



Dear Everybody

Spring 2011

In 1988 we received a letter from 2 Americans asking if they would see elephants if they went on safari in North Luangwa. We had to inform them that it was rare to observe elephants in the park because the population was still traumatized from heavy poaching and they usually ran at the first sign of people. Not only that, but some of the first tourists in NL were kidnapped by poachers!

ELEPHANTS: That was then. This is now. Not long ago we received another letter from people who went on safari in N Luangwa in 2010. They were amazed at the rugged beauty of rivers crisscrossed with the wake of crocodiles, lagoons churning with hippos, ebony trees teeming with baboons, and plains surging with 1500 Cape buffalos. Mostly they were moved by frequent sightings of elephants. They knew from our books that 93% of the NL elephants had been shot by poachers, yet they watched a family group of twelve splashing in the river at sunset; two young bulls fighting; and infants playing near their mothers. Such scenes are again possible in North Luangwa. The game scouts we trained are still some of the most qualified in Zambia and villagers near the park seldom poach wildlife, because they have alternative legal employment.

The elephants of North Luangwa have not recovered their numbers – that will take more than 100 years. But they have found peace and security. Even time to play. You helped mend this tattered and torn elephant world.

The primary reason for the elephants' success is the ongoing work to assist local villagers with sustainable jobs and agriculture. Hammer Simwinga continues to bring cottage industries, seeds, loans, rural health and hope to those who once had to shoot elephants to feed their families. **We started the project 25 years ago!!! I know we keep reminding you – but very few projects survive in Africa for a quarter of a century.** We couldn't have done it without you.



This fall Owens Foundation members, Peggy and Marc Faucher, are traveling to Mpika, Zambia to deliver a new laptop computer to Hammer. They also gave Hammer his last computer! That one lasted five years in spite of dusty tracks, bumpy roads, extreme heat, and leaky roofs. As Hammer travels to remote villages, he somehow keeps his laptop in one piece and his old truck running so he can reach as many people as possible. We support Hammer as best we can, but money is tight. We appreciate any contribution that you can make to help both wildlife and people.

As you know, we get requests from Chiefs who want us to extend the community outreach programs into their areas, offering assistance to their people. There are never enough funds to keep up with such requests, and that is frustrating to us. Now we are pleased that others are working to establish similar projects. Charlie Ross, who lived in Zambia during the 1980s and 90s, is initiating a large, multi-disciplined program in the Mutinodo Wilderness area. Modeled after our North Luangwa Conservation Project, it will integrate wildlife conservation with rural community development. Mutinodo is a stunning area of granite outcroppings, waterfalls, and miombo woodlands located between North and South Luangwa Parks, and if Charlie succeeds, he will help reconnect ancient migration routes for species including elephants. His project will purchase 25,000 acres outright and be for-profit. (The Owens Foundation is not involved except for consultation and will not profit financially in any way from this program.) We so hope Charlie is successful in achieving wildlife management and improving the lives of remote villagers in Chief Mpumba's area. If you are interested in Charlie's project, please contact him at charlie.ross@jhsir.com

WOLVES: After all the Kalahari sand and Luangwa mud in our shoes, it still surprises us to look down and see snow on our boots. Just two weeks ago we scanned a mountain meadow, covered in snow, looking for the wolf pack we have observed for 6 years. We had often seen them in this spot hunting voles and white tail deer during the winter. But this year we only saw them a few times and worried that many of the pack had been shot during the controversial wolf-hunting season two years ago. As I moved my binoculars slowly from south to north – my mouth fell open. Trotting handsomely across the snow were one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight wolves. They stopped – all in a line -- lifted their muzzles and howled. Within five minutes another wolf joined them. We could hear others howling from the east and west. After another 20 minutes a total of 12 wolves swarmed together, bumping shoulders, whirling in circles, huddling, chasing, playing, romping, and howling. All in an area secured for them where they are safe – for now. They thrilled and honored us for 5 hours.



Only a few days later I watched a young black pup (from last year's litter) lying on a meadow in a soppy wetland eyeing 50 Canada geese cruising a newly thawed pond. In plain view -- his black fur as visible as a banner against the greening grasses -- he stood and sauntered toward the geese. Still 20 yards away he charged into the pond, almost disappearing under the water. Recognizing an inexperienced youngster, the geese barely moved. He pulled himself onto dry land, shook vigorously, and tried again, darting toward the geese. Always sinking in the muck. A few flew out of his way, but most just swam slowly across the pond. He lay down again, head on his paws, eyes shifting back and forth. Finally he trotted to the trees, no doubt looking for his pack -- who knew how to hunt!

ACTION: What an honor to be able to watch wolves simply being wolves - yet Congress is poised to weaken the Environmental Protection Agency (!) and the Endangered Species Act, which protects our most spectacular, yet vulnerable creatures including wolves, grizzly bears, and lynx. It seems a no-brainer that threatened species should not be hunted. There are fewer than 800 wolves in all of Idaho -- a state with the most wilderness other than Alaska. That is only about .0009 of a wolf per square mile or 0.0000016 of a wolf per acre! Please contact your Congressional representatives and tell them you support a strong **Endangered Species Act** and that you oppose the hunting of any threatened species, including wolves. Your voice makes a difference!

- **For Address Info:** Write - *The Office of the Clerk of the US House of Representatives/US Capitol* -- Room H154 - Washington, DC 20515 -- PH: 202-225-7000, or email for info www.clerkweb.houses.gov - or email your representatives through: www.house.gov/writerep. For the senate visit: www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
- **US President,** The White House - Washington, DC 20500 Email: www.whitehouse.gov/contact

Good news! We have been selected by the **Discovery Channel** for their upcoming "Curiosity Project," which will be on the Internet, their television channel, and in other media and will offer information from a wide range of experts on almost any topic. If you want to know how the human heart is affected by stress, how many calories a hummingbird requires a day, when the ivory ban will up for vote, or why horses still have genes for toes, you can go to their site and learn what a qualified expert has to say. It should be up and running by summer, so check it out.

The famed photographer and writer, **Robert Vavra**, has published his new book, Remembering Africa, highlighting the lives of 30 people who dedicated their lives to Africa. It is a masterpiece of stunning photographs and prose. His chosen protagonists include Jane Goodall, Elspeth Huxley, Mary Leakey, Iain and Oria Douglas-Hamilton -- and Mark and Delia Owens, we are honored to say. Anyone who loves Africa will want this book. Robert will donate 15% of the price to the Owens Foundation for any books sold through our website. You can visit www.owens-foundation.org, and click on the link to his site to see a slideshow of stunning images and text.

LAND: Both wolf encounters occurred on land that we secured for wildlife. The OF holds acres that are essential for grizzly bears, wolves, elk, moose, and waterfowl - protecting it from development. We cannot afford to hold such land for long. Let us know if you would like to purchase some breathtaking, forested land, overlooking a stunning river that would be a great investment in the earth and perhaps your portfolio. Others have sold such land a few years later and made a significant profit (although, of course, we cannot guarantee this) and given a home to wildlife. You could also keep the land and build a cabin overlooking the wilderness, where you could watch bears.

You have helped create a lot of improvement in the world. Though wolves in Idaho and Montana will likely soon be hunted again, at least more of them roam the mountains than before; once dry, overgrazed floodplains are now wetlands of flowing water; grizzly bears have more summer range; the elephants of North Luangwa continue recovering as the project in Zambia continues helping people and protecting elephants; the Central Kalahari remains a game reserve; and we are still alive to appreciate all of these wonders. Nature will prevail...with your help.

Thank you for making it all possible. Cheers!