

May 2003

Dear Everybody,



Remember the orphaned female elephant who wandered into our camp those many years ago? We named her *Gift*. When she was only half the age of normal elephant mothers, *Gift* gave birth to *Georgia*. Later *Gift* produced another female and then a male baby. Now *Gift* has a grandcalf!! The Frankfurt Zoological Society researchers, working at our camp, told us that ***Georgia*** has given birth. She is also very young to be a mother.

Our elephant research shows that since poachers shot 93% of the North Luangwa elephants, only 8% of them are adults of breeding age, as opposed to 50% in a normal population. So now the adolescent females are giving birth at much younger ages. Since these teenage, single moms have not been raised in the security of large family units, they are not the best mothers: *Gift* frequently walked off and left *Georgia* behind in the tall grass. Long minutes after *Gift* disappeared, little *Georgia* ran out of the grass, holding her tiny trunk up like a periscope, and screeching for her mother. Unbelievably, *Gift* paid no attention to her infant's cries. It was up to *Georgia* to find her mother again. Such bad maternal behavior will almost certainly result in high infant mortality, and in fact, at this time *Georgia*'s calf is missing and presumed dead.

The recovery of the entire elephant population depends on these inexperienced elephants whether they are bad mothers or not. The old matriarchs are dead, and so is their vast reservoir of collective wisdom. The only hope for North Luangwa elephants is that these youngsters will rebuild their population, one calf at a time. *Gift* is certainly doing her share. So long as poaching is held in check, we bet they will also rise to the task.

North Luangwa remains the most secure park in Zambia -- largely due to the programs we established, and that still continue today. As an update, the following is a recent letter from Hammer Simwinga, the Zambian who continues to run our Village Development Programs:

"Dear Mark, Delia, and Mary: It is good news, that you have managed to raise some funds for schools. This is a great project ... And on the small business, the project will facilitate replacing of old ram press [for pressing oil from sunflower seeds] in the village once we update the inventory of the same. It is true that we have lost some TBA's [Traditional Birth Attendants trained by our project] through death [and] others have shifted through marriages, while some have advanced in years and need replacement. The Rural Health has now revolved [evolved] so much that it's no longer an issue of maternal, birth or child mortality; [rather it is] a combination of TB and HIV/AIDS compounded with poor nutrition, sanitation, and water. We seriously need a holistic approach to rural health.

"Thanks for the camera... The current Chief of Mukungule is a friend and supporter of the project he will be able to assist in outlining things he thinks their village would need. I have an opportunity and privileged to remain a link with the Owens Foundation ... They [the villagers] are always asking when Mark and Delia Owens will come back and why they have decided to work in America. More villages are coming seeking for assistance after seeing the bee apiaries in Kabuta village west of Mano camp.

"I just feel like going on and on writing. I have to stop somewhere and its here. Thanks, Wish America good luck [in the war]. Victory shall come at dawn; all shall be well. Hammer."

We have raised money to retrain the TBA's and to expand education. One family at a time, we are improving their living standards. Most of these people no longer even think about poaching elephants. Like *Gift*, they are starting over after the ivory wars, where no one was a winner except the smugglers. It will still take time, but the elephant and human families are adjusting to a better and more peaceful life.

Have you heard about the elephants and the bees? Now that the elephants are more secure, they are visiting some of the villages. Elephants do not lay waste to every field as some say. Chiefs and villagers have written us letters of thanks that, after years of absence, they are again able to see elephants just beyond their bomas. However, elephant crop damage is a problem in some areas. But it appears that there is a new solution: Apiaries established near the crops. When the elephants wander toward the mealie patches in the moonlight, set on munching yummy ears of corn, they startle the bees that then swarm around the elephants, and literally chase them away. This is an easy, natural way to keep elephants at bay, and get honey at the same time!

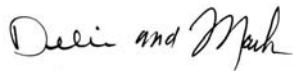
Some remedies are not so sweet: As you know we spent nearly eight years studying lions, such as Bones, and brown hyenas like Patches in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana. We discovered that disease-control fences -- built to control foot and mouth disease that did not even exist in the desert -- killed a quarter of a million wildebeest by blocking access to water during drought. After years of work, we convinced the Botswana government and giants like the World Bank to eliminate certain fences, and to protect the Kalahari from cattle development that was unsustainable in this marginal habitat. But now these many years later, Botswana has leased most of the Central Kalahari National Park to diamond mining companies. Widespread mining, with its roads, fences, pits and towns, would further disrupt and extinguish sadly depleted desert wildlife. The government is trying to remove Bushmen from the only reserve created for them and their ancestral lands.

So why do we continue to fight for the few wildernesses left on Earth? Is there any hope at all? When we stop caring for the untrammelled corners of our globe, we will have a rather soulless existence. Without wilderness, how will we know who we are? We will be like a pond so polluted it has lost its reflection.

But you can make a difference: Every one of you. Who would have thought we could diminish the poaching of elephants in North Luangwa from 1000 a year to 0? Who would have predicted that we could protect the Kalahari from cattle barons who knew they would overgraze the desert in a few years, and then move on? There is hope, there is success everywhere, and we will keep trying. You can depend on it.

Many people all over the world need assistance. We know you are pulled in many directions for donations. But we need your help more than ever, because our ongoing projects and conservation campaigns are yielding remarkable successes even in these trying times. Elephant calves, bear cubs, brown hyena cubs, and lions -- just to name a few -- are surviving in expansive wildernesses secured by your generous donations. Please help us help them as much as you can. Your generosity is multiplied many times over and we are ever thankful.

Cheers,



Delia and Mark

FROM MARY: Paper clips are not exciting but it is hard to run an office without them. Without an office to coordinate funds, applications, accounting and communication, field projects cannot prosper. We keep overhead to the bare bones. We pay no rent or utilities. We get volunteer support for computers to legal advice but it still costs money to support conservation of North Luangwa and find conservation buyers for critical wildlife properties in the US. Thank you for greasing the wheels of conservation. We can't do it without you.

- *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 via www.owens-foundation.org or by calling me. 6% goes to the credit card co.
- *Foreign currency donations must be made by wire transfer or by credit card due to new banking restrictions and charges.
- *Online purchases through our web page link to Barnes&Noble.com will generate income for our work.

DONATIONS FOR NORTH LUANGWA: Thanks to all who have shipped school and medical supplies to North Luangwa. They are needed and appreciated. Still needed are: **School Supplies:** Crayons, pens, pencils, erasers, chalk, wildlife books & magazines (used are fine). **Medical Supplies:** Betadyne, antibiotic ointment/cream, gauze pads & rolls, first aid tape, Band-Aids, sterile latex gloves, antibiotic soap (Dial) ziplock bags. **Shipping:** Label as medical as *Hygiene Supplies* and school as *Education Supplies*. List on customs form as *Gift*. Ship USPO surface/no insurance. Use sturdy boxes, reinforce w/ 2 strips of duct tape in each direction. Overlay duct tape edges w/clear plastic tape to prevent duct tape from rolling. SHIP TO: NLWCCDP, Box 450210, Mpika, Zambia

***TO SAVE THE WILDLIFE & PEOPLE OF THE KALAHARI FROM DIAMOND MINES PLEASE WRITE:**
The Honorable F G Mogae, President of the Republic, Private Bag 001, Gaborone, Botswana. THANK YOU!!!!

*A special thanks to HRH Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands for his support for the people and wildlife of N Luangwa.

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