

Dear Everybody

Spring 2010



US NORTHWEST:

For the past 8 winters, when snow covered the mountains and meadows, we have watched a wolf pack led by a blonde alpha female and a large cinder-black male as they moved through their range, tracking them through the forest when we lost sight of them. In spring the yips, yowls and howls of their pups drifted through the valley. But this past winter we rarely saw them, and only heard them howl five times. No great mystery here:

Idaho has only 800 wolves in the entire state (1/1000th of one wolf per sq mile), but some officials believe there are too many, so last winter for the first time in decades wolves were legally hunted. We found a smashed CD player used to play wounded coyote and rabbit cries to lure wolves to the road for ease of shooting. For months we did not see the pack.



But one spring morning the pair trotted through the valley, last year's pups trailing behind them, pouncing on rodents in grassy patches amidst the snowmelt. Soon, we hope to hear the cries of new pups from the den that would not be there without our protection (with your help!); part of 16,000 acres we have helped secure.

"Sixteen thousand acres? Can that be right?" An old friend and colleague and I were sitting at the edge of one of the marshes we are restoring for grizzlies, moose, elk and wolves, tallying the acres we had helped set aside for wildlife to date. It began 12 years ago while riding our

horses in the Selkirk Mountains protecting grizzly bears from illegal hunters (the majority of bear deaths in the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak ecosystems are human-caused). Secure habitat is critical to a prospective wolf mother looking for a den, or a grizzly female needing to put on 30% of her body weight in fat to keep herself and cubs from starving over winter. For decades humans have taken over lush creek bottoms and river floodplains, forcing wildlife into marginal mountain habitats where animals must eat less substantial moths, beetles, and sour grass. Since that night, coordinating with other organizations, with state and federal conservation programs and private donors, we have helped protect more than 16,000 acres of vital bottomland habitat. We have also funded a grizzly education program to help reduce bears killed by making people "bear aware." But there is much more to do.

We still hope that efforts to get wolves re-listed as an endangered species will be successful, and that they will not be hunted this year. We believe they should have the opportunity to increase in numbers before another hunting season is allowed.

NORTH ZAMBIA:

CITES: Great news! After a close vote at the UN's *Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species* (CITES), the critical ban on the commercial trade in ivory has been continued. There was a concerted effort to defeat the ban, which has been instrumental in reducing elephant poaching world wide thus saving this species. Zambia was denied its petition to sell stockpiled ivory after investigations found that much of the ivory was illegally obtained, and that governmental corruption remains rampant. In the run-up to every CITES meeting since 1992 attempts have been made by powerful interests to discredit us and our work (and that of other biologist/conservationists) because of our support for the ivory ban, and our position against the trophy hunting of endangered and threatened species. You may have seen a sensational and utterly false and vindictive article about us written by a journalist who was wittingly or unwittingly used by vested interests at odds with our work in Zambia. We will not waste valuable resources on this except to say that our efforts, supported by many readers of this newsletter, have improved the lives of tens of thousands of Zambian people, saved many populations of wild animals, and conserved enormous tracks of wilderness. For further information see www.owens-foundation.org.

WILDLIFE INTERPRETIVE CENTER: Hammer Simwinga, is busy expanding our model programs into chiefdoms near North Luangwa. In Hammer's words: "The increasing population and demand for more food has put massive pressure on the natural resources like the forestry, river, wetlands and wildlife." The Owens Foundation is seeking funds to build an Interpretive Wildlife Conservation Center, Herbarium and Botanical Garden to "...help young Zambians understand Nature as an integral part of humanity's existence."

A simple out-door site is under construction using local materials and it is a source of income especially for the area women who are supplying sand, stones, grass and other building materials.

SCHOOL FOR TOBONDO: We have helped build schools in Mukungule and Chilyaba. Previously only 2% of the children in these villages received an education because the nearest school was 16 km away. We need help to educate the future decision makers by building a school at "Tobondo" - which means *small animal hooves*. Until recently this area was littered with hooves from poached animals. Poaching is still a problem because Hammer is only now introducing our programs. This is the next step in building a base of human prosperity in order to save wildlife.

RURAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING: Since the early 1990s, the OFWC has trained more than 70 *Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs)* to provide the only health care, AIDS prevention, midwifery, and family planning in many remote villages. Hammer has coordinated the training of 15 new TBAs and we have provided 10 bicycles. Five more bicycles are needed so TBA's can access distant villages.



Photo Credit – John Antonelli

COMMUNITY FOREST PRESERVES/NATURE RESERVES: Mpika District - the size of Wales - is the largest in Zambia. Agriculture on the plateau above the Luangwa Valley is threatening tracts of wildlife habitat of miombo forests and rivers that feed the parks in the valley below. Three Chiefs have agreed to preserve a minimum of 40 hectares each of tribal forestland, and Chief Mpumba has agreed to designate 5000 hectares as the first Community Nature Reserve in Zambia. This is critically important to reestablishing traditional rainy season wildlife migration routes from the Valley west up to the Bangweulu Wetlands and Lavushi Manda Park. Preliminary surveys have been completed, but funds are needed for a formal survey to officially designate the Community Nature Reserve.

AGRICULTURAL: Hammer continues agriculture assistance, and 180 trained seed growers have supplied 440 lbs of bean seeds to farmers while increasing crop diversification by 60%. Since we first began, 600 villagers have been trained in beekeeping. Fish farms are succeeding, and villagers have much more food security than when they relied on poaching.

Please help us support Hammer's efforts for the sake of rural people and their wildlife.

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| 1.....New school in Tobondo | \$7,500 |
| 2.....Construction, operation, and staff for the INTERPRETIVE WILDLIFE CENTER..... | \$9,400 |
| 3.....Training program, supplies and support for <i>Traditional Birth Attendants</i> | \$4,500 |
| 4.....Five bicycles | \$750 |
| 5.....Operation funds to support village work: diesel, tires, and vehicle maintenance | \$8,000 |
| 6.....Cottage industry: beekeeping, fish farm construction, fish fingerlings, seeds, oil presses | \$35,000 |
| 7.....Support for the Mobile Clinic (the only health care in many rural villages) | \$15,000 |
| 8.....Agricultural assistance | \$18,000 |
| 9.....Community Forest Reserves: Surveying, training, and management..... | \$15,000 |

AND FOR IDAHO:

- 1. \$5,000 for aircraft rental to count grizzly bears and secure wolf and bear populations during hunting season.
- 2. \$300,000 for tracts of grizzly bear spring and summer range habitat.

We began our work 36 years ago, and conserving portions of our natural world is more challenging than ever. Thank you for standing by us and supporting our efforts. Together we can continue to make the earth a better home for people and wildlife.

Oh, I think I just heard some wolf pups!

Cheers,

Mark and Delia