



Dear Everybody,

A mournful, stirring howl echoed off the rocky cliffs and drifted across the marshy meadows shrouded in soft moonlit mist. The ancient, wavering cry pierced the silence and resounded in our souls.

“A wolf!” Mark sat up in his sleeping bag, looking around. “Boo, wake up, it’s a wolf.”

We listened, but the heavy silence returned, surrounding us and the swirling mist with uncertainty.

“Maybe it was a coyote,” I suggested. “There haven’t been wolves here for years.”

“No. I know that was a wolf.”

Our ears cocked for an encore that never came, we spent a restless night camped on the edge of the marsh. By morning, the mysterious sound seemed as unlikely as the mist that had been stolen by the sun.

A few days later on the edge of the marsh we found the remains of a young female deer that had been killed by a canid too large for a coyote. “See,” Mark said, “wolf tracks.”

“Maybe. Could be a feral dog.”

The new wetland was thriving on snowmelt. Cascades of water poured from the mountain streams and spread across the old stream channels. Aquatic vegetation that had lain dormant for sixty to eighty years since the wetlands were drained sprung to life from patient seeds. Sedges, a grassy favorite for bears, peeped through the soil. Pond lilies and duckweed, perhaps hitch-hiking on webbed feet, appeared on the lagoons that had been dry for decades. All summer long new fauna and flora made their debut: elk, moose, deer, otters, cougar, coyotes and thousands of frogs. And now we had possible signs of a wolf. But for weeks we could not be sure.

And then one morning as we counted the wildlife... “What the heck? Look at that!” I grabbed my binoculars and pointed at a large, dark creature trotting across the meadow. “Mark, it’s a wolf!” She was tall and thin, and nearly black from head to tail. She ignored us as she stood watching a herd of white-tailed deer.

“It’s a wolf alright. And she’s wearing a radio collar!” Mark answered. A call to the Montana Fish and Game confirmed that a small pack of radio-collared wolves was missing. We gave them the coordinates of the wolf, and the department found the pack by aircraft.

A few days later Mark was riding his horse Summit in the mountains and came face to face with another wolf wandering down a trail. Our horses are bear-wise; we have trained them to remain calm in the presence of bears, and they usually do. But what would Summit do with ‘the big bad wolf’ blocking his path? Panic, rear up, run away? Fortunately, Summit, with his unbiased mind, could clearly see the wolf as a relative to ‘man’s best friend,’ and ignored him.

The wolf and Mark stared into each other’s eyes. Perhaps these few seconds of closeness might dissolve the alienation that has developed between our two species. But there was not enough time. The wolf trotted into the forest and disappeared. We have only seen them a few times, but at least we know the wolves are here. The presence of top predators is one of the best indicators of an ecosystem’s vitality. It is a sobering reminder of how the rest of our earth is fairing, and why we have to protect as much habitat with clean water and biodiversity as possible. We urgently need more funds to protect land that we have identified as critical habitat.

One of our greatest joys as field biologists has been working with the Zambians who are continuing our project in North Luangwa. In spite of all the financial setbacks and political hassles, Hammer and Moses have ensured the survival of our village programs. They send us the bush news via faxes and email!!

Frankfurt Zoological Society continues important support for elephant research and anti-poaching programs and Harvest Help in the UK is providing much needed support for agriculture in the North Luangwa area.

Recently, we provided funds for a new school in the village of Fela near North Luangwa. The villagers are delighted. We are in the process of upgrading the Conservation Education Syllabus for all the NLCP schools. Every new school saves African children and elephants! We have financed fifteen additional villagers as beekeepers, and funded the purchase of honey presses to improve the honey harvest. As you know our Rural

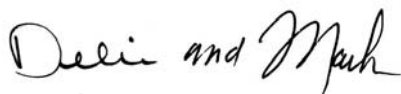
Health Program trained forty-eight Traditional Birth Attendants from villages around the national park. In most cases, the TBA's are the only health care providers for people in these remote areas, and they are badly in need of a refresher course and first aid supplies for which we must raise the funds.

It is no coincidence that North Luangwa has far less poaching than many of the other national parks; that the orphaned elephant, Gift, is successfully raising three young of her own; that elephants are seen more often along the rivers than when we first arrived. As long as we continue to educate people and to provide them with job opportunities, improved agriculture and health care, they do not have to risk their lives to poach. The people, the elephants, Hammer and Moses all need your help. We must build more schools, send more educational materials, provide more training, and more jobs. We are even getting requests for lap top computers!

While going through some old, faded letters we wrote from Africa, I found what may have been our first Dear Everybody letter. It was written from our camp in Deception Valley in the Kalahari in 1975, and there was bug juice smeared on the page. Back then we wrote the letter by hand, or on a portable typewriter and sent it by post to our families and a few friends, maybe ten people in all. It took eight weeks to reach home. Now we share the letter with seven thousand of our extended family and committed friends. And because of each of you the howling of wolves and the trumpeting of elephants can stir the nights across two distant worlds.

To be honest, we never expected to see wolves on the newly protected land. We were happy to see ducks! We never dreamed our work would reduce elephant poaching by more than 95%; that the grizzly bears would begin a recovery; that the Central Kalahari Game Reserve would be saved. We set these goals, but braced ourselves for disappointments. There have been setbacks, controversies, and heartaches, but all these things have been accomplished. And we're still going strong. Thanks for all you do to make this possible.

Cheers,



Delia and Mark

UPDATES FROM ADMINISTRATOR MARY ☺

- Please advise any **change of postal address or email address**. It saves so much time and money and me!
- **To receive conservation updates by email:** email marydykes@compuserve.com
- **Donations by credit card** can be made at www.owens-foundation.org or by calling me: 770-270-0729
- **Foreign currency donations** must be made by wire transfer or by credit card due to new banking restrictions. Call, write or email me if you have any questions or need more information. I'll be happy to help!
- **Online purchases** through our web page link to Barnes&Noble.com will generate income for our work.
- **DONATIONS FOR NORTH LUANGWA:** Thanks to everyone who has shipped school and medical supplies to North Luangwa. They are greatly needed and appreciated. Still needed are:
 - School Supplies:** Crayons, pens, pencils, erasers, chalk, wildlife books & magazines (used are fine).
 - Medical Supplies:** Betadine, antibiotic ointment/cream, gauze pads and rolls, first aid tape, Band-Aids, sterile latex gloves, antibiotic soap such as Dial and any size ziplock bags.
 - Shipping:** Label as medical supplies as *Hygiene Supplies* and school supplies as *Education Supplies*. List on customs form as *Gift*. Ship USPO surface – no insurance. Use sturdy boxes and reinforce with 2 strips of duct tape in every direction. Overlay duct tape edges with clear plastic tape to prevent duct tape from rolling.
- **SHIP TO:** NLWCCDP, PO Box 450210, Mpika, Zambia

CITES IVORY BAN: As we advised in June, by the time you receive this letter, the UN will have voted whether or not to allow the sale of ivory. Thank you for writing letters supporting the ban. We can only hope that decision makers will have the understanding and vision to protect the world's elephants with the critically important continued ban on commercial trade in ivory. Elephants can be worth so much more alive than dead.