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Live encounters

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Conservation
Guest Editorial

Chris Mercer

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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

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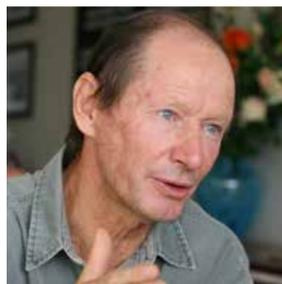
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Cover Photograph of money in cage by Mark Ulyseas

Click on title of article to go to page



Guest Editorial - Regulatory capture and the hunting fraternity **Chris Mercer**

After a career as an Advocate practising law in Zimbabwe and Botswana, Chris came back to South Africa in 1984, and decided to retire young. He farmed in the Western Transvaal for ten years, before he and Bev moved to the Kalahari to establish a wildlife rehab centre and Sanctuary. This they ran for seven years. Now retired at Wilderness in the Cape, Chris keeps busy running the NGO which he and Bev founded, called the Campaign Against Canned Hunting (CACH), a registered non-profit and public benefit organisation.

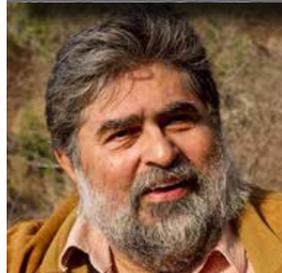
www.cannedlion.org



Message from the grand son of Tatanka Iyotake (Sitting Bull) of the non-Treaty Lakota **Ernie La Pointe**

Earnest (Ernie) Wayne LaPointe, a disabled Vietnam veteran, was born on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation of South Dakota in 1948. He has authored the book "Sitting Bull - His Life and Legacy" and helped produce two documentaries with Bill Matson - Sitting Bull: Authorised Biography, and, Sitting Bull's Voice.

www.sittingbullfamilyfoundation.org



Van Dhan Yojana - A game changer for forest India **Valmik Thapar**

Thapar, Foremost Tiger Conservationist, Naturalist, Film-maker and Founder of Ranthambhore Foundation is author of over 25 books on tigers and conservation. His latest, *Tiger Fire*, is a magnum opus on 500 years of the tiger in India from the 16th century till date. He has also produced many documentaries on India's habitat for the BBC, Animal Planet, Discovery and National Geographic. He is married to the theatre personality *Sanjana Kapoor* and the couple have a son, Hamir.



Wolves: Return to the Wild **Suzanne Asha Stone**

Suzanne Asha Stone has specialized in wolf conservation in the western USA since 1988. She served as a 1995/1996 Yellowstone and Idaho wolf reintroduction team member and is Defenders of Wildlife's regional wolf expert. She is currently developing and testing adaptive nonlethal deterrent methods to help livestock managers successfully avoid losses to wolves and other native carnivores. She has tracked, aerial surveyed, and howled with wolves in the wild; teaches about their ecological importance; and helps support state, federal and tribal wolf conservation efforts. www.defendersblog.org



Savage **Sybelle Foxcroft**

Foxcroft is an Australian conservationist and Director of the non-profit organisation *Cee4life* (Conservation and Environmental Education4 Life) She has served in the Australian Army as a SGT Medic, holds double degree in wildlife conservation biology and environmental management, and has been investigated the wildlife trade and witnessed the brutal treatment of some of the world's most iconic animals. www.cee4life.org



The Crush **Joachim Matschoss**

Joachim Matschoss was born in Germany and now lives in Melbourne/Australia. He is a playwright, poet and Theatre-maker. His Theatre Company, 'Backyard Theatre Ensemble (BYTE)' presents diverse pieces of theatre all across Melbourne/ Australia and internationally, both Youth Arts and for adults. Joachim has created theatre in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, India, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, HongKong, Hungary, Taiwan, Switzerland and China. Joachim's poetry is published in Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA. www.byteensemble.com



EAI Continues our Transformative Work in Asia! **Carol Buckley**

Buckley has been working with elephants for the last 40 years. She set up the largest's natural habitat for elephants in the USA for rescued elephants from circuses, zoos etc. Carol has won many international awards. She is Founder of Elephant Aid International. Presently, Carol is in India designing a 122-acre chain free natural habitat for 15 elephants at the Bannerghatta Zoo, the first of its kind in Asia.

www.elephantaidinternational.org



Bali Starling Back From the Brink **Drh I Gede Nyoman Bayu Wirayudha**

Bayu has done Veterinary Medicine, Udayana University, Bali. Founder director of FNPF, Yayasan Bebali, which works with traditional cultural revitalisation, and previously with the Begawan Foundation, where he oversaw the program breeding the critically endangered Bali Starling (*Leucopsar rothschildi*) and their subsequent release by FNPF onto Nusa Penida. 2003 and 2007 nominated for Indonesia's Kalpataru (Hero of the Earth) Award for his work with conservation. 2007 Bali Governor awarded him Environment Pioneer. www.fnfp.org



Ancient Fire **Joo Peter**

Aka Joachim Peter is a Visual artist and writer based in Southwest Germany, presently working on documentary & travel photography in Asia. He loves to explore and combine all arts in his work. Joo has studied Arts; painting and graphics, worked for theatre (designing stage, costume and light), did some work for television and film, went into teaching. He writes essays and a blog in his native tongue, German, for he feels his language combines philosophy and humour. www.joo-peter.photoshelter.com



Friends I met on the Way **Mark Ulyseas**

These are photographs of friends I met on the way in four countries. They were my companions for a while, sharing my food, shelter, joys and times of great sadness. They taught me of the spirits that rest within all living things. They never judged me and even in times of anger their gentleness and love kept me from doing things that were not nice. For me, these are my true friends who kept me safe as I navigated dark alleys of the soul.





CAMPAIGN
AGAINST CANNED HUNTING

CHRIS MERCER
DIRECTOR, WWW.CANNEDLION.ORG

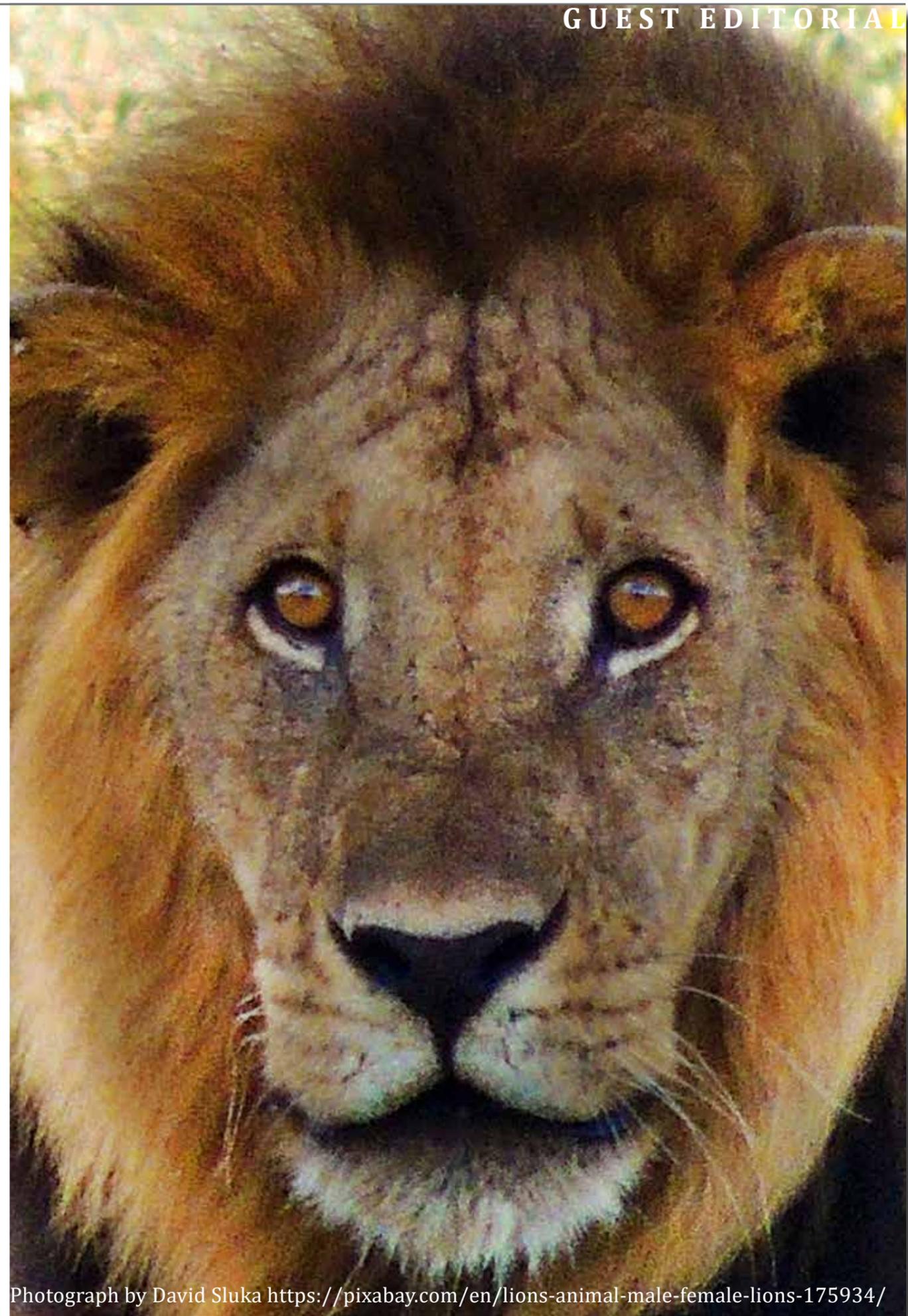
Regulatory capture and the hunting fraternity

Hunting and animal rescue and protection are two very different ways to treat wild animals. Because hunting involves cruelty, killing and adverse impacts upon biodiversity, you'd expect hunting to be heavily regulated and monitored. And you'd expect animal protection to be lightly regulated, to encourage public participation.

On the contrary, hunting is so lightly regulated that it could accurately be described as a free for all. All the landowner needs is a Certificate of Adequate Enclosure to confirm that his perimeter fence is strong and high enough and Presto! all regulations vanish like smoke. No need for hunting seasons or other petty restrictions to get in the way; the landowner is free to do what he likes with his 'alternative livestock.'

No need for any EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) even though some game farmers deliberately cross-breed mutant freaks because these are more valuable to trophy hunters.

With hunting being granted a free-for-all by conservationists (they call it 'self-regulation') it is no wonder there are more than ten thousand game farms in S.A.



Photograph by David Sluka <https://pixabay.com/en/lions-animal-male-female-lions-175934/>



Photographs from the net illustrating the activities of the hunting fraternity.

Now compare the regulatory burden on wildlife sanctuaries or rehab centres.

Before the animal rescuer can rescue a single bundle of fur or feathers, there is a lengthy, complex and expensive paper trail to follow.

Keeping rescued wild animals to protect them is regarded by the Department of Planning as a new land use. Keeping wild animals in order to kill them is not. Indeed, even turning the land in to a battlefield, with dozens of hunting towers surrounded by hundreds of dead and dying animals, like the infamous driven hunt at Alldays in Limpopo, did not need an EIA or a re-zoning.

So, not for hunting, but for animal rescue, a re-zoning application is required.

Now the bureaucracy runs riot.

A one-size-fits-all re-zoning application means that the mind-numbing requirements designed for large scale developments such as a new golf course complex or a five star ten story hotel all have to be met by the poor wildlife rehabber.

Here is just one small extract from the application form:

A full justification report the feasibility of the proposed land use change are discussed , must be attached . The following guidelines apply in respect of such motivation :

5.1.1 Physical characteristics of the property

The expected impact of the proposed land use change and any change to the physical characteristics , must be discussed. The physical characteristics include topography , geological formations , soil properties and depth of underlying rock formations , microclimate , vegetation (eg plants) , flood-plains and flood lines , water tables , fountains , drainage , unique ecological habitats and sensitive areas , existing filled areas and quarrying , and so on.

Really? All this – and much, much more - just to rescue a bundle of fur or feathers?

Consider how driven hunts are facilitated in SA.

The recent European style driven hunt at Alldays, Limpopo province in South Africa have reinforced the view of many people that SA Conservation has become an arm of the hunting industry.

Conservation officials stood by while hundreds of beaters in orange jumpsuits, earning a pitiful \$15 for the day's work, formed a long line and herded the resident wildlife down corridors lined with high hunting towers. In scenes more appropriate to a battlefield, the luckless animals were fired on by dozens of wealthy European 'hunters.'

A hundred dead and dying zebra, impala, kudu, eland and other antelope, baboons and even warthog littered the blood-soaked veld.

For a good coverage of this shocking event, with pictures, see this excellent article in the Dodo. <https://www.thedodo.com/hunters-hide-their-faces-1347803434.html>

The landownership of this appalling battlefield is one of a number of cases of fraudulent abuse of the land restitution system involving Dutch businessman de Vries. See: Corrupt fruit exporter and driven hunt - <http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/agriculture/2013/05/31/da-accuses-fruit-exporter-of-corruption>

Despite the vast scale of the infrastructure built on this farm to change the land use to driven hunts, no re-zoning application was required.

Despite the scale of the massacre inherent in driven hunts, no EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) was called for by Conservation Services - in violation of the Environment Conservation Act of 1989.

In fact, not only were conservation laws ignored by conservation officials in this case, such indiscriminate massacres are promoted and facilitated by SA conservationists as 'conservation.'

Intelligent people see them for what they really are: environmental terrorism.



AMAZING isn't it...

or IS IT?

Please learn about #cannedhunting
cannedlion.org

Photographs from the net illustrating the activities of the hunting fraternity, petting centres and canned hunting.

Now compare how SA Conservationists treat animal rescuers.

Unlike the tender concern shown for hunters by SA conservation services, any would-be wildlife rehabber or sanctuarian is compelled to struggle through a minefield of regulations and policies, so onerous as to make it well-nigh impossible to comply.

Merely asking for permits to rescue orphaned and injured animals for a rehab centre triggers an avalanche of bureaucracy. In addition to the full-scale re-zoning of the farm, even if the rehabber merely wants to upgrade existing fences and build a couple of camps, a full scale EIA is called for, even though the poor rehabber is thereby saddled with the wholly unnecessary costs of paying consultants to produce reports that can also take months and cost tens of thousands.

The provincial conservation authority, **which does not even regard animal welfare as part of its mandate to conserve biodiversity**, has its own 'minimum' 'guidelines.' These are so comprehensive and particular that the rescuer is compelled to employ a consultant to guide him through the detailed motivation. A standard fee for such consultancy is SAR 20,000 (nearly \$2,000). Sketch plans, topographic maps, motivations, inspections, Standard Operating Protocols (SOPs) that require detail right down to where he parks his car at night, the list goes on...

Restrictive permit requirements demand a specific permit for every specific rescue (Imagine the outcry if every ambulance driver had to obtain a permit from Head Office of the Ministry of Health every time he was called out) Since permit officials work ordinary office hours, animals may not legally get rescued on a weekend, but must lie in agony until Monday before the rescuer can apply for a permit.

In violation of the right to freedom of association, the rehabber must also belong to a zoo association, such as PAAZAB. Logic?? Why on earth should a rehabber be forced to join a Zoo association? Zoos exist for human entertainment; the rehabber has no interest in human entertainment.

Some of PAAZAB's rules, such as the requirement to be open to the public at all times, are bizarrely inappropriate to a rehab centre, which is closed to the public at all times.

The point is this: not only are these excessive bureaucratic obstacles discouraging the public from participating in wildlife management, but the fact that none of these onerous obligations are imposed upon game hunting farms boggles the mind.

That there are any rehab centres in SA at all with all the onerous bureaucracy involved is a testament to the dedication of the animal welfare community; no wonder there are only a handful in the whole country.

Is this blatant use of over-regulation and abuse of authority deliberately designed to discourage sanctuaries and rehab centres? Or are EIAs and compulsory PAAZAB membership really necessary for conservation purposes?

That this victimisation is aimed at deliberately frustrating rehabbers' constitutional rights to freedom of occupation, and their legal right under NEMA to participate in wildlife management, is certainly a reasonable suspicion, because:

If these onerous bureaucratic demands were really important, then they would apply to game farming and the hunting industry – much more so because hunting impacts the environment far more than rescuing and rehabbing orphaned and injured wildlife. Despite the anti-conservation antics of an out-of-control hunting fraternity, such as cross-breeding mutant freaks for hunting trophies, or turning the land in to a battlefield like the driven hunt at Alldays in Lipopo, no EIAs are required.

In the conservation sub-culture, 'welfare' of animals is almost a swear word. There is open hostility to the whole idea of animal welfare, and anyone who speaks out against cruelty to wildlife is pejoratively labelled a 'greenie,' a 'rightist,' a 'radical' and 'an extremist.' So it would not be unreasonable to infer a certain malice in making regulations so stringent as to vent that hostility.

Why is there such a disparity? Why are hunters given preferential treatment, while animal rescuers are so badly victimised?



Photographs from the net illustrating the activities of the hunting fraternity.

The answer is this: **regulatory capture**. And animal activists like rehabbers are regarded as a threat to hunting interests.

Wikipedia defines it thus:

Regulatory capture is a form of **political corruption** that occurs when a **regulatory agency**, created to act in the public interest, instead advances the commercial or special concerns of **interest groups** that dominate the industry or sector it is charged with regulating. Regulatory capture is a form of **government failure**; it creates an opening for firms to behave in ways injurious to the public. Such agencies are called "captured agencies". (George Stigler – The Theory of Economic Regulation.)

Businesses have an incentive to control anything that has power over them, including institutions from the media, academia and popular culture, thus they will try to capture them as well. This phenomenon is called "deep capture." [7]

More damaging even than *deep capture*, is *cognitive capture* or *cultural capture*, in which the regulator begins to think like the regulated industry. This can result from interest-group lobbying by the industry.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regulatory_capture

Big Hunting has invaded and occupied conservation space in SA – and indeed, in USA and around the world, displacing and marginalising true preservationists, and replacing real conservation – the preservation of natural functioning ecosystems – with a self-serving phony conservation called ‘sustainable use’ which in practice causes and promotes sustained abuse.

<http://www.cannedlion.org/blog/invoke-and-occupy>

The consequences of allowing wealthy foreign hunters to pervert conservation policies and move the conservation debate away from true fundamentals, will hasten the destruction of the African continent’s priceless, irreplaceable wildlife heritage. Then what?

Leaving aside the ecological devastation, the geopolitical consequences are too terrible to think about. Imagine a billion desperate starving Africans besieging Fortress Europe. The current migrant crisis would look like a tea party in comparison. And just as the current migrant crisis is an unintended consequence of failed American imperial foreign policy in the Middle East, so the coming African migrant tsunami will be partly caused by the reckless machinations of Big Hunting.

The fundamental issue is this: are wilderness and wildlife just a resource to be harvested, or are they a precious heritage which should be preserved for posterity?

Big Hunting has successfully bought, lobbied and litigated to ensure that the former is the prevailing paradigm. Hunters have successfully created a whole toxic culture - which they call conservation.



Photograph of jackals slaughtered in the name of conservation.



What is approaching from the future will create panic to the majority of the World, but there will be a chosen few that will welcome the purification. The chosen few will be the ones that are looking to the future with compassion and living a Spiritual way of life.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

ERNIE LAPOINTE

**GREAT GRANDSON OF TATANKA IYOTAKE (SITTING BULL)
WHO WAS A SUN DANCER, MEDICINE MAN
AND CHIEF OF THE NON-TREATY LAKOTA**

I lived for 6 decades plus and approximately 4 decades I lived in the fast World of the Americans. In 1993, I started my journey back into the Ancient Sacred Life of the Lakota People. I started with participating in *Purification Ceremonies* (Commonly Known as Sweat Lodges) then I was called by the Ancient Spirits to participate in the Sacred Sun Dance. The protocol for the ceremonies began with a Purification Ceremony then a *Hanblechiya* (Crying through the Night for a Vision). I was troubled with how the American people lived. They lived for material, monetary gains and were egotistical, racist and were taking everything our true Mother, the Earth offered. They created a bubble and to fit into this bubble, a person has to give up their identity and natural gifts or talents. Their education systems are geared toward the past. They try to teach their children how to correct the mistakes of the past to create a better future, which is not the *Ancient Lakota* way. They are actually destroying the future for their children. The majority of the Americans are for Pro Life, but how are these future generations going to survive when they are destroying the air, water and food sources.

Our Mother Earth is crying out to those of us to try and save her very existence, but she is also a Mother and she does not want to harm her children, so her other children (The Elements) are showing the two legged ones that are hurting her with signs. The signs are extreme droughts in certain areas and extreme flooding in other areas and fires are burning the forests and also climate change. I was told through a ceremony that the Earth is going to shift from her axis. I sometimes feel as I am the only Human Being to recognize this. I do not have a religious person to tell me about who "god" is or what will happen to me if I don't fear him. I have a Sacred Pipe and with this pipe I can communicate with the Ancient Spirits and with Wakan Tanka (*The Great Mystery*). I was informed many times to not fear the Ancient Spirits or Wakan Tanka, because they are the future. I try to live my life as the Lakota people during the times of my Great-Grandfather Tatanka Iyotake (Sitting Bull).



These values are generosity, compassion, courage and visions for the future. I felt I had to explain who I am and my walk through this life, before I tell about my vision. Our Lakota way is shared orally and is not a written language, but through ceremonies, I was told the people cannot understand points in a story, because the American language is a backward language and one word or sentence can create misdirection and misunderstanding in storytelling, so I have to take the painstaking task of trying to translate my Native Lakota words into this backwards language.

My only hope is that the people reading my words will understand my points. The vision I was given was at Bear Butte in the Black Hills of South Dakota. My vision started right after the helpers set me in my *hochoka* (Alter). I started hearing people crying all around me and the crying was so mournful; I had tears flowing down my face. I started praying to *Wakan Tanka* why I am hearing this, but it just went on until dawn, then the helpers came for me. The helpers and I went into the Purification lodge and the Medicine Man asked me about my vision, so I told him about the men and women crying. The Spirit answered my vision, the Spirit said this is what is coming from the future, because the people are ignorant and haven't turned to face the future, but live for monetary and material wealth. I was told majority of the people think when what is approaching is emanate, they will just mention a man's name from their "good" book and they will be saved, but they will be in for a rude awakening, it will not happen.

These are the people who are crying I heard, the Spirit also said many of these will be from within my own immediate family. They will offer their money and material wealth for help, but these things do not have any value in the Spirit World. They have the chance to change their ways now, if they so desire, because the fate of the future is not set in stone, we can change the course, if the people of the World can act together. I was told to spread this vision to those that will give an ear, so at speaking events all over this country and many European countries, I share this, but it seems the people don't either understand or maybe they just don't care.

Ernie LaPointe
Black Hills, South Dakota, December 2015



My Great Grand Father, Tatanka Iyotake (Sitting Bull)



VAN DHAN YOJANA - A GAME CHANGER FOR FOREST INDIA

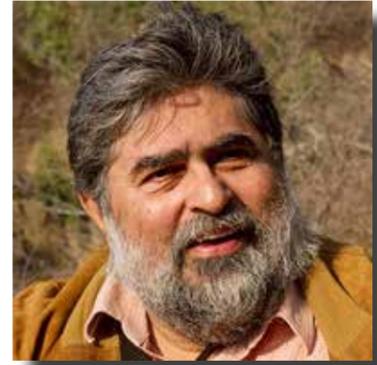
A few months ago the Rajasthan Government led by Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje approved a new scheme THE VAN DHAN YOJANA. Van Dhan means forest wealth and is a strategy to involve local communities into the process of enhancing the wealth of the forest. I was lucky to create this scheme, work on it and then present the detail of it to the chief minister of Rajasthan, which is a state in northern India. I chose two people from government to work with. My colleagues were Giriraj Singh Kushwaha of the Indian Administrative Service [IAS] and GV Reddy of the Indian Forest Service [IFS] both of whom I had known for years and respected greatly. Three of us worked hard for two months across Rajasthan to flesh out the detail. As we finished our work we presented our plan to the entire government machinery of the state of Rajasthan. It got quickly approved. Within days of its approval the Maharashtra Government [another state in India] replicated the idea announcing the Shyama Prasad Mukherji Van Jan Yojana. It took 6 days for this to happen. Sometimes the speed at which state governments can work is startling. A new idea was born and for the betterment of both people and wildlife.

Van Dhan Yojana is a green mission that is flexible, site specific, holistic and helps in reducing the dependency of people on wildlife rich areas. People centred conservation outside our national parks and sanctuaries is a win-win situation to benefit people as well as wildlife. Van Dhan Yojana creates livelihoods for forest protection. Van Dhan Yojana works with people for wildlife. Van Dhan Yojana creates a foundation for ecological security. At its core it is about conflict resolution outside our best wildlife rich areas.

Van Dhan Yojana through "green" skill development and special training centres encourages employment and income generation in forest friendly activities and businesses and creates a green economic zone in the immediate area around our protected areas to boost local economies. We have so many skill development centres coming up that around our best forests they need to be redirected and focused on conservation skills. Tourism and the creation of both conservancies with local people and non-governmental wildlife refuges will be a part of the process to boost the site specific economy. This is a vital area for growth and generation of income for local communities and needs to be prioritized so that wildlife tourism plays a genuine role in conservation as it does through most of Africa.

Van Dhan means forest wealth and is a strategy to involve local communities into the process of enhancing the wealth of the forest. His latest book titled *Saving Wild India - A Blueprint For Change* is available on www.amazon.in

Photograph of tiger/Aditya Dicky Singh. Courtesy Valmik Thapar.



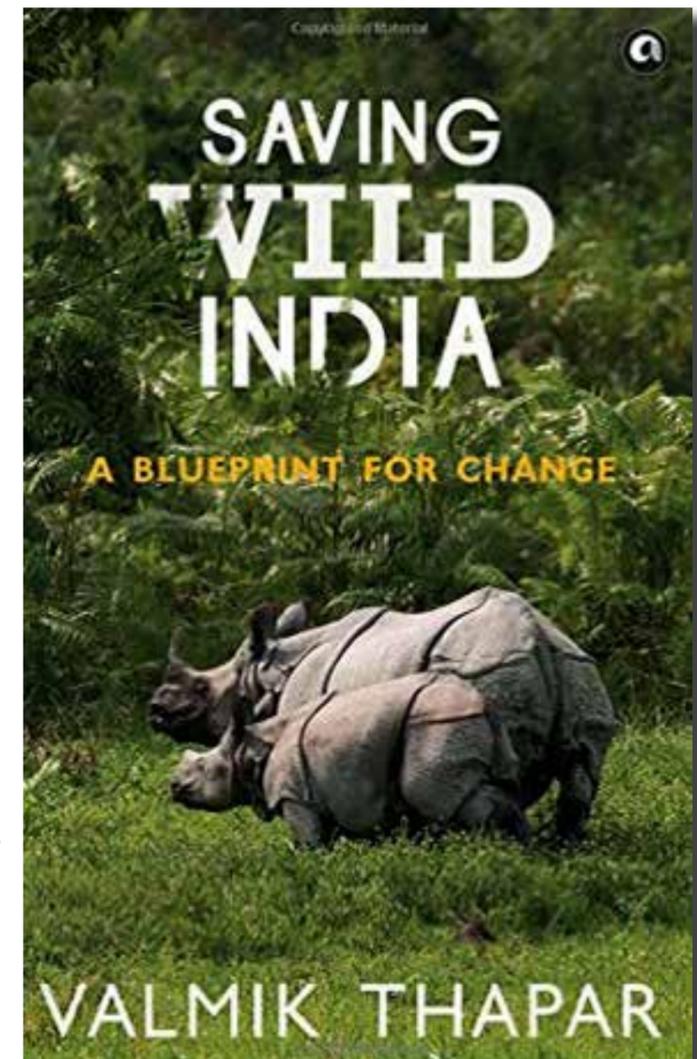
Valmik Thapar - Wildlife Conservationist, Naturalist, Author

For the first time India desperately needs both locals and other private players to enter the fray of managing our wilderness in new and innovative ways.

Conflict resolution is essential for effective conservation and Van Dhan will offer quick livestock and crop compensation and other grievance redressal measures when animals like tigers and leopards attack animals or when crops get devoured by wild animals.

Van Dhan Yojana is the convergence of all prevalent schemes in different government departments both of the central and state governments towards a green mission and modifies existing schemes to dovetail into the objective of protecting our best forest areas with the participation of local people. India has created hundreds of schemes in the last 68 years since independence. Most of them have been severely neglected.

Van Dhan recharges them and takes the best of all of them to strategically benefit both forests and wildlife. It is the ecological way forward to develop rural areas with a green mission in mind. There are scores of central and state government projects with approved budgets that are implemented in each district.



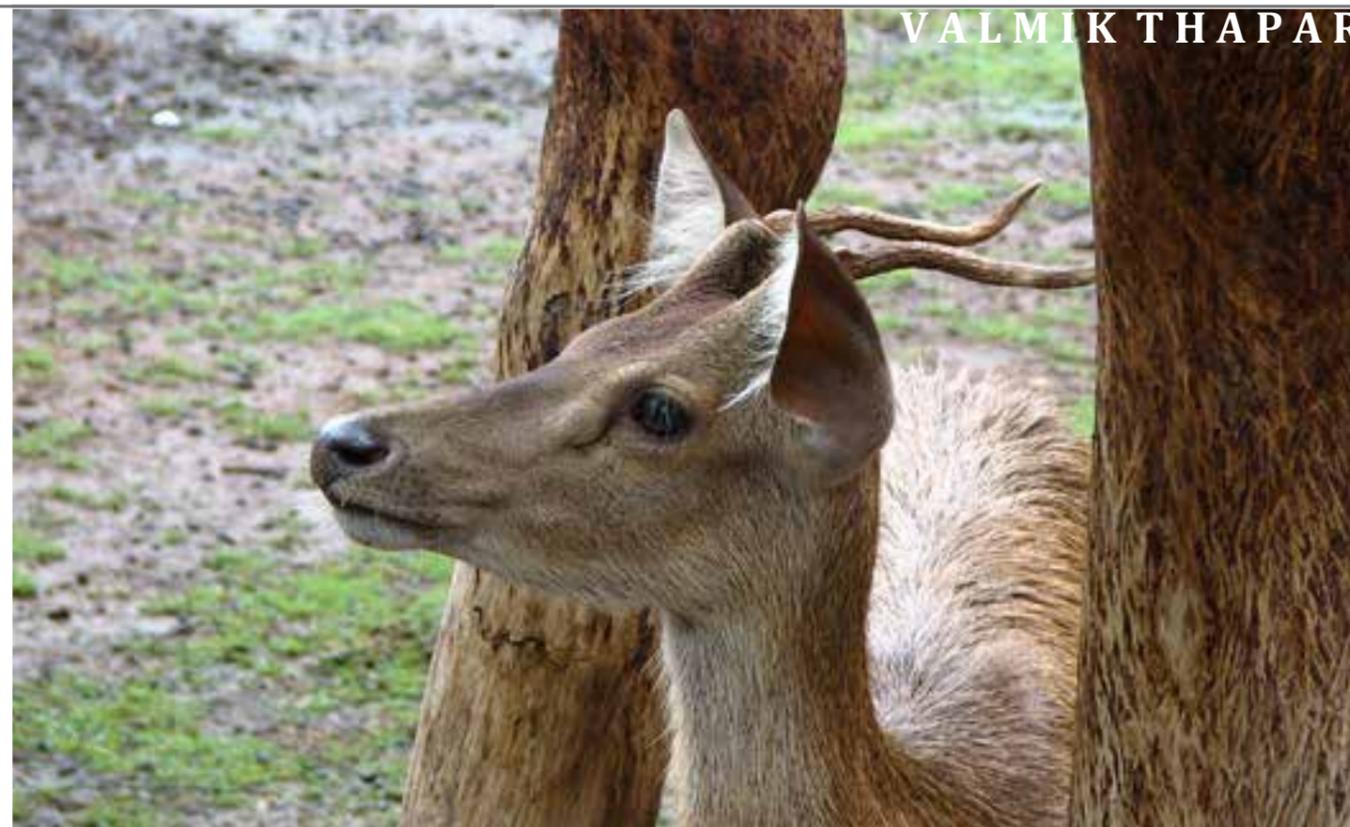


Forest/Mark Ulyseas



Forest/Mark Ulyseas

Van Dhan uses available money of all these schemes refocusing and redirecting them in a specified radius around our National Parks and Sanctuaries. To mention a few-forest programmes of social forestry and afforestation, bee keeping, animal husbandry, dairy, biogas, solar energy, pasture development, agro-forestry, plantation, water and soil conservation, envireducation, conservation of heritage sites - the list is endless and the skills that can be taught infinite. Schemes that can converge include the flagship financial schemes of the Government like Avas Yojana, Swatch Bharat mission, MPLAD, MLA-LAD, MNREGA, NRML or The National Rural Livelihood Mission and probably several dozen others that get dissipated in day to day governance never reaching the right beneficiary. New ideas and Schemes will be targeted through new donors like NABARD, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Global Environmental Facility and so many other many other national and international organisations that search to fund more inclusive solutions in the forest and environmental sector. Our own corporate world can contribute enormously through their schemes. Van Dhan Yojana harnesses the talent of people to protect wildlife and forests, through using available schemes that can benefit both people and wildlife.



Samba deer/ Mark Ulyseas

Van Dhan Yojana will relieve the pressures on our finest protected areas by increasing forest cover on degraded forest lands and the non-forest government lands outside especially revenue wastelands. This will allow for greater spill-overs of wildlife into newly generated lands thereby increasing wildlife populations. Van Dhan Yojana is the Rajasthan Government's answer towards an inclusive approach to forest and wildlife conservation by creating innovative livelihoods for local people that strengthen conservation, rehabilitate traditional hunting tribes, improve forest cover and protect wildlife by better intelligence gathering and protection by locals and through a series of viable programmes that respect natural resources. Such a scheme will stress on the use of alternative energy that minimises the use of fuel wood and encourages stall fed, high milk yielding livestock, that can create a white revolution and provide renewable energy like bio-gas, reducing our dependency on fossil fuels.

The Van Dhan Yojana mission inside the protected areas will focus on innovative village relocation schemes, and assist district relocation committee for speeding up the process. This will not just enhance the forest but uplift local people. The end result of this innovative approach will be positive impacts on the global problem of climate change. This unique scheme is based on the fact of genuine partnerships between the government and all non-government players both in decision making and implementation. Private does not just mean the private sector. It means all those that are not in government. Public private partnerships will be a key in the implementation of this scheme. Because large budgets are not involved and most of the concepts are already budgeted for I believe this is a doable and practical scheme easily replicable in each state across India. It is also an idea that can be used in the fields of health and education and so many other vital areas where action needs to be redirected and refocused: It is a moment for all those in and out of government to join hands and make some of our vital schemes deliver time bound results that benefit our people.

By October 2015 the scheme was running in four pilot projects including the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and my fingers are crossed that it not only impacts on our wild landscapes but becomes a new idea for all the other regions in India to follow.



Suzanne has specialized in wolf conservation in the western USA since 1988. She served as a 1995/1996 Yellowstone and Idaho wolf reintroduction team member and is Defenders of Wildlife's regional wolf expert. She has tracked, aerial surveyed, and howled with wolves in the wild; teaches about their ecological importance; and helps support state, federal and tribal wolf conservation efforts.

www.defenders.org



WOLVES: RETURN TO THE WILD

SUZANNE ASHA STONE
NORTHERN ROCKIES REPRESENTATIVE
DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE, IDAHO

It was a bitterly cold winter morning when the convoy departed down the ice covered forest service road near Salmon, Idaho. Our cargo was of immense controversy – so much so that Idaho's governor threatened to call out the National Guard to stop us at the state border. Decades after scientists first called for the restoration of wolves in the Northern Rockies, the first four wolves had arrived in Idaho and were being transported to their release in the Frank Church River of No Return, the largest federally managed forested wilderness in the continental USA.

In 1995, local opposition to wolves was dangerously high. Although generations had passed since the last wolves in the region were killed by cattle and sheep ranchers, their descendants still felt there was no room for wolves. Anti-wolf rallies had taken place. Amidst this political maelstrom, we arranged for the wolves to be held in a secure warehouse for the next night until we were ready to take them to the release site.

In the early dawn on the morning of their release, I returned to check on the wolves. They were quiet but keenly observant of every move. I approached one of the cages and looked inside. It was the first time I locked eyes with a wild wolf and I was surprised by the depth of intelligence and curiosity that met and held my gaze. These were not a dog's eyes. They were far more ancient and wild, and piercingly self-aware. He was the first wild wolf I'd met in such proximity but he would not be the last.



Photo Credit: US Fish and Wildlife Service -Nez Perce elders blessing wolves on their way to the Idaho release 1995 USFWS. And Suzanne Stone,1996, British Columbia Yellowstone/Idaho Wolf Reintroduction Transport Station.

Not all local communities opposed the return of wolves to Idaho. In a simple but heartfelt blessing ceremony, Nez Perce tribal elders welcomed the wolves back personally and blessed their restoration. Former Chairman of the tribe and my college internship mentor- Charles "Pete" Hayes - had stepped forward to assist with restoring wolves. He explained that the Nez Perce believed wolves were their elders and by restoring them, an important part of Nez Perce culture would also be restored. The quiet, patient support of the tribe for wolves was an important contrast at a time when fear of wolves' return among many locals persisted.

Despite the political controversy on the morning of January 14, 1995, a group of biologists, wildlife advocates, and local officials set out in a caravan of heavy duty trucks following behind a large snowplow that cleared our road to the edge of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. The "Frank" as dubbed by locals is a posthumous tribute to Idaho Senator Frank Church who, twenty years before his death in 1984, was the floor sponsor of the national Wilderness Act. The Frank remains the largest forested wilderness area in the continental USA.

The journey into Idaho's backcountry that day was perilous. The road was covered in a thick sheet of ice as it edged above the ice-choked but deep Salmon River. We removed our seat belts to avoid being trapped if our vehicle slid off the ice covered road and down into the freezing waters below. The slow crawl down the road took hours of white knuckle driving before we reached our destination. The campground at Corn Creek was peacefully quiet but walking on the ice turned out to be harder than driving on it. We all slipped around in walk-skate fashion doing our best to carefully unload the shipping crates with the four bewildered wolves inside. Within minutes of our arrival, the first wolf with her radio collar -- vividly decorated with the name "Moonstar Shadow" by the students in Idaho's Blaine County -- was bounding her way through the snow. I realized I was still holding my breath when after running a few hundred feet, she stopped and turned back to look at us before disappearing into the woods. The next wolf, the large silver male I'd met the night before, ran about 15 yards before stopping to make his mark on his new world. The students at Lapwai Nez Perce School had decorated his collar with the name "Chat Chaht", which means "older brother" in their language. Tears blurred my vision as I thought of Pete Hayes, who would have approved deeply of this name, but who passed away only months before the wolf reintroduction.

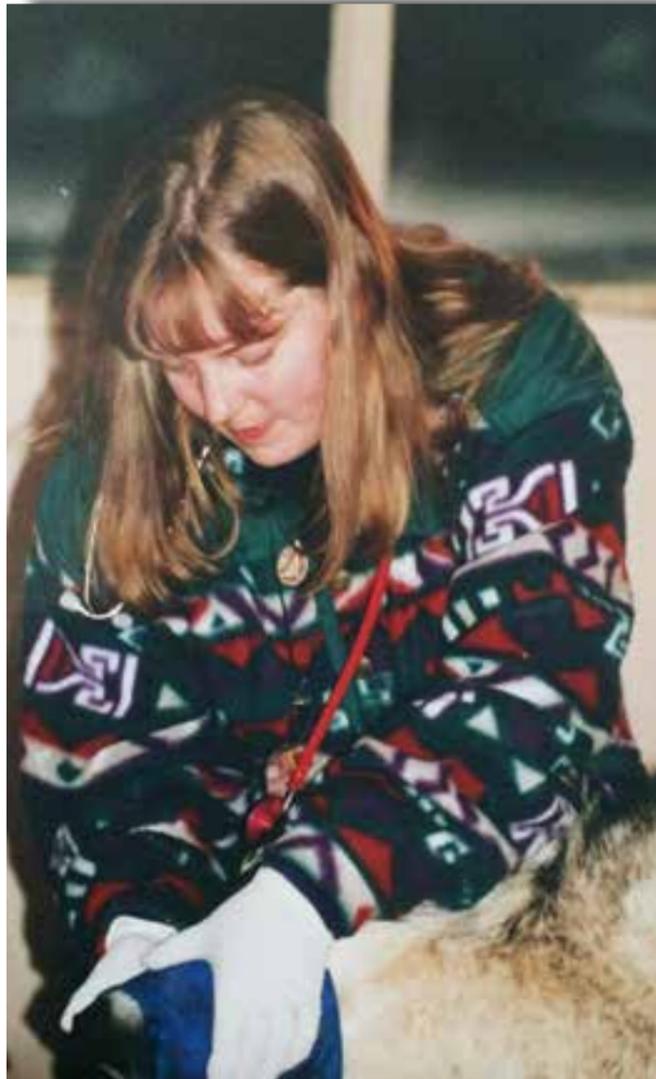
Suddenly aware that people were staring at me, I heard my name called by the lead biologists on the team. "Suzanne, this one is yours..." they said. Her name was spelled out in a colorful design on her radio collar: "Akiata." She was a young black wolf with green eyes and very reluctant to leave the safety of her travel kennel. After some shaking and a few encouraging words, she shot out of her kennel, gracefully sprinting through the snow without looking back. The students of McCall Donnelly Junior High had chosen her name and designed her radio collar. They would stay connected with this wolf by monitoring her wide roaming adventures through the Track-A-Wolf program. And, nearly 18 years later, I met one of those students who decided to pursue a doctorate in wildlife conservation, which was inspired by his experience following Akiata. The last wolf was named "Kelly", her collar simply decorated by the students of St. Maries School in northern Idaho. After the wolves disappeared, we felt the gravity of what just happened. Wolves were back in Idaho after an absence of nearly a century. The Frank Church Wilderness was wild again and wolves would soon fill the forests with their ancient soulful songs. We cried, hugged each other, opened champagne and gave our toasts to the wolves.



Photo Credit: US Fish and Wildlife Service



Suzanne Stone. 1996. British Columbia Yellowstone/Idaho Wolf Reintroduction Transport Station. Photo Credit: US Fish and Wildlife Service



There were several more wolf releases over the next year, totaling a founding population of 35 wolves. That spring, wolf pups were born in Idaho's mountain regions; the first generation of hope of restoring ecosystem diversity for wildlife conservationists and scientists and the restoration of a lost cultural wildlife heritage for native people. Still opposed to the return of wolves, when Idaho's state legislature made it illegal for state wildlife managers to help with wolf management, the Nez Perce tribe stepped up to take the formal lead on the ground instead. Their wildlife scientists carefully monitored the wolf population for the next decade. And as with most voids in nature, over the next decade, the wolf population grew and expanded their range.

Today, wolf range continues to expand as wolves have returned to Oregon, Washington, and California. And what was once thought impossible – the coexistence of wolves and livestock on the same landscape – is not only feasible but also desired by conscientious consumers who selectively prefer wildlife-friendly agricultural products. These wildlife friendly ranchers and farmers are pioneers in their own right of nonlethal deterrent strategies that better protect livestock by reducing impacts to wildlife.

They are developing new tools like siren alarms and strobe lights and enhancing old ones like livestock guarding dogs and fencing to keep livestock safer from wolves and other wild predators.

One of the best examples is the Wood River Wolf Project in Idaho. In 2008, a handful of ranchers, environmentalists, and agency wildlife managers began a landmark demonstration project in central Idaho to test if nonlethal wolf and livestock management could effectively minimize losses of livestock to wolves. Field technicians worked with sheep herders to monitor wolves and pack denning activity and to reduce attractants like livestock carcasses while using nonlethal deterrents including increased human supervision, sound and light deterrents, multiple livestock guard dogs after denning season, portable fencing, and other methods to keep wolves away. Over the past eight years, this pilot project has evolved into a full grown collaborative partnership among large sheep operations, state and federal agencies, and academic institutions. It has expanded in size from a few hundred miles to 1000 square miles and is successfully protecting approximately 20,000 sheep during the grazing season from June through October losing only 30 sheep to wolves in total.



Photo: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife [LINK](#)
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Photo credit: Dan Stahler, Yellowstone National Park

This is a far lower loss rate than adjacent sheep grazing areas where ranchers and government agencies rely more on killing wolves rather than proactively using nonlethal methods to prevent conflicts with livestock. These practical alternatives to killing wolves don't require more money, greater effort, or even difficult training to adopt. However, they do require a different frame of mind. If historically-held animosity toward wolves is based on threats to livestock production, then it just makes sense to proactively prevent these losses by working with nature rather than against it. Together, we are finding these nonlethal solutions that are cost effective and more sustainable over the long-term.

Since the wolf reintroductions in 1995 and 1996, I have tracked wolves, howled with them, mourned their losses, and celebrated their expansion to Oregon, Washington and California.

I still feel there is nothing more magical in nature than hearing a family of wolves' song echo through the forests. It is a sound that resonates to the core of my being. Along the way, I've worked beside ranchers, researchers, tribal leaders, biologists and other conservationists to help all of us learn how to coexist with wolves and other wildlife.

If we can bring back wolves, we can and should restore other native species that enrich the world's biodiversity. They deserve our best efforts to protect their future as our wild elders and have much still to teach us of our own connection to the earth.

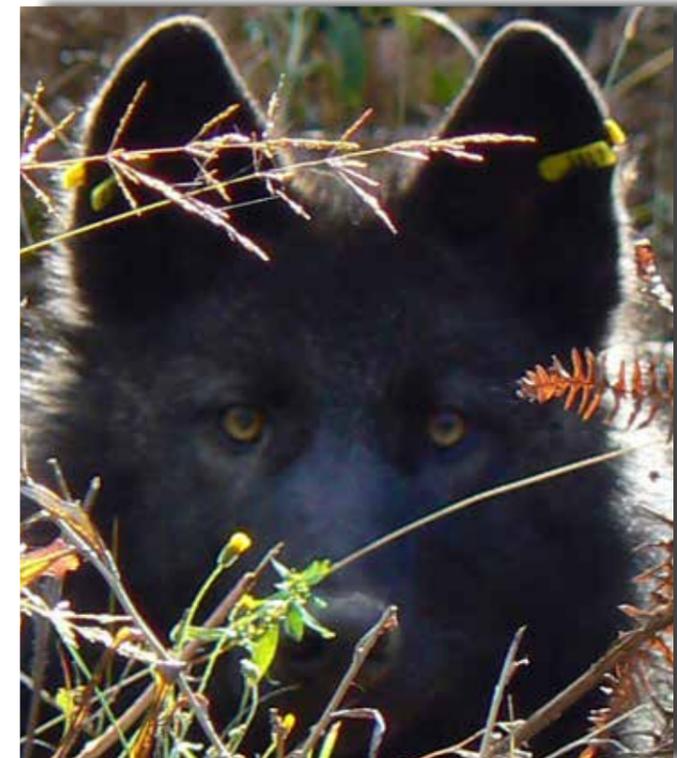


Photo: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife [LINK](http://www.liveencounters.net)
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“We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature and living by complicated artifice, man in civilization surveys the creature through the glass of his knowledge and sees thereby a feather magnified and the whole image in distortion. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate for having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein do we err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with the extension of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings: they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth.”

— Henry Beston, *The Outermost House: A Year of Life On The Great Beach of Cape Cod*



L to R: Idaho Blaine County Commissioner Larry Schoen, Suzanne Stone and retired US Fish and Wildlife Idaho Wolf Recovery Coordinator Carter Niemeyer at Defenders' HQ in Washington DC.





Sybelle Foxcroft

Director of

Conservation & Environmental Education 4 Life ([CEE4Life](#))

Savage

There is something terribly wrong in the world of conservation and animal ethics. It is nearly as if somewhere in time there was a split in the human humane genes that resulted in three distinct types of people.

1. Human beings that care deeply for animals and nature and will actively work to wards protection and sustainability,
2. Human beings that sit on the fence and ultimately do nothing, and
3. Human beings that destroy animals and nature.

Of course there is always going to be good and bad in every corner of the world, but these days we are witnessing some of the most atrociously cruel, intensely murderous and deliberate focused genocidal acts being unleashed upon animals, and it is sickening.

From the slaughter of the Taiji dolphins, the spearing of bulls, the massacre of elephants for ivory, crush videos, fake traditional medicines, the abusive live export, tiger farms, puppy farms, canned hunting, horror zoo situations, animal prostitution and raping, etc.

The list is so long, so brutal, so inhuman. If you try and learn how these people work and why they commit these acts without any real emotion, it means allowing your psyche to walk into a very dark and twisted place where you can never un-see or un-hear these things again.

It takes a special kind of person to do animal rescue work as one must have a strong grip on their emotions due to the things that are seen and the job that must be done. But also because the situations can vary immensely from a relatively easy rescue or rehome, to the opposite of walking into the depths danger and high risk. Yes, it takes a special type of person to do these things.

There are the successes but on many occasions, in order to bring humane care or protection to a suffering animal or an animal in peril, the path to rescue or safety is filled with a gauntlet of obstacles ranging from political reasons, corruption, ignorance, lack of education regarding animal welfare or ethics, and one of the main one's is simply and horribly the lack of the care factor or sensitivity chip towards the animals we share the earth with.



Trade in Wildlife: L to R: Tigers and Ligons for sale in Indonesia. Photographs by Sybelle Foxcroft

Why is it so hard to help a suffering creature or an animal in a dire situation?

For example, the case of Melani the Sumatran Tiger, who was poisoned with formaldehyde tainted meat due to human's saving money and buying cheap festering meat, and then left to suffer for years. How did those who had her in their care ignore this? And why did it have to take begging politicians to allow that help... And having to prove that she was in dire need even though any one could visually see the suffering let alone what was actually going on inside Melani's body. And only after the massive international outcry did a ministerial order follow. And finally after 5 years of suffering, aid was granted to this beautiful critically endangered tiger. This is insanity.

Then there are the cases of the numerous wild animals being hunted to extinction because of poaching syndicates slaughtering iconic species for the 3000 year old myths of the fake traditional Chinese medicine that uses animal body... Turning beautiful living beings into a bottle of lies sold as fake magical cures for thousands and millions of dollars.

Or the relentless slaughter of elephants for their Ivory, cutting off their faces and leaving their dead bodies to rot in order for humans to own morbid trinkets and decorations. This list of sickening human activities against animals is endless.

But in order to stop these things or bring an end to the suffering of animals whether they are wild or captive, evidence must be gathered and presented. That in itself is an enormous, difficult and often a dangerous job to do.

The amount of conservationists, animal rescuers, researchers and animal loving humans that have lost their lives trying to protect creatures from extinction or aid a suffering animal, is mortifying. It should be clearly understood that people who do this work could quite easily lose their lives at any time. The blasé manner in which some people think of environmental and animal protectors as "tree hugging hippies" living the good life, is the furthest thing from the truth.

Right now, friends of mine are risking their lives out in the night in areas of Africa, Arabic countries, USA, Australia, SE Asia, India and many other places.

This danger has been happening for years - [Dian Fossey](#) - Rwanda, [George Adamson](#) - Kenya, [Jairo Mora Sandoval](#) - Costa Rica, [Gregory Gibbard](#) - Zimbabwe, [Dr Ymke Warren](#) - Cameroon, [Prajob Naowa-opas](#) - Thailand, [Shehla Masood](#) - India, [Jopi Teguh Lesmana Perangin-angin](#) - Indonesia, between 2002 - 2013 [448 Brazilian environmentalists were killed](#), the list is endless.

To rescue or protect animals, especially the iconic and critically endangered animals, the conservationist or rescuer needs skills that go beyond any normal job.

Once there was a tiger who I worked with in SE Asia who lived in a facility and whose eyes were being eaten away by infection and ulcers. I conveyed the tiger's condition to the attention of the staff and head of this place, naively thinking that they didn't realise how bad this tiger's condition was. Unfortunately, I was to find out that the staff knew about the tiger's condition for a few years and that only a small amount of veterinary treatment was given to her. It was evident the minor treatment did not work and that she needed a higher level of treatment. When I asked if they would help her I was informed that too much money had been spent on her already and that the facility was not going to spend any more money on her. This sent me into a desperate search to raise money for the treatment. The operation was \$1200 AU, I had \$1140 AU and couldn't get the last \$60. This tiger suffered until her eyes were eaten away, right to the nerves.

Many other tigers in this facility were suffering and as I looked further into the situation it became obvious these tigers were for money only. Then came the discovery of the other physical abuses, then the wildlife trade. Then came the decision to try and help them, the gathering of evidence, the massive obstacles, the threats, the liaison with authorities, disappearing tigers, corruption and the dark campaign to end this suffering continues.

Yes there is something terribly wrong in the world of conservation and animal ethics. Do not take those that are on the ground doing this work for granted. It is very hard to achieve the positive outcomes, and sadly more often than not, it is savage. Bless the animal lovers and conservationists of the world, keep them safe, and keep them in your heart.



A young elephant screamed as young men stabbed nails into her ears and feet. The animal was tied up and immobilized in a small, wooden cage. In addition to beatings, elephant-handlers use sleep-deprivation, hunger, and thirst to "break" the elephant's spirit and make them submissive to their owners. Tourists from all over the world pay good money to take elephant rides in the forest, or watch them perform in shows. But the process of domesticating these animals is something few outsiders see. For example, elephants in the crush are taught to raise their feet on command so owners can easily move them. Men give orders enforced by stabbing at the animals' legs with sticks that have nails on the end. Mistakes are punished with beatings.

Photograph of elephant: www.occupyforanimals.net

THE CRUSH- HOW SADISM IS USED TO DOMESTICATE ELEPHANTS IN PARTS OF THAILAND

Very recently I spend some time in and around Chiang Mai, a city in the northern part of Thailand. While traveling in the remote highlands, west of the village of Mae Jaem, I heard a sound that is still ringing in my ears. A young elephant screamed as young men stabbed nails into her ears and feet. The animal was tied up and immobilized in a small, wooden cage. Her cries were the only sounds I could hear in this otherwise quiet countryside.

The cage is called a "training crush." It's the centerpiece of a centuries-old ritual in northern Thailand designed to domesticate young elephants. In addition to beatings, elephant-handlers use sleep-deprivation, hunger, and thirst to "break" the elephants' spirit and make them submissive to their owners. *"It's a ritual that exists, in varying forms and degrees of cruelty, in virtually every country in Asia that has domesticated elephants,"* explained Richard Lair, an American expatriate and international relations officer for *Thailand's Elephant Conservation Center* in Lampang. Lair has studied domesticated elephants for more than 20 years and is author of the UN report [Gone Astray: The Care and Management of the Asian Elephant in Domesticity](#).

It seemed that there is the belief it to be important to control the animal one needs to make the elephant feel fear and pain. There are many who are outspoken critics of the 'crush' and whose business activities around elephants seems to be focused on care and not exploitation but there are still others who exploit. There is the belief in Thailand that elephants helped build their nation. For centuries they were used to transport, breakdown buildings, even used in war. The elephants became cultural icons and in some way symbols of Thailand's king's divine right to rule. People 'used them' as good luck-charms, even religious icons. The status of the animal has not influenced the fact that they are now near-extinction in Thailand. The World Conservation Union, based in Gland, Switzerland, lists the Asian elephant as endangered.

A century ago, there were 100,000 elephants in Thailand. That number has fallen 95 percent, primarily due to loss of habitat. Of a few thousand elephants left, about half are domestic, according to information I have received from a local. There is still for too little done to really protect them.

Thai law is quite ambivalent in regards to the animals as domestic elephants are considered livestock and therefore under Thai law, they're no different from buffalo or cattle. Small fines, rarely enforced, are the only penalties for abusing livestock. Most domestic elephants now work in tourism. Worldwide fascination with these giants fuels a thriving industry. Tourists from all over the world pay good money to take elephant rides in the forest, or watch them perform in shows. But the process of domesticating these animals is something few outsiders see. For example, elephants in the crush are taught to raise their feet on command so owners can easily move them. Men give orders enforced by stabbing at the animals' legs with sticks that have nails on the end. Mistakes are punished with beatings.

Elephants are typically covered in bloody wounds and rope burns when released from the crush after three to six days. They are quickly tied up again; the training continues for weeks.

Are there alternatives? A new training-method should depend on rewards, not punishment, a local told me.

But 'the crush' thrives in isolated villages where narrow dirt roads are the only connection to the outside world. Few outsiders venture into these remote areas. Isolation is what allowed the crush to continue unchanged for hundreds of years, and protects it still.



THE APRIL 2012 EDITION OF LIVE ENCOUNTERS FEATURED THE WORK OF ELEPHANT AID INTERNATIONAL (EAI) AND ITS FOUNDER, CAROL BUCKLEY. HERE IS AN UPDATE ON WHAT EAI HAS ACCOMPLISHED SINCE THEN.

ELEPHANT AID INTERNATIONAL CONTINUES OUR TRANSFORMATIVE WORK IN ASIA!



Clockwise: Carol after Mee Choks chain free corral was completed (BLES), BLES chain free Thailand, volunteers, mahouts and local labor.



Khorsor-hattisar-Nepal/EAI

Chain Free Means Pain Free -- Nepal

Elephants in Asia traditionally have been kept on chains when they're not working.

In 2013, EAI designed and built Nepal's – and Asia's -- first solar powered chain-free elephant corral in collaboration with National Trust for Nature Conservation, the country's leading environmental organization.

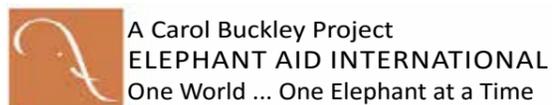
The project was so successful that the government of Nepal asked EAI to convert its 15 elephant hattisars (stables), which house 63 elephants used on anti-poaching patrols in Chitwan National Park, to chain-free.

EAI added spacious custom designed chain-free corrals to the outdoor stables, using state-of-the-art, solar-powered fencing. The fencing emits a vibration that is harmless to elephants, but keeps them safely in their corrals.

Most of the elephants received their own one-plus acre corrals. In a break with the tradition of keeping elephants separately, others, including groups of mothers and calves, were released into multi-acre shared corrals.

All the corrals allow the elephants to move at will and engage in natural behavior such as dusting, foraging, sleeping, bathing, exploring, playing and socializing with their loved ones.

The project, jointly funded by many generous EAI's donors and in-kind support from the Nepalese government, was completed in April 2015.



A Carol Buckley Project
ELEPHANT AID INTERNATIONAL
One World ... One Elephant at a Time



Pilot project NTNC, Nepal/EAI

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Lambodhar Prasad/EAI

Pilot project for bulls

Among the elephants who work on anti-poaching patrols in Chitwan National Park are 10 mature ivory-carrying males (bulls). Because their tusks don't conduct electricity and they are extremely strong, solar-powered fencing won't contain them, especially when they're in musth (a period of heightened sexual readiness when bulls are volatile and unpredictable).

EAI has a solution.

Working with its Nepalese partners on a pilot project, EAI custom designed and plans to build a steel pipe enclosure for one of the bulls, 60-year-old Lambodhar Prasad, who has spent his entire life on chains.

The Lambodhar Prasad Pilot Project: Freeing Nepal's Chain Gang will demonstrate that even captive-held bull elephants can live chain free safely. The four-acre enclosure, which will include its own piece of forest, will enable mahouts (elephant handlers) to work safely with Lambodhar Prasad even when he's in musth (hormonal) session.



Lambodhar Prasad/EAI



Nursery at Khorsor, Nepal/EAI

Nepal: Tiger Tops Resort

After months of planning, EAI will work with Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge to build chain-free corrals for its 17 elephants. At the same time, the lodge will phase out traditional elephant rides. Instead, it will offer visitors the chance to walk with elephants so they can observe and learn with respect. This is a very exciting development; EAI hopes that other elephant owners will soon follow suit.

India

In 2014, EAI collaborated with PETA/India to design chain-free corrals for India's first free-roaming elephant sanctuary at Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP), just outside Bangalore. The 49.5-hectare facility is the home of Sunder, a 15-year-old bull who arrived there after a high-profile rescue last year, and 15 other elephants. EAI also designed a one-acre steel-pipe corral to contain Sunder when he's in musth.

Thailand: Boon Lott's Elephant Sanctuary (BLES) and Friends of the Asian Elephant (FAE) Hospital

In August 2015, EAI completed solar powered chain-free corrals at both locations. Modeled after EAI's successful projects in Nepal, this groundbreaking project—a first for Thailand—freed 17 elephants. Playful calves, maturing adolescents, aged females and a 62-year-old bull elephant with enormous tusks now live chain-free thanks to this deceptively simple, yet amazingly effective elephant containment system



BLES herd, Thailand/EAI



Pedicure at BLES, Thailand/EAI
© www.liveencounters.net december 2015 volume four



Pedicure, Nepal/EAI

Sumatra

Responding to a request from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), in July 2015 EAI visited the home of the Tesso Nilo Elephant Flying Squad. This team of four captive-held elephants and eight mahouts patrols settlements on the edges of Tesso Nilo National Park to help reduce conflict with the local farmers. EAI has designed solar powered chain-free corrals and construction will begin in the coming months.

Nepal: Pedicures

Foot health is a serious issue for captive-held elephants. Inactivity, poor husbandry practices, too much time spent standing and walking on unnaturally hard surfaces such as pavement and concrete can cause thin, uneven and bruised foot pads and cracked nails, leading to infection and osteomyelitis (terminal bone disease).

In collaboration with the National Trust for Nature Conservation and Nepal's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, EAI provides free pedicures and mahout instruction for government and privately owned elephants twice a year. Now in its fifth year, the program improves mahout skills and prevents foot disease for nearly 200 elephants.

EAI's goal is to create similar foot care and educational outreach programs throughout Asia.



Pedicure, Nepal/EAI



Volunteers, mahouts and local labor/EAI

Free the Elephants Volunteer Program

EAI's Chain Free Means Pain Free-Nepal was aided by a crew of 38 volunteers from all round the globe who participated in its "Free the Elephants Volunteer Project." Volunteers from the U.S., France, Thailand, India, Britain, Australia, Germany and Nepal worked side-by-side with local Nepalese laborers to build 32 chain-free corrals.

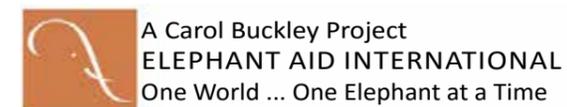
Elephant Sanctuary Search

Elephant Aid International has launched a search for land to build a new elephant sanctuary in the U.S. Elephant rescue efforts have nearly come to a standstill. On the one hand, the zoo industry has successfully fended off campaigns to retire elephants to sanctuaries. On the other, both of the country's two accredited sanctuaries have experienced challenges to accepting new elephants.

As a result, elephants languish in less than suitable situations for extended periods of time or are not rescued at all.

EAI will build on the experience gained by both U.S. sanctuaries, scientific knowledge and our hands-on experience in Asia to create the next generation of sanctuary that combines the development and use of progressive management practices, noninvasive research, community education and international advocacy to improve the lives of elephants worldwide.

During its first five years, thanks to the generous support of its donors and the active participation of its partners, EAI has had a measurable impact on the lives of elephants in Asia. We hope you will join us as we take on new challenges in Asia and the U.S. Learn more at elephantaid.org, and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) @ElephantAidIntl.





Drh (Veterinarian) I. Gede Nyoman Bayu Wirayudha

Founding Director of **FNPF** (Friends of the National Parks Foundation/ Yayasan Pecinta Taman Nasional), Bali, Indonesia.

BALI STARLING BACK FROM THE BRINK

How an innovative conservation project has brought Bali's Starling back from the edge of extinction

The tourist island of Bali may strike you as an unusual place to find one of the world's rarest and most beautiful birds. And without the efforts of Friends of the National Parks Foundation (FNPF), the Bali Starling would have joined the dodo and the passenger pigeon into extinction. The bird itself is also known as Rothschild's Mynah (*Leucopsar Rothschildi*), a more fitting name for such an exquisite creature, and is described as Critically Endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the highest classification for wildlife species at risk of extinction.

Widely considered the most beautiful of the minah family, the Bali Starling is a pure white, medium-sized bird with black tips on the wings and tail, and a drooping white crest, which it raises during social interactions. The skin around the eyes, and on the legs is a lovely and unusual sky blue. The birds have a grey or brown beak. When the birds are foraging, for fruit and insects, they make a chattering call, as they fly between coconut palms and trees.

By 2005 the wild population of the bird in Bali, the only place in the world that it is found in the wild, had fallen to less than 10, an unsustainable number, and urgent interventions were needed if the species was to be saved. Poaching by organised gangs for the highly lucrative international caged bird market had reduced the bird's wild population to a critical level.

Dr Bayu Wirayudha, a vet and bird specialist then assisting the Begawan Foundation, realised that captive breeding, for release, was the only solution, and from two captive-bred birds sourced from breeders in the UK, managed to successfully breed almost 100 birds. These birds were to form the basis of the current wild population on the island of Nusa Penida.



Former President and First Lady of Indonesia releasing Bali Starling in Nusa Penida. Photograph courtesy FNPF

The next step was to set up a bird sanctuary to protect the birds on the off-shore island-group of Nusa Penida which lies off the coast of south-east Bali. The group of islands consists of Nusa Penida, and two smaller islands, Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Ceningan. The birds are not strong fliers, and the island is just far enough away to prevent them from flying to the mainland. Bayu realised that the project would fail without community protection and involvement, so he embarked on the task of talking to each of the forty-six villages on the island group, enlisting their help in protecting the birds. His master-stroke, however, was to integrate the conservation project into the spiritual life of the island. Bayu, himself a Balinese Hindu, whose beliefs are the anchor for much of his conservation work, had the insight that religious leaders were crucial to this process. After a painstaking consultative process, all villages on the Nusa Penida island-group agreed to pass local village laws (awig-awig) prohibiting the poaching of the Bali Starling.

The captive-bred birds are released during religious ceremonies, and this means that they came under the spiritual protection of a particular temple, prohibiting poaching by the local community, and in the area of the village which the temple serves. It also helped that the local temples are surrounded by small tracts of protected forest, ideal for the birds to roost and feed. FNPF nest-boxes are placed high in the trees surrounding the temples providing a secure nesting place.

In preparation for a bird release ceremony, an FNPF conservationist travels to each temple around the island collecting holy water which is used to bless each Bali Starling. This forms a spiritual bond between the community and the birds – ensuring obligatory social and moral protection under traditional law. On release day, a priest conducts traditional Hindu ceremonial prayers and blessings before the birds fly to freedom.



Wild Bali Starling eating a papaya. Photograph courtesy FNPF.

“The last census in 2014 shows that at least 66 Bali Starlings live in the Bali Bird Sanctuary on Nusa Penida almost all wild hatched birds,” said Dr Wirayudha, “and the future of the species is secure. Our unique holistic Conservation and Community approach has been successful as the local community also benefits greatly from the Bali Starling project. Despite it being a relatively poor island, the local community actively protect the valuable birds from being stolen and sold. I think this is an excellent example of sustainable conservation at work in the real world.”



Bali Starling couple inside FNPf breeding cage ready to be released © Cok Puspa. Photograph courtesy FNPf

The birds themselves go through a “training program” to prepare them for life in the wild, during which they are taught to forage for food, and to identify suitable food sources. Breeding of chicks was originally conducted on Nusa Penida itself, but this has now been moved to the FNPf Centre near Ubud in central Bali, where Dr Wirayudha is based, and where there is a more reliable supply of insects and fruit for the young birds. Bayu also realised that involving the local population of the islands, mostly farmers and sea-weed farmers, was vital if the project was to succeed. Reforestation, a key conservation activity on Nusa Penida, is supported by the FNPf tree nursery, run by staff and volunteers. Together with local people, the island’s forests, road sides and gardens, are regenerated in the wet season by replanting tens of thousands of native tree saplings each year.

FNPf staff and volunteers monitor every sapling planted for three years to ensure a minimum 70% survival rate. The reforested native trees, of ten or more different species, many fruit-bearing, provide food and shelter for birdlife, including Bali Starlings, reducing soil erosion, increasing rainfall, and providing economic benefits to the community. The course of this reforestation activity, FNPf have learned many lessons about which tree species are likely to survive and grow best, and which are most likely to provide food for the various bird species on the island. Local people have taken to this activity with enthusiasm. They are encouraged to come to the FNPf tree nursery, and take saplings to plant around their homes, or on the road sides.

The result is a greener and more hospitable environment for the Bali Starling, and other birds. FNPf’s holistic approach to conservation also includes educating local children about the importance of protecting our environment, and providing English lessons and other support for schools. FNPf also provides scholarships for young people from the local community to study at schools and universities on the main island of Bali, something which hitherto had not been possible for economic reasons. As one indicator of the success of the community involvement in the project, a group of villages from another part of Bali, Besi Kalung, have approached FNPf to ask them to operate a similar project in the area of their villages.

In 2007, in an unusual and rare show of support for FNPf’s conservation program, the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudiyono, travelled to Nusa Penida and released several Bali Starlings.

This was an important sign of government support for the FNPf initiative, and gained wide media coverage both in Indonesia and overseas. The project has also garnered recognition from conservationists and researchers worldwide. In 2014, FNPf in Nusa Penida was visited by a National Geographic research ship with more than eighty Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (UK) philanthropists and lecturers on board – to witness a return to the wild of Bali Starlings at a traditional Balinese Hindu temple ceremony – during a ‘Critical Species and Islands-at-Risk’ expedition through Borneo, Bali and Komodo.

“The Bali Starling is much loved around the world and we can see the way you are working with the local community to protect the Bali starling will lead to great success – you will save the Bali Starling,” Lee Durrell, Honorary Director of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust told the leader of the local government during a ceremony at the FNPf Nusa Penida conservation centre.

“It’s a good conservation example to the rest of the world that if you respect local traditions, and work very closely with local people you succeed – it’s not easy, but it works,” said Lee Durrell, who had heard of the work of Dr Wirayudha and FNPf to save the Bali Starling. Lee Durrell also said that she had waited for two years to meet Bayu on this expedition and to attend a release ceremony on Nusa Penida.

As news of the Bali Starling initiative has spread around the world, researchers, conservationists, students, film-makers and journalists have come to the Nusa Penida Bird Sanctuary to witness the project for themselves. FNPf also runs a very active volunteering scheme, with volunteers coming from around the world to help with conservation and reforestation activities.

“The last census in 2014 shows that at least 66 Bali Starlings live in the Bali Bird Sanctuary on Nusa Penida almost all wild hatched birds,” said Dr Wirayudha, *“and the future of the species is secure. Our unique holistic Conservation and Community approach has been successful as the local community also benefits greatly from the Bali Starling project. Despite it being a relatively poor island, the local community actively protect the valuable birds from being stolen and sold. I think this is an excellent example of sustainable conservation at work in the real world.”*



ANCIENT FIRE

VISITING BENA VILLAGE IN FLORES

NGADA, BAJAWA,
EAST NUSA TENGARRA, INDONESIA

JOO PETER

Visual Artist, Photographer, Filmmaker
Helibronn, Germany



The Ngada people of Flores are still living in an ancient matriarchal society: women are head of the clans. When a couple marries, the man moves to the family of the woman and works for them. Houses are symbols of female power and the process of building a new house is followed by a ceremony, where the men sacrifice animals, cooking and sharing all in a big feast.

Bena village is situated below volcano Inerie not far from the coast. The Ngada people are traditionally animistic and worship their ancestors.

The chief mother of a clan is called **Ine**. There are also wise old men called **Masolaki**, respected for their experience and living memory of the culture, keeping village and clan history alive in oral tradition.

I visited Bena village for a major event...the ritual of 'rebuilding' the house of the clan matriarch. The final part, setting up the roof, is celebrated with music, sacrifices, and lots of Brem, palm wine. Though the food is simple the focus is on communal feasting, a very old tradition.

The Portuguese had visited this area and converted many to Christianity. Yet beneath the veneer of *westernisation of belief* there remains embedded a rich cultural heritage that is an integral part of daily life.

The following photographs guide you through colourful traditions that reflect the cultural diversity of Indonesia.

Opposite: The proud matriarch of the clan watches her men rebuilding her house. Her teeth are black from chewing betel nut, as it was usual almost everywhere in Asia in the past. Women in Bali used to do it, even Geishas in Japan.





While the celebration goes on, black fibres of sugar palms are turned into strings and ropes in a few minutes, and used to bind thatch for the roof. It is stunning to see how the old men swiftly process natural materials into construction parts for the house.





Shaped like an umbrella and covered with thatch, shrines for male ancestors called ngadhu are placed in the center of a village (here behind Moses working on thatch for the roof). Their female counterpart are called bhaga and are shaped like a little house, symbolizing the sanctuary of the family home and the female body. Each clan has such a shrine.

Brem, palm wine is served to the food.
A simple menu with little to no variations since centuries.
More important is sharing.

“We are not individuals.
We help each other”
Melky, my guide, characterizing his people



When the house of the clan mother is finished, animals are sacrificed and all villagers share a meal.



Megaliths connect to the supernatural world.
They help the Ngada communicate with their ancestors.



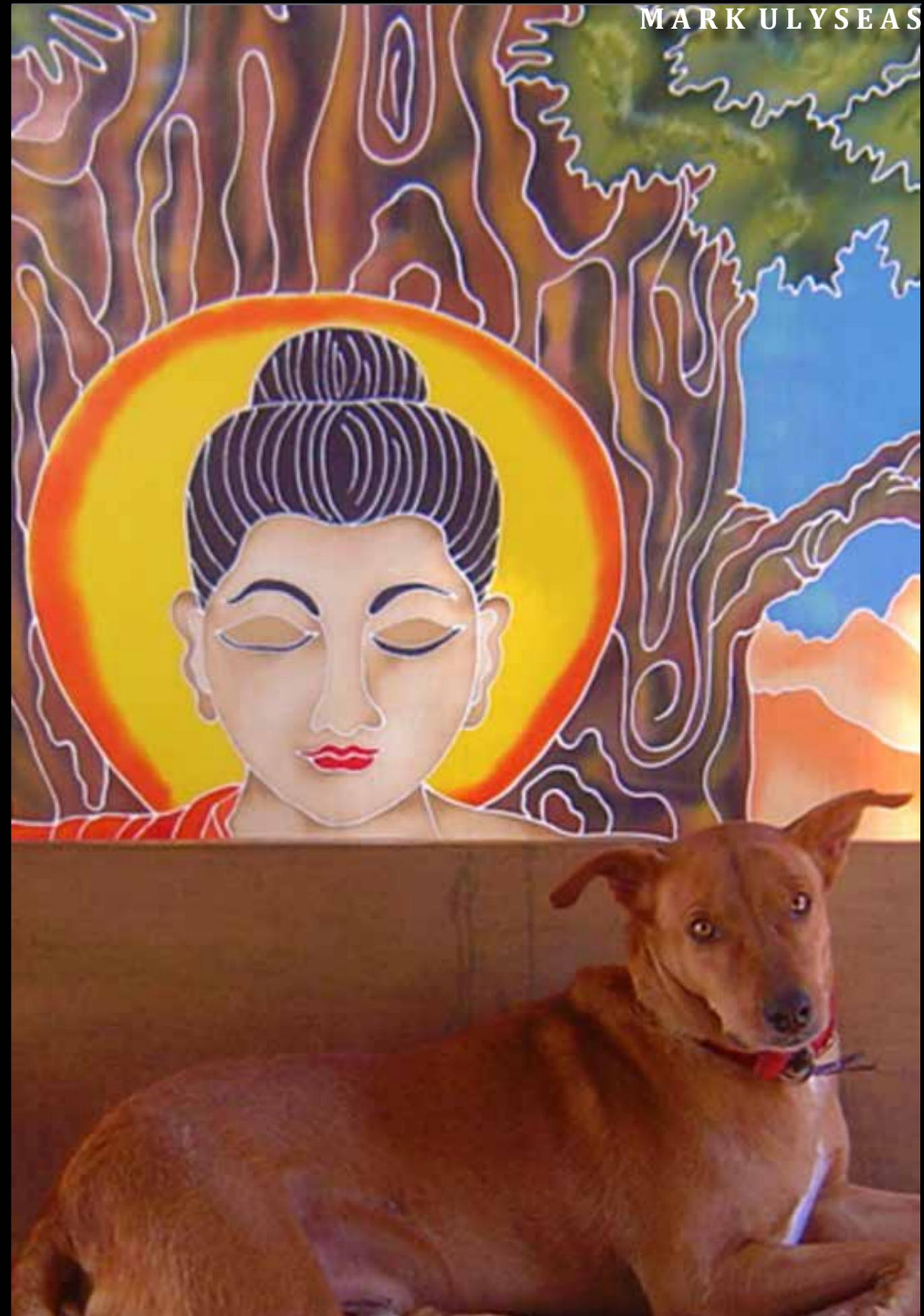
Nature still holds sway and the ancient spirits roam this land that remains fairly uncontaminated by the rampant modernisation that carries with it the non-biodegradable refuse of mankind. Bena still remains unsullied.



FRIENDS I MET ON THE WAY

Photographs by
MARK ULYSEAS

These are photographs of friends I met on the way in four countries. They were my companions for a while, sharing my food, shelter, joys and times of great sadness. They taught me of the spirits that rest within all living things. They never judged me and even in times of anger their gentleness and love kept me from doing things that were not nice. For me, these are my true friends who kept me safe as I navigated dark alleys of the soul.



Rainy - an old soul.



Derrick, my guardian in wild elephant country. One day a leopard took him away.



Tripod, lives on an island. Lost part of his leg to a drunk machete wielding tourist.



Mummy, perpetually pregnant.



Hema, hangs out near a famous seafood restaurant.



Mercy, lost an eye to a stone thrown by a child. Loves all human beings.

Blackie, secretary to Rainy

Live Encounters is celebrating 5 years 2010-2014

Live encounters

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