

Dear Everybody

October 2012

WOLVES: The wailing cry of a deer fawn woke me at dawn. Bleating fawns often startle the wetland in early summer, but this one's shriek carried on and on through the misty air and down the valley. I sat up and looked around. There, only 60 yards away was a spotted fawn running at full speed, and behind it, a silver-gray wolf. The wolf was only 30 yards behind the fawn and gaining fast.



As always in these situations, I held my breath. Half of me pulling for the fawn, the other half knowing the wolf must eat. The fawn, its thin legs fully extended, ran south through short grass, and toward a small pond surrounded by dense brush. I knew there was a bank between the pond and a creek. The wolf was now only 15 yards behind the fawn. The meadow was soaked with recent rain, and water splashed from his paws.



Suddenly, the fawn disappeared into the brush between the creek and pond. The wolf followed at full speed. I could no longer see them, and stood to get a better view. Seconds later the wolf ran out of the other end of the brush. No fawn in sight. He was as confused as I was, and re-entered the thicket. He trotted into the meadow again, and circled the pond sniffing the ground, stopping now and then to look and listen. But no fawn.

I smiled. Commanded by instinct, the fawn had dropped quickly into tall grass behind the brush. Fawns have no odor, so as long as it froze in its hiding place, it was safe. The wolf trotted around for a few minutes, then headed east toward the mountains.

Speaking of wolves. There would be many other prey animals for the wolf to eat that morning, but whether he will survive this winter is uncertain. Once again, some of the western states are determined to drastically reduce the number of wolves, even though they have barely recovered from the brink of extinction. In this most recent November election, Idaho actually adopted a new amendment to the state constitution, which states that trapping and snaring wolves and some other species will be legal ***forever***.

For more than 100 years, scientists have known that predators actually improve the robustness of prey populations. If you want to see the most numerous and largest elk in the lower forty-eight, go to Yellowstone National Park. And while you're there, you'll also see the most wolves in the lower-forty eight. Thriving together as they have for millions of years. Predators do not wipe out prey. If they did, prey species would have gone extinct millions of years ago, and the predators would have died out as well. That is a very simple concept, which has been proven many times, yet man's knee-jerk reaction is to rid any ecosystem of predators. According to the Idaho Fish and Game Service, there were record numbers of elk in 2010, when wolf numbers were at their peak.

It has been documented in many ecosystems, that when predators such as cougars and wolves are removed, the prey populations expand for a while, then over-utilize their environment, and crash to lesser numbers than when the predators were present.

We are working to conserve the prey and predator species of the West by:

- **Educating the public**
- **Protecting large tracts of wilderness**
- **Opposing policy that persecutes predators**
- **Continuing to learn about predator/prey relations.**

That morning, as I watched the wolf chase the fawn, there were many beautiful, natural wonders in the meadow: dew drops sparkling on the grass, mist floating through the old-growth forests of the mountain, the predator and prey acting out their ancient contest. But one of the most essential of the spectacles was **WATER** splashing from wolf paws. Water. So ordinary, so common, so over-looked, until it is gone. This meadow was once a dry, barren, dusty, over-overgrazed wasteland, and now it has fawns who can out-fox wolves. It boasts moose, elk, bears, cougars, ducks, and lots of water.



Restoring a wetland may not be as exciting as observing wolves, but wolves cannot do without water and neither can we. As I write this, 50% of the counties in the US are in drought. Some habitats have already been changed drastically, and more severe droughts are predicted. It seems that, wherever we are, there is either rising water or barely any at all. Some of these extremes can be blamed on a changing climate. But another primary reason land is drying up across our planet is because we have re-channeled creeks, lined streams with concrete, and drained wetlands.

So, our work to restore wetlands continues, and we hope more and more people begin to realize why it is so important. A wetland is like a natural farm that grows water, which in turn, supports all forms of earth's life, including our own.



ZAMBIA:

Elephant poaching in Africa is on the rise again. You may have seen the *National Geographic* cover, which states that 25,000 elephants were shot in Africa last year. Because the *United Nations'* international ivory ban has been weakened and it is now legal to sell ivory in some countries such as China, once again the poachers have taken up their guns.

Elephants are not truly safe anywhere, but one of the places where they have a chance to survive is in North Luangwa, where we began

the *North Luangwa Conservation Project* 26 years ago. Elephants are safer there than in other parts of Africa because many of the villagers living near the park now have sustainable economic

prosperity and food assurance. Hammer Simwinga has done an unbelievable job of expanding our original project, and also securing grants from other funding organizations as well as the Owens Foundation. This year has been especially productive. A few examples of his recent successes:

Conservation Education – There are now conservation education programs in 24 schools. The students have planted 3,000 trees to restore some of the natural forests lost to former slash and burn agriculture techniques and firewood needs; 2,300 of the trees have survived. Forest field trips for 60 students from 2 schools allowed them to identify 30 plant species in their local language, to learn about the value of trees and the environment overall.

Training – 30 villagers (including 12 women) were given a 5 day business course on how to run a small industry; make a profit, and cooperate in some endeavors such as buying bulk seed.

Crop Improvement – This year, the small grants program that we started in the 1980s, supported 200 farmers. Hammer emphasized growing crops that the government does not plan to import, so that there is a ready market and a profitable price.

- **Three villages produced a total of 15 tons of beans.**
- **Incomes were 35% higher than last year.**

This is astounding! In the 1980s these villagers often went hungry, and depended on poaching elephants and other wildlife in order to make a small living. Parents who could not afford school requirements (books, shoes) in the past now send their children back to school, and there are fewer malnutrition related illnesses among children.



These villagers are not going to shoot elephants - or - allow outsiders to poach!

Beekeeping – Delia started the beekeeping project in two villages in 1989. This year villagers produced 800 liters of honey from 23 beekeepers. The honey is sold locally, and still cannot keep up with demand, so new beekeepers will be provided start-up loans.

Photo by Mischa & Hanka Tryzna – wonderful supporters of Hammer Simwinga and The Owens Foundation for Wildlife Conservation.

It only takes \$ 160 to train, finance, and establish a beekeeper in a remote village and to provide monitoring over the first year while the hive is becoming established. Thanks to your help, these villager business people can support their families, provide a service and an important commodity to local people, help with crop, plant and tree pollination and protect elephants (remember elephants munching on crops disturb nearby hives and are chased for long distances by angry bees...and they don't come back. This reduces human/wildlife conflict.). This seems a very good way to spend less than \$200.

Nature Reserve - Hammer secured a grant to purchase 5,000 hectares of habitat to conserve natural resources including wildlife. We need funding for 10,000 more hectares to complete the small but very important reserve. If you can – please help!

Health care - The Mobile Clinic funded by generous Owens Foundation donors now provides HIV prevention training and tests, teaches sanitation and hygiene in villages, and provides rural health care. We are still supporting the *Traditional Birth Attendants* trained by the OFWC in the 1980's through today.

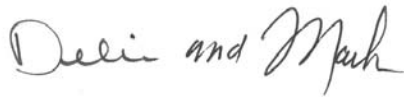
It is truly astounding that this project is still successful and benefiting so many people after all these years. Giving rural people a chance to survive in harmony with their environment is surely still the best way to give wildlife a chance. We need funds for the clinic, general rural health care, small business loans and training, improved agriculture, and conservation education.

And...**Hammer needs a new truck.** Bush driving is hard on a vehicle – yet transportation is one of the most important assets in instituting these programs in remote areas where they are critical to the survival of the people and wildlife.

As always, we need and greatly appreciate your help to finance our work in North Zambia and in North America. These are tough times for people and for the earth. But we have been here before, and working together, we can make a difference.

On a personal note, Mark had another surgery on his spine in hopes of decreasing the constant pain he suffered since his horse accident six years ago. I am pleased to tell you that he now has many pain-free days. Of course, this means that he is back in the saddle, riding rough, steep trails in the mountains to observe wolves and grizzly bears. Well, somebody has to do it!!

Thanks and cheers,



Delia and Mark



HOW YOU CAN HELP

AMAZON SHOPPING: As you are doing your holiday shopping – please go to the Owens Foundation web site homepage (www.owens-foundation.org) and click on the Amazon.com link at the bottom of the page. Any purchase you make through this link will return 5% of your purchase amount to the Owens Foundation. An easy, painless and effective way to raise funds for conservation!

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please – if you are moving – or changing your email address – let us know. It saves so much times and money if we know in advance. Thank you!

ONLINE DONATIONS: You may donate online via credit card – at our homepage. Just look for the yellow “Donate Now” button at the top of the homepage (www.owens-foundation.org).

FOREIGN CURRENCY DONATIONS: Must be made by wire transfer, US dollar money order or check or by credit card online. We greatly appreciate the special effort required to donate from abroad.

MATCHING DONATIONS: Some companies match employee and retiree donations to 501(c 3) nonprofits such as the Owens Foundation. Thank you for multiplying your giving and empowering conservation.

LEGACY PLANNING: Touch the future by including the Owens Foundation in your Estate Planning. *Contact Tammy Johnson for more information:*

- **Will, Living Trust or other plan:** Name the OFWC as a recipient of a fixed amount or a % of your estate.
- **Annuity or Life Insurance Policy:** Designated OFWC as beneficiary
- **Retirement Plans:** Designate OFWC as a beneficiary of all or a percent of your Retirement Plan.

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