

Owens Foundation for Wildlife Conservation

trappers to wait for up to three days before checking their traps and snares, leaving their prey to struggle and suffer blinding pain and psychological torture all the while? Some states do not require trappers to check their sets ever. What kind of society sanctions the practice of strangling and clubbing trapped animals, or suffocating them by standing on their chests to preserve the quality of their pelts; or lets dogs literally tear them apart while being held by traps, defenseless? Answer: Fifty-two states in these United States of America, our states, our country.

According to the Born Free Foundation: "Each year, more than 4 million animals are trapped and killed for their fur in the United States. Millions more are trapped and killed in the name of 'livestock' and 'game' protection and for 'nuisance' animal control. Whatever the purpose, the consequences for the trapped animals are the same — pain, suffering, and death." Eighty-nine countries have banned leg-hold traps, but those that still allow their use, including the USA, are located in fur-producing jurisdictions, and their government representatives are lobbied intensely by the fur industry to continue using leg-hold and body-gripping traps as well as snares. We've spared you the grizzly photographs.



Idaho not only allows these cruelties but it has amended its constitution, guaranteeing the right to use steel-jawed traps and wire snares, and therefore to be cruel and inhumane under state law, in perpetuity, just as we have guaranteed our rights to free speech and assembly, and other "unalienable" human rights. Because our forbearers trapped fur-bearers in days of yore is no excuse to continue doing it. Our ancestors also killed one another for a host of reasons, but such behavior is no longer permitted under the law — because societies and their cultures evolve, hopefully for the better. We no longer have a justifiable need to continue treating animals this way. Frankly, we thought we had left wire snares back in Africa with poachers, only to discover that their use is not only legal in Idaho and some other US states, it is being promoted as one of the best ways of killing wolves. For more on trapping and snaring in general please go to www.bornfreeusa.org/facts.php?p=53&more=1

Trapping and snaring is not only inhumane and unconscionable, it is harming entire ecosystems because the practice often kills multiple "non-target" animals for every target animal captured. In trying to stop it we are focusing our efforts on this "taking" of large numbers of often un-reported non-target animals, which is devastating our forest ecosystems. Following is an excerpt from the ***Idaho Statesman Newspaper*** about snaring:

By TOM KNUDSON — MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS (6-10-12)

The popularity of neck snares results in a trail of grisly killings.

"Oh, my God. I couldn't believe it." Bob Norie is talking about the day in 2010 that he found his dog trussed up tight in a neck snare set by a Wildlife Services trapper along a hiking trail in the Boise National Forest. Loops of wire coiled around the dog's neck, torso and right rear leg, slicing into its flesh. Unable to move, the animal lay near a blood-splattered log. Worse yet, it had chewed its foot off in a desperate attempt to escape. "This was a shocking thing," said Norie, a 61-year-old forestry contractor from Oregon. "Sometimes I try not to think about it because it hurts too much."

Made from galvanized aircraft cable, neck snares are one of Wildlife Services' most widely used tools. But that popularity comes with a catch: Neck snares are also indiscriminate, kill in grim fashion and pose a special danger to golden eagles.

"They are plumb non-forgiving and nonselective," said Gary Strader, a former Wildlife Services trapper. Strader set neck snares on public and private land across Nevada to kill coyotes but was surprised how many other animals he caught. "If it walked down the trail I had a snare in, then it was going to get caught, no matter what it was," Strader said. "I have caught skunks, badgers, kit foxes, bobcats, (mountain) lions, deer, elk, dogs, raccoons, porcupines, red fox, gray fox and antelope."

Agency records show that neck snares have killed more than 50 "non-target" species since 2006 — 5,700 animals in all — from armadillos to opossums, wild turkeys to black bears.

According to the American Society of Mammalogists, since 2006, USDA Wildlife Services employees have trapped, shot and poisoned more than 500,000 coyotes and other predators, along with 300-plus other species. In the process they have unintentionally killed more than 50,000 non-target animals, from dogs to eagles.

Despite the fact that many thousands of non-target species have been caught in wolf traps and snare lines **the Federal Government is**

proposing to turn over the management of wolves entirely to states' governments such as Idaho. But state governments are hostile to wolves and predators in general because too many of their constituents fervently believe that they should be allowed to kill the deer and elk that wolves eat; that this prey is rightfully theirs, that they are entitled to it – even at the expense of the ecosystem. They conveniently ignore the body of science demonstrating that wolves and other predators do not “wipe out” their prey populations, that in fact predation is essential to controlling prey numbers so that herbivores do not over-graze and over-browse their habitats – as happened in the Yellowstone ecosystem when wolves were removed. The agriculture lobby claims that wolves are killing too many cows and sheep – though on average wolves are only responsible for about one percent of all stock killed by predators each year. If wolf range states get autonomous control of wolf ‘management’ the Gray Wolf will again be a truly endangered species in those range states. We believe that it already is -- because of the rate at which wolves are being killed.

Idaho's hunters and trappers have already reduced the statewide population of Gray Wolves by more than two-thirds its original estimate; there are only two to three hundred left in the entire state and the aim is to reduce the population to no more than 150 individuals – a federally mandated minimum number. But if the feds relinquish all controls the states have shown a willingness to virtually exterminate wolves with near year-round hunting –trapping-snaring seasons. Idaho has already sanctioned the shooting of wolves from the air in Central Idaho.

What are we doing? We are collecting evidence from the field that traps and snares are decimating the wildlife populations of our forest ecosystems in the West. This evidence is used to challenge state and federal wolf and predator management. We are empowering sister organizations with this information and facilitating a growing network of resistance to this mistreatment of animals in the name of sport hunting, trapping, and predator control.

What we would like to do with your support:

1. Aerial reconnaissance to monitor trap lines and wolf packs: \$13,500/year
2. Remote cameras to document trapping/snaring of non-target species: \$4000
3. Truck fuel for wolf and grizzly field work: \$3500
4. Legal Defense Fund: joining litigations challenging killing of non-target animals in traps/snares on public land: \$15,000
5. Stipend for 2 field assistants: \$5000
6. Snowmobile upgrade: \$5200

What you can do:

1. Write the Whitehouse, copied to the Secretary of the Interior, and your state and federal congressional representatives insisting that the **rate** at which wolves are being killed is endangering their continued existence in the range states and urging that they be re-listed as an Endangered Species. Get involved locally with groups addressing this issue.
 - **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 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
 - **Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell**, DOI -1859 C St NW, Washington DC 20240. 202-208-3100, feedback@ios.doi.gov
2. Insist that the USDA's Wildlife Services and Animal Damage Control document that predators have actually killed or injured a domestic animal before condemning it to death. The American Association of Mammologists, one of our most august scientific bodies, has determined that each year many thousands of carnivores are executed without justification.
3. Get involved locally: Get your friends to contact your state Fish and Wildlife agency to learn its trapping and snaring policies and to register your opinions with them. They are very sensitive to the public on this issue.
4. Make a tax deductible donation to the Owens Foundation via check to P.O. Box 8770530, Stone Mountain GA 30087 or online via credit card at www.owens-foundation.org.

Meanwhile back in Africa:



Mark and I lifted off in our project helicopter from our dirt airstrip in the Luangwa Valley in Northern Zambia. The waters of the small Lubonga flashed under our belly like a burning river, reflecting the reds and gold of dawn. We had to fly 1000 miles north across four African countries - Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, and Kenya - to reach Nairobi before dark, because there was nowhere closer to have the helicopter serviced. For years Mark had maintained our single engine Cessna himself in the middle of the bush. Once he used Brillo pads to plug up a burned out muffler and epoxy-ed the plane's elevator. But the helicopter was US registered so had to be maintained at a proper facility. This was our first such journey.

As we drifted over the forested uplands of Malawi, I pointed out a meadow on a peak high in the mountains. It was deserted: no villages or people in sight. I asked Mark if we could set down for a pee-break. No problem. He circled, then lowered us through the mist and gently touched down. I scrambled out and headed away from the chopper's furious downdraft, toward some bushes. Just as I was preparing to do my thing, I saw a stampede of

villagers, dressed in colorful, flowing garments rushing toward us. Mark stood near the chopper, keeping the curious, laughing people at a safe distance from the rotors. I tried sneaking away further into the thicket, but they saw me, and all ran in my direction. By now I was in bad need, and tried to explain to them, but they didn't understand a word of Chibembe or English. I gently took the hand of a very elderly woman and motioned for her to come with me into a thicket. There I demonstrated what had to be done. She laughed and went back to the others, shooing them away in a loud sing-song chant. Then she stood guard for me and then escorted me back to the chopper. As we lifted off in the middle of some Malawi mountain, all those people waved and cheered.

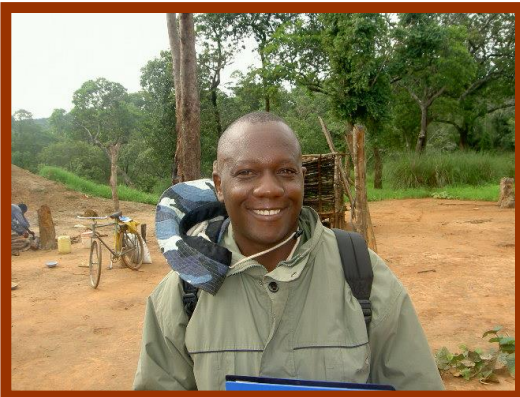
So many things happened on that journey, I can't begin to describe them in this letter. We were apprehended and held over-night in Dodoma Tanzania, accused of being a one man-one woman terrorist team. After considerable explaining, we finally got out of that and continued low-level over the Serengeti Plains and the sturdy shoulders of Mount Kilimanjaro. All the varied expressions of Africa came together as one face.

The reason I mention this story now, is because almost every time we flew over a remote village on that flight, I noticed beehives. Of all the other sights, beehives don't sound very interesting. But I was very excited. For years, we had introduced cottage industries of grain mills, fish farms, carpenter shops -- in the villages around North Luangwa, but there was no beekeeping in the region, and we had never thought of it.

As soon as we flew back to camp from Nairobi, after many other adventures on the return, we researched the best options and began introducing beekeeping in the villages. We trained people and gave them loans to start their honey business. That was in 1993 and today there is thriving honey production in Northern Zambia of providing honey to eat and sell while bees pollinate fruit trees and crops and discourage elephants from raiding crop fields.

GOOD NEWS! News is so good from North Zambia where we began in the 1980s that it is hard to believe. **It is nothing short of a miracle that these concepts we created 27 years ago continue steadily and quietly thriving and spreading in remote areas, helping one family at a time become economically self sufficient, healthier, better educated, and hopeful for a more secure future. And with all of that, the elephants and other wildlife have a much better chance. While ivory poaching is on the rise throughout Africa – North Luangwa is safer – for everyone. And, we are very excited to learn that Zambia and Botswana have banned lion and leopard hunting and are phasing out all trophy hunting for an interim period so that wildlife populations can recover. We believe this is a very wise move for both people and wildlife.**

Photo by John Antonelli



Here is Hammer Simwinga's latest news:

Muchinga Nature Conservancy. The acquisition and conservation of 15,000 hectares (5,000 fully paid for) of prime habitat next to North Luangwa National Park, is fully underway. In the past, this lush miombo woodland was threatened by intensive, primitive farming techniques, such as slash and burn. However, Hammer's program has introduced massive tree plantings, community education in the value of conservation, and the provision of environmentally-friendly livelihoods for the rural people. He still needs funding to secure more land.

Rural Development: This program reduces poverty and hunger among the poor households surrounding the national park and the

nature conservancy. Alternative livelihood activities such as cottage industries, beekeeping, legume crop production and other income generating activities have and will empower the community economically, so they do not poach wildlife, but can manage their natural resources sustainably for the good of all.

- Household income and food security have increased in the last 25 years; in 2013 25% of households near the new conservancy will be reached.
- Small Business Training has reached hundreds of Zambians in the last 20 years and continues in 2013.
- Agricultural Development. Continuing this long tradition, a seed program for legumes will be introduced to 35 new households; vegetable seeds and training will be provided to 30 youths (18 females) with an emphasis on dry season gardening.
- Beekeeping. And yes, this year Hammer hopes to grant loans to forty new households for beehives. An idea that came to us as we drifted over Africa twenty years ago.

Rural Health: Since the 1990s more than 65 women in rural areas have been trained in simple health care. In 2013, 20 additional women will be trained, and in addition 24 youths have been trained in alcohol and drug abuse awareness. The trainings were for 15 days, from February 11th to the 25th, 2013. (Alcoholism is a serious problem in many villages and leads to abandonment of children and severely hinders economic development.) By the end of the trainings, the caregivers identified and registered 90 orphans who needed psychological-social counseling and support for other physical needs. In some cases these women provide the only health care available in remote areas.



4. Conservation Education Program: In 2011 and 2012 a total of 12 Mpika pupils were selected and sponsored by UNICEF to attend a national youth symposium on climate change and the role of the young people. Then, Hammer's program sponsored the 12 pupils to reach 300 other students by performing educational dramas, debates and drawing competitions in 3 junior schools. The emphasis was on how young people can ensure a better future in a changing climate, such as more frequent droughts and floods.

Mark and I feel as proud as parents to know that Hammer is doing such a great job and all of these programs are continuing and growing after so many years. But, as always he needs help from all of us. Thank you for anything you can do to support a project that helps

people and wildlife. **Hammer especially needs a new truck!** Each and every one of these life saving programs for people and wildlife depends on Hammer getting to the neediest places and bringing training and support.

Then back to the American West:

Near winter's end, Mark and I skied through a forest and into a mountain meadow. We stopped instantly. All around us were tracks: tracks of cougars running, cougars playing, pooping, sleeping, rolling, romping, and digging.

“It looks like a pair,” Mark said, pointing to one set of large tracks and one set smaller. “I wonder if they’ll come back tonight.” I said. It was already late, nearing dusk. “I doubt it; now that our scent is here. But maybe if we leave now and hide!” We could get up to that ridge.” Without saying another word, we skied up the thirty-foot ridge, and stood still as icemen. There was only a small moon, but by snow-light we could see the meadow quite well, and sometimes the mixture of cougar-chances with moon-and-snow-light, brings magic.

We didn't even have to wait long. It would be an exaggeration to say we watched the show in detail, but what followed were two shadow-cats prancing into the meadow, leaping, playing, running and chasing. Fog drifted in, and their figures moved silently and gracefully through the back-lit grayness, until they disappeared into the night. There was no scientific evidence to speak of, but we're quite sure they were courting, and had found a wondrous honeymoon suite! (Don't worry, we'll ensure no traps are set in this meadow.)

Their dance lasted only a few moments. Like the minutes we watched the up-side-down elephants reflecting in the Luangwa River, or the giraffes eating acacia trees above our heads during a lunar eclipse, or the tawny fur of wild lions sleeping around us in the Kalahari. But those few moments revive us. Our work brings many urgent and depressing issues to our lives. So much so, that often I feel I cannot breathe. But then these moments of snowy cats or howling wolves slip into our day, and we keep trying to make them safe.

Thank you for all you do to help us.

Thanks and cheers,

Debi and Mark

