

June 2002



Dear Everybody,

Sniffing loudly, the orphaned moose stuck her blunt black snout into the branches of a lilac bush, but then walked on without feeding. Her mother had been killed by a truck on a distant highway, and now she faced the bitter northwestern winter alone. Born seven months ago during the previous spring, she had

been filling out nicely. But without her mother to show her what and where to eat, she was now little more than a sack of bones in her thin black coat. Her gangly legs were attached to her body at odd angles like four bent soda straws and her long face seemed forlorn. All this made her more charming as she strolled down the middle of Main Street of the nearby village. The only food available was growing in someone's backyard. Everywhere she turned there were fences, parking lots, or busy streets.

Our Conservation Officer phoned to ask if we could provide a wilderness home for this orphaned moose. Two hours later, in a snowy secluded meadow above a newly restored marsh, the Warden pulled a horse trailer loaded with the tranquilized moose. She was still groggy, but awake. Mark and the Warden gently held her down, as I tiptoed in the crowded trailer and untied the ropes around her razor-sharp hooves. Even at this young age, she could be quite dangerous if startled. Once she was free she jumped to her feet and walked drunkenly out the door and into the wild meadow, bordered by marsh and forest – moose heaven. She knew home when she saw it. She wandered into the marsh that was laden with moose treats.

A few days later the phone rang - could we take another moose? "Sure." This moose was even younger and the night much colder. She arrived in the trailer sound asleep from the tranquilizer drugs. Animals can easily die of exposure if left tranquilized in cold conditions. Even in the Kalahari Desert we had to keep immobilized lions and hyenas warm during the night. So we knew just how to pamper a young moose. We filled jerry cans with hot water and tucked them next to her belly and back, then wrapped her in blankets. There were cougars and coyotes in the area so we closed the trailer door. We checked on her every few hours, but swaddled in wool blankets and hot water bottles she slept snug in her horse trailer manger. The next morning we found coyote tracks circling the rig. But *Mugs*, as we had named Miss Moose, was safe and fully awake. As we peeped over the door she looked at us with wide, deep eyes. We opened the door slowly and *Mugs* walked steadily out of the trailer like a fancy racehorse and started eating snow to quench her thirst. She made no effort to run from us, but browsed in the woods nearby.

In all, we released 3 young moose onto the newly restored marshy meadows. Around Christmas time, two of them were seen wandering around together. *Mugs*, the smallest, learned to follow a resident mother and calf at a safe distance, learning the ropes of her new home.

Giving three young moose a chance to survive was rewarding, but this was only possible because we had first saved the meadow. Once you secure the habitat everything else will follow. This land was once an unsuccessful ranch. For 60 years farmers failed to make a profit because the land was too wet and had to be constantly drained. Over several years we carefully instituted a restoration plan filling in the drainage ditches and damming the creek, as beavers would do. The marsh sprung to life. Before restoration this meadow had supported about 20 white-tailed deer. So far this Spring we have recorded 18 elk, 50 white-tailed deer, 11 mule deer, 1 black bear, 3 river otters, 2 minks, 2 bald eagles, 2 golden eagles, 10 Canada geese, numerous ducks, and coyotes galore. All we did was add water. Due to several years of drought, some of the wells for human families living downstream were going dry. Now their wells are replenished.

It makes no sense to take viable farmland that people need for food, and restore it to marshy wildlife habitat. It makes all the sense in the world to take unsuccessful, abandoned farmland and restore it to its

former pre-settlement conditions, which is always suitable for wild species. Especially since the new wetlands replenish our own water sources that are drying up in large areas of our nation. What is good for other species is always, in the long term, good for us - although this is sometimes difficult to see.

In May, the Selkirk grizzly bears, hungry after their winter sleep, began to forage most evenings on the Boundary Creek Wildlife Management Area that you helped acquire. Mark wanted to ride the horses out to observe the bears. The horses and I were not sure about this plan. Mark suggested that we pack a picnic in our saddlebags, but I pretended to forget it. Hungry grizzly bears and picnics don't mix. But as usual, Mark was right; observing the enormous, cinnamon-colored bears as they fed on the lush meadows was worth the risk. Just knowing they have a safe place to go is worth a lot of risk! So acre-by-acre, moose-by-moose, grizzly-by-grizzly, we are doing what we can to bring water and wild land back to our Earth.

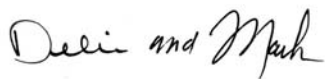
Our habitat recovery efforts have reached a critical juncture as key wildlife properties are for sale. These pieces are vital to the exchange of wildlife populations and gene flow between of the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk mountain ecosystems. If you or someone you know can contribute to the purchase of these properties, please contact us. Donations are tax deductible and may be restricted at your request.

The news from Africa is also very good. The Frankfurt Zoological Society team, who continue the elephant project from our old camp, report that *Cheers*, *Survivor*, *Gift* and the other elephants are doing very well. *Survivor* frequently visits camp and has learned to get into the food boxes. *Cheers*, as always, minds his own business as he quietly feeds on the marula fruits in camp. They report that the elephants are finally forming larger family units in the valley, so hopefully a recovery is well under way.

The Bemba people near North Luangwa National Park that we trained and supplied with jobs (thanks to you) continue to rally behind conserving wildlife. We are raising money to help build schools in two villages that have none. The villagers will make the mud bricks and we will pay for concrete and roofing. We need more funds to replace the aging sunflower presses and to install more beekeepers. Because the people of North Luangwa have alternative jobs, improved agriculture, conservation education and rural health, elephant and meat poaching is less frequent in North Luangwa than in the other Zambian national park. Also - thanks to all of our members who have shipped school and medical supplies to North Luangwa. They make a huge difference in the lives of the people and the wildlife.

Thanks to all of you for helping make these successes possible. We couldn't do it without you.

Cheers,



Delia and Mark

- **CHANGES OF ADDRESS:** Again – if you have new address information, please let me know. It saves so much time and money and makes me smile!
- **EMAIL UPDATES:** If you would like to receive conservation updates by email, please send your address to me at marydykes@compuserve.com
- **SCHOOL/MEDICAL SUPPLIES:** You can send donations of school and/or simple medical supplies directly to North Luangwa and no matter how small, your help will be important and greatly appreciated. Contact me for more details at 770-270-0729 or by email at marydykes@compuserve.com