- a safety in case Summit could not recover his balance. Finally, the horse found the trail with his feet and stood up, his breath blasting white clouds in the frosty air. Mark stroked Summit's neck and calmed him.

Mark, Greg Johnson, Idaho Fish and Game Conservation Officer, and Josh Gordon, a student from the Univ of Idaho, were headed deep into the mountains to collect grizzly bear hairs. Calculating the density of any species, particularly ones that inhabit rugged terrain, is one of the most difficult parameters to determine in a study of large mammals. In Zambia we had a helicopter, airplane, and plenty of 4X4 trucks, but it was still hard to accurately count the elephants in the park because they move long distances overnight. In the days it took to fly the park, there was always the chance of counting the same elephants twice. We solved this problem by radio collaring as many elephants as we could, and learning family groups. Once we knew how much range each family required, we could extrapolate for the density of the entire park. We confirmed these estimates with aerial censuses. The Selkirk Bear Project has no plane or helicopter, but if we can collect enough bear hair samples from the entire Selkirk range and decipher the unique DNA code of each, we will be able to quantify the number of bears in this area, the population's rate of recovery, and whether individuals are immigrants, or residents. The latter is an important indicator of gene flow from one population to another, which is needed to insure genetic variability and resilience.

So Mark, Greg, and Josh, rode deep into the mountains with an odiferous salve made from rotten fish and road-killed deer that had been decomposing all summer in a hot 50 gallon drum. This special "stink" is deliciously attractive to bears. At remote corners of the mountains, they poured the bait onto bushes and smeared it on trees near barbed wire they strung near bear trails. These 'bear hair snares' harmlessly snatch a bit of hair from the backs of bears drawn to the 'stink.' Two weeks later the researchers will collect hair from the wire and renew the bait. Each hair sample is sent for DNA testing, and when the results are in, we will share them with you.

We are also continuing our work for important Habitat Protection. Through your donations and the support of conservation minded buyers, additional lands are being returned to protected status to enlarge the size and type of habitat available to all wildlife, including bears. Our work on wetland restoration also continues.

And now for some news from Africa: As you know, our North Luangwa Conservation Project in Zambia reduced poaching by more than 95% by helping local villagers start small businesses that provided protein, cash flow, and much needed goods and services as an alternative to those provided by killing animals. Our project lives on in North Luangwa, and the best way to update you on its progress is to share with you excerpts from some of the letters we have recently received from our village friends:

" Hello, Doctor Delia and Mark, I heard from Hammer and Albert that you are very busy looking after Bears in America. How do they look like? Send me the photos of some animals of your parks. May I thank you for the help you offered me in 1995 of the oil press. It was a good loan. It has made my life easier for me and my family all the five children are in Primary School and I can pay fees quickly than my friends. Yours faithfully, Cleotus Chuma"

"Dear Mark Owens, Thank you for coming to our village to help us. Our village is now in a G.M.A [Game Management Area]. Animals are now many. When are you coming to see us? The tuck shop helped me and better than my friends who have no business. Game scouts and other people like truckers buy from my shop. One day when you come you will buy a coke from my shop. Yours sincerely, Webster Chibale."

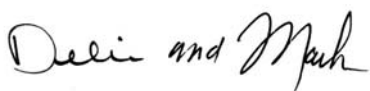
"Dear Delia, How are you by this time with me and my family we are fine. Last week a government helicopter flew on the other side of the mountain. My children shouted and looke through the tall tress say that is Owens. I did not tell them that you are however 'home' because they would have felt very sad because they always remember you driving unimog bring relief food when their drought in Zambia. We have harvested honey 6 times from the bee hives you gave us. I also trade honey with small chickens finger millet which I later sell to Mpika Boma. Yours faithfully B. Naosa"

"Dear Delia, How is everybody and the family me here am alright. My machine you brought me is good. but now is very old. I am making cooking oil every day. I sell to my friends and neighbors. 1 child of me is now finished school. Thank you for your good kind. Your friend, Fred Chibende"

These people only needed a new direction and a bit of help, and they stopped poaching elephants. Our most recent grant has provided loans to establish ten new beekeepers in the villagers near the park. With your donations we can do even more. Our current wish list: A motor bike and fax machine for our Zambian staff; more support for small business development and agriculture support in North Luangwa, a computer and surveillance cameras for the bear project - and maybe a more sure-footed horse for Mark!

People and wildlife can get along together. It may be difficult to see at first, **but helping one always helps the other**. As always, thanks for your help in putting our Earth back together.

Cheers,



Delia and Mark

Mary Updates:

- (1) If you can advise any **change of address** info it cuts costs and the risk that we'll loose touch with you.
- (2) If you would like to receive **conservation updates by email**, contact me at marydykes@compuserve.com
- (3) Check our Web Page (www.owens-foundation.org) for new Photo Albums of North Luangwa and Selkirk. Also, if you click on the link from the OFWC page to **Barnes & Nobel.com**, a portion of any purchase you make there will be donated back to the Owens Foundation. Your holiday shopping can also benefit conservation.
- (4) **The Bear Protection Act** passed the US Senate but will have to be addressed anew during the next session of Congress. This is the farthest this legislation has ever gone so there is a good chance it will pass next time.
- (5) The US Park Service is considering switching winter visitor travel in **Yellowstone National Park** from environmentally damaging snowmobiles to quieter, cleaner Snow Coaches. If you would like to support this important move to protect this unique wilderness, please write to Clifford Hawkes, 12795 West Alameda Parkway, Lakewood CO 80228 or email yell_winter_use@nps.gov For more Info see www.nps.gov/planning
- (6) The Selkirk grizzlies span north Idaho and portions of SW Canada. It is critical to the recovery of this grizzly population that hunting be stopped in British Columbia. Support for the **Ban of Grizzly Bear Hunting in BC** is growing but your help is needed in writing to Canadian Ministers: **Paul Ramsey**, Min Finance & Corporate Relations <http://www.gov.bc.ca/fin/feed> PH250-387-3751, **Corky Evans**, Min Agriculture, Food & Fisheries <http://gov.bc.ca/agf/feed> PH250-387-1023 and **Jim Doyle**, Min of Forests <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca> PH250-387-6240. Each Minister can be reached by post at "Parliament Bldgs, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4 CANADA". Thanks!