



Owens Foundation for Wildlife Conservation, Inc.

Dear Everybody,

Snow is slowly melting off the mountain's face above our Thunder Mountain Marsh, and its meadows have flushed green with the rush of rain, snowmelt, and warmer air. The "chirrs, trills and tweets" of red-winged black birds first announced spring, followed by honking Canada geese arriving from the south. And last weekend I saw a big black bear bumbling along the edge of the marsh gobbling up sedges and lush new grasses.

But it really was a goose pair who brought spring home to me with a 'ker-plop.' A few mornings ago, as I was preparing my breakfast, a raucous lot of honking, wing-flapping and scratching sounded through the fireplace chimney in the kitchen. Suspecting that a pair of geese were eyeing our chimney as a nesting place, I took my coffee and a bar of orange chocolate onto the deck and sat down to watch the show as the birds brought grass straw, sticks and other nesting materials to my chimney top, their beating wings stirring the air overhead as they landed on the ridge line above me. I sat there for some time, until I had drained my coffee cup. I had just come back from the kitchen with an espresso and set it on the table next to my chair when the geese took flight from the roof-top headed back to the marsh for more nest stuffings. I raised my eyes to their bellies and broad stroking wings as they passed overhead, honking like fools, cussing me, I guess, for looking up at their 'underskirts.' It didn't take long for them to get even: Between honks I heard a heavy 'plop.' I looked down to pick up my coffee cup and was somewhat dismayed at finding that one of the geese had turned it from an Americano to a latte' with its poop. I wasn't making another, so working on the 'ten-second' rule, I picked up the tea strainer, poured the latte' into a second cup, and pretended that the white streaks were cream as I sipped it. It was rather different tasting, but not in a bad way, and I plan to forward the recipe to Starbucks

WOLVES: What is happening to wolves and other predators in the West is hard to believe and harder still to swallow. Idaho Governor Butch Otter and his Fish and Game Commissioners have committed \$400,000 annually in tax payer funds to pay professional hunters and trappers to kill wolves. But they are also getting help from the Federal government. Earlier this year in Idaho's Lochsa River drainage of the Lolo and Clearwater National Forests, US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services' Agents, acting at the behest of Idaho officials, killed 23 wolves in two days from a helicopter...after having killed 42 in previous missions in that same area. The cost to kill EVEN one wolf is an irrational and unconscionable expenditure of public money.

Even threatened and endangered species are not safe from these forces, who seed the land – without public notice -- with dangerous poisons that can and do kill domestic pets as well as thousands of bears, cougars, coyotes, lynxes, bobcats and a host of other carnivorous species including fishers, martins, ravens and eagles. Former employees of the USDA Wildlife Services confirm that the agency is using deadly poisons that were banned by the EPA in the 1970's. Wolves are being shot from the air and killed by inhumane wire snares and steel leg hold traps. Much of this destruction is perpetrated in secret and without accountability to prevent media and conservation groups from exposing it.



Removal of predators from otherwise healthy ecosystems has allowed elk, deer and other prey to over-populate and damage the habitats needed to sustain them. This makes these animals vulnerable to collapse from hard winters, food supply failures and Chronic Wasting Disease, a type of spongiform encephalitis or 'mad cow disease' that is spreading across the country among over-populated wildlife herds – over-populated because natural predators like wolves are being eradicated by the very officials we, the public, pay to protect them.

Why all of this tax payer money and enormous effort? Unbelievably – it is to sustain overpopulations of deer and elk for sport hunters and to protect the 2% of beef and lamb production that comes from artificially cheap grazing of livestock on public land.

Photo by Mark Owens



This is personal for Delia and me. Over the past 3 years hunters and trappers have killed every one of the 12 wolves of the Solomon Lake/ Thunder Mountain Pack who for more than a decade romped and played in the snow of our meadow every winter and spring, their siren howls filling the Curley Creek valley in the crisp winter air. Now the meadow is silenced and we have so many deer on our property that we cannot recover the woody vegetation in our over-browsed marsh. And

so, we cannot recover our beavers, songbirds, and other diverse species that occurred here before the creek bottom was over-grazed for decades by cattle.

But – there is hope. On January 4, 2014 the LA Times ran an article outlining the concerns voiced by US Congressmen Peter DeFazio a Democrat from Oregon and ranking member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, and John Campbell a Republican from California over the abuse of wildlife by USDA. You can go online to www.predatordefense.org to hear interviews offered in the graphic documentary, "Exposed," that outlines these horrific abuses. This film will soon be screened before a congressional reception on Capitol Hill.

Remember: there are better ways to protect livestock than killing predators. In April 2014, Defenders of Wildlife Magazine stated: "...here in Idaho, the Wood River Wolf Project in Blaine County has successfully protected more than 25,000 sheep annually grazing on the Sawtooth National Forest, losing less than 25 sheep over 6 years – without having to kill a single wolf in the project area. Despite being one of the highest concentrations of wolves and livestock sharing the same landscape, it's the lowest loss rate of livestock and wolves in the state."

THE GOOD NEWS is that a growing number of us are fighting back, determined to bring this wildlife travesty before the public, so that they will demand better protection and management of the wildlife on their public lands. We must ask for your support, not only by donating money, but also by writing letters demanding an end to this persecution of our great predators and the decimation of biodiversity which threatens us all. Please write The Whitehouse, with copies to the Secretary of Interior, the EPA, the governors of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, plus Congressmen DeFazio and Campbell urging an audit of the USDA Wildlife Services and to relist gray wolves as 'Endangered' to allow them protection under the Endangered Species act. Remember: these public lands belong to you and me and because they do, we share the right and responsibility for their safe-keeping. Thank you in advance for helping us right this injustice.

- **PRESIDENT OBAMA**, The White House - Washington, DC 20500 - Email: www.whitehouse.gov/contact
- **CONGRESSIONAL CONTACT INFO: For Address Info:** Write - *The Office of the Clerk of the US House of Representatives*/US Capitol -- Room H154 - Washington, DC 20515 – PH: 202-225-3121, or you can locate your representative at <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>. You can locate your Congressman's web site and email them directly.
- **SENATOR CONTACT INFO:** call 202-225-3121, or address your letter to: Senator's Name, US Senate, Washington DC 20515 or visit: www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
- **Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell**, DOI -1859 C St NW, Washington DC 20240. 202-208-3100, feedback@ios.doi.gov
- **Gina McCarthy**, EPA, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave, Washington DC, 20460 202-564-4700, www.epa.tips.gov
- **Gov. Otter**, Office of the Governor, State Capitol, P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720 - or – email him online at <http://gov.idaho.gov/ourgov/contact.html>
- **Gov. Steve Bullock**, Office of the Governor, PO Box 200801, Helena MT 59620-0801, PH 406-444-3111, 855-218-1330, or email at - <https://governor.mt.gov/Home/Contact/shareopinion.aspx>
- **Gov. Matt Mead**, Office of the Governor, 200 West 24th Street, Cheyenne, WY 82002-0010 – or – email online at <http://governor.wy.gov/contactUs/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Congressman Pete DeFazio**, 2134 Rayburn Office Building, Washington DC 20515, phone 202-225-6416
- **Congressman John Campbell**, 2331 Rayburn Office Building, Washington DC 20515, phone 202-225-5611

POINTS TO MAKE ON BEHALF OF PREDATOR AND HABITAT CONSERVATION:

1. The US Government has spent huge sums of money reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone National Park and their return has restored balance to that ecosystem benefiting all members of the wildlife community.
2. The number of wolves currently in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming are by no means sufficient to consider the species stable and viable and yet they have been removed from the Endangered Species list and immediately set upon by hunting, trapping, poisoning and extermination by aerial teams.
3. Eradicating wolves (and other predators) that have in no way threatened or harmed people or livestock is unnecessary and destructive to the ecological balance of the areas where they live.
4. Wolves and other predators do not destroy prey species populations but rather strengthen them by off taking the weak and sick, unlike sport and trophy hunting which target the largest, fittest members of any species.
5. The methods used to exterminate predators and other innocent animals are unethical and illegal.
6. There are infinitely cheaper and more practical ways to protect livestock from predation.
7. USDA Wildlife Services must be disbanded and the responsibility for controlling problem animals be remanded to a new agency with oversight from an independent panel of scientists and other experts from the private sector, and without ties to the agricultural industry or hunting groups.
8. Lethal control should only be exercised when a predator has actually killed domestic stock, to be determined by a government official of the new agency rather than the aggrieved rancher/farmer.



Hammer is sitting, front row, 3rd from the right.

ZAMBIA: We never fail to be amazed by our protégé & hero in Zambia, **Hammer Simwinga**. He was selected to attend a Conference in Freiburg, Germany in April sponsored by the European Environmental Foundation. Hammer: *"The meeting was very interactive and the organizers took care of us very well. The meeting had over 40 award winning laureates from all over the world. And we were joined by local governors and mayors of the city. I had very good discussions with several laureates, in particular, we made plans to collaborate with a scientist from Ethiopia to start a joint project of making high efficient rural cooking stoves and a China laureate is also interested to support solar light in rural communities."*

Mary Dykes had carefully made all of Hammer's travel arrangements; by plane from Lusaka, Zambia with a layover in Dubai then on to Frankfurt, Germany. Next Hammer connected by train to the beautiful green city of Freiburg. Mary was concerned by an email that Hammer's return train reservation had changed. She needn't have worried:

Reply from Hammer: *"Oooh yes, there was a train delay. In fact, I had to change my reservation seat because the team of Chinese Laureates made me their team leader and wanted me not to leave them behind until we get back to Frankfurt. I picked up a few Chinese words and helped them through security at times. I enjoyed the most when we reached Frankfurt and each one bowed down their heads in Chinese fashion as a good bye as we parted our ways. They called me: 'Sensei' meaning teacher. When they had left, a Germany security officer came and asked me if I was a 'Kungufu' teacher. I said yes, and looked away through the window to hide my cheating smile."*

FROM HAMMER ON HIS FORESTRY PROGRAMS: *"I'm working around an idea of promoting woodlots which can have a plant population of 625. The Foundation for Wildlife and Habitat Conservation (FWHC) will raise a tree nursery and each woman who plants and successfully raises 200 trees will have qualified to receive a standard Beehive. These beehives cost about US \$47.00. This project will establish about 50*

woodlots (3000 trees planted). Also, part of our funds will go for agro-seed purchases for distribution to farmers, training, transport, the purchase of hives and project monitoring. Using beekeeping as a greening initiative will not only provide nutrition and income for the community, but it will also support forest conservation programs in the district. The area where the hives will be established will be protected from bush fires and illegal cutting of the trees.



I will also be visiting the agriculture college next week to propose the clover project for soil fertility that we saw at the University of Georgia last November. We may also conduct soil testing and analysis with students using the soil testing kits you sent me. They will be excited, they have never seen such tools. Neither have I! Not even during my time of agriculture training.” (Note from Mary: These kits cost \$6 at the local hardware store and yet they are exotic stuff in the rural Zambian villages and even colleges. Small things can produce big results.)

Thank you to everyone who has donated to Hammer's truck fund! We recently received a very generous grant from Sarah Grant's *Color Me In Foundation*. Sarah is a former Peace Corps volunteer stationed in North Zambia. She knows how much Hammer needs dependable transportation. We need another \$5,000 to make our goal of for a new

used truck. Thank you for anything you can do to empower Hammer and his work.

There are so many challenges but we cannot turn away. We must push forward and we hope you know we could not do it without your help. Thank you!

Cheers!

NOTE FROM MARY: You can raise substantial money for conservation. If you shop on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) – simply go to the Owens Foundation home page at www.owens-foundation.org and scroll to the bottom of the page – and click on the Amazon link and continue you shopping. Amazon will donate 5% of your total purchase amount to the OFWC. It costs you nothing. A friend purchased home furnishings through the OF link to Amazon and generated \$185 for conservation. PRESTO! It's so easy. Thanks!

MORE WAYS TO HELP

- **NEW EMAIL OR POST ADDRESSES:** **Please** advise us any changes in your contact information as soon as possible.
- **DONATION BY CREDIT CARD:** Can be made at www.owens-foundation.org via **DONATE NOW BUTTON** or by calling Tammy Johnson (678-648-1267). Three percent of your donation goes to the credit card company for processing fees. You will be asked for the security code on your credit card as an added level of protection for you.
- **FOREIGN CURRENCY DONATIONS:** Must be made by wire transfer, US dollar money order or check - or by credit card (see above for online donations). Thank you for the extra effort!
- **NORTH LUANGWA TOURISM:** Have the experience of a lifetime AND help people and save wildlife by choosing North Luangwa for your safari. See www.owens-foundation.org
- **LEGACY PLANNING:** Touch the future. Include the OFWC in your Estate Planning.
 - **Will, Living Trust or other plan:** Name the OFWC as a recipient of a fixed amount or a % of your estate.
 - **Annuity or Life Insurance Policy:** Designate OFWC as the beneficiary.
 - **Retirement Plans:** Designate OFWC as a beneficiary of all or a percentage of your Retirement Plan.
- **MATCHING DONATIONS:** Some companies match employee and retiree donations to 501(c) (3) nonprofits such as the Owens Foundation. Multiply your giving and empower conservation.