



Owens Foundation for Wildlife Conservation

April 2004

Dear Everybody,

It was thirty years ago that we first rambled over East Dune in our battered Land Rover and looked over Deception Valley in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana. And so began our odyssey to document and save wild animals in wild places; first lions, brown hyenas and wildebeest in the Kalahari, then elephants in the Luangwa Valley of Zambia,

and most recently, grizzly bears in Idaho. On our 30th anniversary we reflect on some of the memories we have made together along the way. Just imagine that you are sitting with us around our campfire:

Mark: The sound was like the bristles of a scrub brush against my nylon sleeping bag. Suddenly I was wide-awake. Lying on my back in our dark tent, I could feel a pressure, at first *moving* near my feet, and then along my lower leg. I opened my eyes, swallowed hard, and froze. I imagined the snake crawling along my bag, its scales rasping on the fabric. A deadly Puff Adder as thick as my forearm, tongue flicking from its wedge-shaped head, searching, drawn to my warmth, seemed to be crawling along my body. 'If it comes near my head, I will kill it with my flashlight,' I thought. The one at my head – more flash than light.

But then I heard squeaks, rumbles, and heavy breathing. Not Delia. Not a snake. I slowly raised my head. The manes, muzzles and shoulders of two massive lions – standing *at* our feet, looking down at us – were silhouetted against the moonless night sky over our Deception Valley camp. Muffin and Moffet had simply walked into our ripped-out tent. Their stiff whiskers brushing along our bags had awakened me.

I slowly put my hand over Delia's mouth and whispered, "Be still! Lions!" She opened her eyes wide. A minute - or perhaps an eternity - later, Muff and Moff backed out of the tent, and sauntered down the footpath through our camp. We skinned out of our sleeping bags and followed them to our open 'kitchen.' They sniffed a sack of onions hanging from a limb, smelled our plank counter, scent-marked the acacia tree next to the water drum, and then lay down side-by-side to watch the dawn breaking. We sat on the ground ten feet behind them, and together watched the sun rise over the dunes. Later, with heat waves dancing off the fossil riverbed, they stood, stretched, glanced back at us, and then strolled into the wilderness.

The Kalahari was unique; we were the only two people in an area the size of Ireland, and most of the wild animals had never seen humans, not even Bushmen. We lived with lions and brown hyenas, and discovered unknown facts about their natural history and societies: That when prey gets scarce during long dry seasons, and drought, desert lions cannot support themselves in family groups, or 'prides,' as they do in East Africa. Instead they scatter to the winds, going their separate ways sometimes for years, surviving only on the fluids of their prey. And we learned that brown hyenas, previously thought to be solitary, actually roam over a communally defended territory, live in clans of female relatives who raise their cubs together in a communal den, and even adopt orphans, which happens often in this harsh and fickle environment.

We documented that foot-and-mouth control fences blocked the second largest wildebeest migration in Africa – though that disease pathogen has never been found in the Kalahari. More than a 250,000 died, along with thousands of animals needed for protein by the Bushmen for whom the reserve was created. We wrote articles, a book, and encouraged others to publicize the plight of one of Africa's last great migrations, to prevent the *Central Kalahari Game Reserve* from being rezoned as cattle ranches. For the rest of the twentieth century this 33,000 square mile wilderness remained one of the largest wildlife protectorates in Africa. Today its Bushmen, wildlife and unique fossil riverbeds are again threatened with open pit diamond mines and new cordon fences. Wilderness can never be taken for granted, and we will continue to try to save this very important one.





Delia: I sat alone under a spreading Marula tree, its thick gnarled limbs sheltering our huts and spilling over the tall bank of the Lubonga River, which sauntered lazily by. *Ripples*, the crocodile, slumbered near some driftwood stranded on the sandy beach opposite me. Now and then his cat-like eyes popped open to glare at me, but otherwise he sunned himself without a care in the world. I was writing a *Dear Everybody* letter by hand on a scratch pad. Suddenly *Ripples* sashayed across the sand, flung himself into the shallow water, and instantly became one with the sand and rocks of the river bottom. I looked to see who had so offended him. Ah, *Cheers* - one of the tuskless male elephants of *Camp Group*, the first

elephants to accept us – hurried from the tall grass and waded into the river, clambered up the riverbank, until he stood fifteen yards from me. No doubt he came to feed on the marula fruits scattered near my toes.

Too late to dart into our n'saka (gazebo), I called softly: "Hey *Cheers*." I did not want to surprise him at this close range. "I'm here. Do you see me boy?" He rolled his eye toward me, sighed, and, with the tip of his trunk, began tossing yellow fruits into his mouth. I was hardly larger than a big baboon, and just as unimportant to him. He took a few steps toward me, now no more than 20 feet away. In one motion I grabbed my chair and note pad, dashed into the n'saka, and sat down behind its 3-foot stonewall, its thick thatched roof over my head. Still snorkeling fruits, *Cheers* followed me – until his thick, wrinkled leg was a foot from my hand. I could have reached out to touch him, but I didn't. Just being there was enough.

When we arrived in Luangwa elephants ran from us when we were still a mile away, because poachers were shooting more than 1,000 of them every year. Now, I could stand 3 feet from *Cheers* feeding peacefully. Our work with villagers and scouts had worked. We did not find one elephant killed by poachers that year.

For 19 years the project we established has trained and equipped fish farmers, beekeepers, sunflower seed pressers, millers and more. It has built schools and supplied educational materials to children. Our Rural Health And Family Planning Program improves the quality of villagers' lives. *Zambians Hammer Simwinga* and *Moses Nyirenda* continue establishing businesses while improving agriculture, clean water and forestation. Scientists *Elsabe* and *Hugo van der Westhuizen*, financed by the *Frankfurt Zoological Society*, continue wildlife research and anti poaching – and they have reintroduced black rhinos to the park. The age-old symbiotic bond between the wildlife of North Luangwa, and its people, is being rejoined.

There is much more we want and need to do to protect and expand this success. We want to build a school and brick house to attract an upper school teach to Fulaza Village. We must install more beekeepers and oil pressmen in an expanding range of villages plus a maize grinding mill at Mukungule. All this takes money.



New Beekeeper
Jennifer Kalulu



Hammer with motorbike that
we provided, inspects crops
Harvest Help supports agriculture.



Chilyaba students in front of nearly
finished new brick school.

Delia: "Grizzly!" Mark pointed. I reined in my horse. The large golden bear was tearing apart a rotten spruce log on the mountain slope two hundred yards ahead of us. I raised my binoculars. The mantle of blond hair on the hump between his shoulders looked almost like a lion's mane, dancing like grass in the wind as he worried the log to kindling. He lapped up grubs, ambled over to a grove of huckleberry bushes, and snacked on purple berries. I would hate to have to survive on grubs and berries and I am a tenth his size.

The lush river flood plains lay far below us in the distance. There, little more than a hundred years ago, the bears caught rodents, salmon, and consumed nutritious sedges that fattened them after the long winter in the mountains. But for decades man has claimed this land for wheat fields. We too, have to eat, after all. But in recent years, working with other conservation groups, we have helped reclaim more than 6,000 acres of bottomland and critical migratory corridors for bears. Like the elephants of Luangwa, grizzlies can once again feed and drink at the river in peace. If we are smart, most of the time there is wiggle room for us all.

Our wetland restoration project has shown that by allowing water to seek its natural course, both man and wildlife benefit. Water wells are replenished and lush habitat again provides forage for an entire ecosystem.



L: Mark with pack horse on Grizzly trip in North Idaho.



R: Mark checks darted Grizzly in the Selkirk Mtns of N Idaho.

For thirty years (where has the time gone!) we have tried to fit man and wildlife together in a peaceful and productive puzzle. There have been heartaches along the way, but also successes that we hope will be long-lasting. We have not been alone. You were always there ready to lend a helping hand, make a donation, offer comfort and support. We could not have succeeded without each and every one of you. We thank you with all of our hearts for being with us through all these years.

Now, we need you more than ever, and so does our Earth. Saving parts of it costs much more than during our first years in the Kalahari Desert. Loss of investment income has been hard on everyone. Our *Board of Directors* informs us that we must raise twice as much money as last year to keep our work in North Luangwa and North Idaho moving forward. Every Zambian family that learns to make a living without harming wildlife will pass that knowledge along. Every acre of land we can protect insures a future for grizzlies and other wildlife.

So thank you again, and here's to the next 30 years together!!!

Cheers,

Delia & Mark



We must move now to secure at least a small portion of former grizzly habitat if they are to survive. Please help us by donating to our designated "Habitat Acquisition Fund". By encumbering appropriate properties with Conservation Easements we can protect habitat for all wildlife forever. Thank you!

☺ MARY'S HOW TO HELP LIST ☺

Your donations are **greatly needed** and appreciated. There are no small donations. Every penny is a plus in protecting wildlife, their habitat and the people who live near them. Here are additional ways you can help:

MATCHING DONATIONS: Some companies match employee donations to accredited 501(c)(3) non-profits such as the OFWC. Matching donations multiply your giving and empower conservation. Contact me for more information. Thanks to those that already have!

LEGACY PLANNING: You can touch the future by including the Owens Foundation in your Estate Planning. We recently received a touching and generous *Donation by Bequeath* from Nancy Ackerman, who had been an annual donor for 15 years. Because of her caring, generosity and forethought, Nancy continues her advocacy for conservation far beyond her lifetime. Thanks to those that have already made this important pledge. *Contact me for more information on Legacy Planning through:*

1. **Will, Living Trust or other plan:** A simple bequest naming the OFWC as recipient of a fixed amount or a percentage of your estate just as you can designate specific family and friends.
2. **Annuity or Life Insurance Policy:** Designated as payable to the OFWC.
3. **Retirement Plans:** Designate OFWC as a beneficiary of all or a percent of your Retirement Plan.

RECOMMEND A FRIEND: If you know of someone who shares our passion for conservation, please introduce them to Delia and Mark's work. You can send their contact information to me and I will forward introductory information to them. All contact information is confidential. We do NOT share our donor information with anyone...EVER.

SPONSOR A LECTURE: Delia and Mark's third book will be published soon (we'll let you know when!) and Delia and Mark will be offering a professional lecture tour. Average fee: \$7,000 plus expenses. You can be a huge help in this important fund raising effort. If you know of an individual or organization that would be interested in sponsoring a lecture please contact me for more information.

To receive conservation updates and/or newsletters by email: email marydykes@mindspring.com

- **New email or postal addresses.** Please advise - saves dollars to be used for conservation, not paperwork
- **Donation by Credit Card** can be made at www.owens-foundation.org or by calling me. (6% to CC Co.)
- **Foreign currency donations** must be made by wire transfer, US\$ money order or by credit card.
- **Online purchases** via OFWC web page link to **Barnes&Noble.com** will generate income for our work.
- **Used cell phone recycling:** Check our web page soon to recycle your old cell phone (at no charge) AND create income for Delia and Mark's work. Hopefully this will be set-up within a few months.

DONATIONS FOR N LUANGWA: Thanks to all who have shipped school & medical supplies to N Luangwa. They are GREATLY needed and appreciated. Still needed are: **School Supplies:** Crayons, pens, pencils, erasers, chalk, wildlife books & magazines (used are fine.) Paper is too heavy to ship. **Medical Supplies:** Betadyne, antibiotic ointment/cream, gauze pads & rolls, first aid tape, Band-Aids, sterile latex gloves, antibiotic soap (Dial) ziplock bags. **Sewing Supplies:** Women's groups use any fabric, thread or sewing notions. **Shipping:** Label medical as *Hygiene Supplies*, school & craft as *Education Supplies*. Customs form: Gift. Ship USPO surface/no insurance. Use sturdy boxes, w/ 2 strips of duct tape in each direction & overlay edges w/ 2-inch plastic tape. Use USPO "M BAG" for books at \$1 per pound, 11 lbs minimum, 66 lbs max per box. **SHIP TO: NLWCCDP, Box 450210, Mpika, Zambia**

SUPPORT IVORY BAN: Please continue to support the UN *Convention On the International Trade In Endangered Species (CITES)* ban on the commercial trade in ivory. Spread the word: Tell others not buy or wear ivory.

If you do not wish to receive the *Dear Everybody* please contact me and I will remove your name from our files

Thanks so much! Mary Dykes – Administrative Director - OFWC, P.O. Box 870530, Stone Mountain, Georgia 30087 USA - PHONE 770-270-0279 - EMAIL: marydykes@mindspring.com