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AIDS THE EXOTIC PET TRADE

FIGHTING WILDLIFE CRIME:
AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIUS TALLA



WELCOME

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Born Free in the United States. In reminiscing about our many years of protecting wildlife, one particular animal brings to mind the very heart of Born Free's values. Several years ago, a wild black vulture used to hang around my office building. He was one of a large flock that had made the property their home. Perhaps he was the group's emissary – sent to keep an eye on the humans and ensure that we were hospitable neighbors.

On sunny days, I would find him sunbathing, with wings spread wide, taking in the warmth, and hopping about to get my attention (peacocking, if you will). I would watch his flock circle, swoop, and play on the breeze.

Conservationists and ecologists often put the role animals play in the ecosystem front and center. As if their “jobs” are their value. Born Free USA recognizes this importance; it is their natural behavior. We also believe that animals have value because they are individuals. Because they have feelings and families – and because they have unique personalities, just like that vulture outside my old office.



In this edition, you'll learn about the many individual animals you are helping. You'll hear directly from the undercover agent who conducted our trapping investigation (feature story, page 4). You will read about our work to instate international protections for vultures (page 10). We're sharing stories of monkeys at our primate sanctuary (page 6) and we will introduce you to an artist who spent time capturing the essence of some of our monkey residents (page 7).

And, you'll hear from a devoted supporter and wildlife advocate about her visit to Meru and Elsa's Kopje in Kenya (page 14).

As a Born Free USA supporter, I know you see animals as more than specimens with a scientific role to play in the natural world. You see them as individuals. You understand that compassion is an essential part of conservation.



Not everyone has the privilege to get to know an attention-seeking vulture or visit lions, giraffes, and elephants being who they are meant to be in the wild. But, we all can “see” them for who they are and do our best to make this world a better place for them to live.

Thank you all for your support of Born Free USA – and for valuing the individual lives that together we are protecting. Here's to another 20 years of keeping wildlife in the wild!

Warmly,



Angela Grimes
Chief Executive Officer
Born Free USA



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We work to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs.

We seek to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world.

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TRAPPING EXPOSED: BORN FREE USA'S UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATOR SPEAKS OUT

In March, Born Free USA released a groundbreaking undercover trapping investigation in collaboration with The Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International. The investigation findings are harrowing and reveal the full horror of animal trapping in the United States. Below is an edited conversation between Born Free USA Programs Director, Dr. Liz Tyson, and the investigator who captured the report's shocking findings about the investigator's time undercover, what they learned about trapping, and what it was like to enter the world of trappers. To read the full conversation, please visit bornfreeusa.org/trappinginterview.

Dr. Liz Tyson: You have a lot of experience in undercover investigation to help animals, but this was the first time you worked on a trapping investigation. Was there anything that particularly shocked or surprised you during the investigation?

Investigator: Most of my undercover investigation experience has been in highly industrialized animal use settings like factory farms where profit motives are clear, and exploitation is often justified by the businesses as “necessary” for profitability. A remarkable thing about trapping is that the industry continues to exist almost solely because of hobbyists who trap and kill sentient animals for *enjoyment*.

LT: We hear a lot from the trapping community that the reasons for trapping range from protecting a long-standing heritage, to the control of “nuisance” animals, to trapping for fur, to simply doing it for fun. Did you get a sense of the reasons why the trappers you encountered trap?

Investigator: All of these justifications were used by trapping advocates at the convention, but when I was talking with everyday trappers and going out on the line with people doing it, all of those justifications were secondary to the fact that they like to do it for fun.

LT: How do you think the insistence that traps are humane is able to persist when the reality is so clear?

Investigator: The trapping industry knows that the biggest public criticism of their practice is the cruelty of painful traps, animals suffering as they wait, and an excruciating death. This is a valid criticism, but knowing this, the industry spends a lot of time and effort trying to convince both trappers and the public that the process is humane. These manipulation strategies can be effective. That's why it's so important to spread the reality when we have the opportunity.

LT: One trapper spoke of trapping coyotes as vengeance for

“stealing” her kill on a hunt, and another spoke angrily about a coyote who allegedly killed a horse. Do you think this anger drives some trappers? Do they hate the animals, are they indifferent to them, or something else?

Investigator: I don't think most people involved in trapping do it out of pure malice toward the animals, but when people are raised from a young age to see them as soulless beings with feelings that don't truly matter, any negative encounter – no matter how mundane – allows us to latch onto those narratives of vengeance and of certain animals being the inherent “enemy.”

LT: One trapper appeared to reject the idea that animals have feelings. Do you think this is a commonly held view in the trapping community?

Investigator: This is the paradox of trapping in my mind. The most important concept taught to new trappers is to try to see the world

and the natural environment from the animal's perspective. New trappers are encouraged to understand why a coyote may stick to lowlands to avoid being seen, why a raccoon will look to landmarks for navigation, why a fox might fight for their life when trapped, or what considerations a beaver makes when building a home for their family. To take on the mindset of an animal, a trapper *must* acknowledge that the animal has interests, feelings, and desires.

LT: At the convention, a lot was made of the need to get younger people interested in trapping. Do you think that the practice is in decline because younger people don't want to participate, or did you see enthusiasm from younger people you engaged with?

Investigator: The demographics of the convention were stark. The adults were almost exclusively middle-aged white people, and the majority were men. There were almost no young adults or teenagers.

LT: You are out in remote places when you conduct investigations, are you ever fearful for your own

safety, or that you might be found out?

Investigator: As with most jobs, I take great precaution to avoid having my cover blown. Unlike my many previous agricultural and fixed-location cases, I am not able to simply leave if I suspect I may be in danger. When out on the trap line, I was driven to these remote areas by the trappers themselves. Every trapper was armed with at least one rifle, if not other firearms.

LT: As someone who respects animals, your work must be so difficult to do. What are your coping mechanisms while you are working in the field?

Investigator: Despite witnessing a lot of animal abuse in my line of work, it never really gets easier. While I'm out in the field, I just try my best to focus on the task at hand and document everything effectively. I cope in the long term by prioritizing aftercare and surrounding myself with others who respect and care for animals so I don't lose hope for a better world.

LT: How did you get into this line of work?

Investigator: I was drawn to undercover investigations because those same kinds of exposés are what initially motivated my concern for animals. I was lucky enough to be able to meet with a former investigator who recommended me to an organization that equipped me with the skills and knowledge to pursue the work.

LT: What do you hope will come out of this investigation, now that it is public?

Investigator: Aiming for legislative change is always an uphill battle, but this is one industry where I'm hoping we can make progress toward the abolition of such a cruel practice. NTA leadership was very clear that they view the wave of anti-trapping legislation as a real threat to the "tradition."

The conversation continues online! Visit bornfreeusa.org/trappinginterview to read the rest of the interview. To explore our trapping investigation, visit bornfreeusa.org/trappingexposed.

FIGHT TRAPPING – ADOPT A FOX!

You can fight trapping and help vulnerable animals by adopting a fox!

Our anti-trapping efforts are made possible by the generous support of our donors. For just \$52 or \$5 a month, you will help foxes and other animals threatened by trapping and fur farming. Your adoption will come with a personalized certificate, a photo, a fox fact sheet... and for a limited time, an adorable fox toy!

Adopt a fox for yourself or as a gift today at bornfreeusa.org/adopt-a-fox.



A TRAGIC START AND JOYFUL NEW LIFE FOR WILLIS

During the summer of 2021, we welcomed three new arrivals to the sanctuary and were in discussions to bring our final rescue of the year home in September. Gambit the rhesus macaque had been kept as a pet in Las Vegas; Kiki the vervet was caged as a pet in Dallas; Maliki the vervet had bitten his owner in Indiana and needed rehoming urgently; and Picassa the baboon was languishing in a defunct pseudo sanctuary in California. We built new enclosures for those who needed them, and shifted current residents around to make way for the others. Logistics were organized, fundraising was carried out, paperwork was completed and, one-by-one, our new friends arrived.

Everything was going well, but then tragedy struck. Maliki, who had appeared completely healthy, passed away suddenly. Necropsy showed that he had a long-standing, previously undiagnosed heart defect. He was just five years old and had his whole life ahead of him. We were heartbroken

and his new enclosure, built just for him, sat quietly empty.

Then, in September, we received a call. A young vervet, little more than a baby at just three years old, had been confiscated in Chicago. He was being held by animal control; had already escaped his cage once; and the staff – who had no experience dealing with wild animals – were desperate for us to take him.

I don't know what would have become of Willis if we had been unable to give him a home. Few sanctuaries accept vervet monkeys and all of those that do were at capacity, including us. That is, apart from that sad empty space left by Maliki. It seemed like fate. And so it was that, just 48 hours after we learned he existed, I picked Willis up from the airport in Austin to drive him to his forever home at the sanctuary.

Willis was taken from his mother at just a few months, or perhaps even weeks, old. He was kept alone,

illegally, as a pet for three long years in a city environment that could not be further from his natural habitat. He had nothing that a young monkey should have and so it was hardly surprising that, when I pulled back the fabric covering the door of his transport crate that day at the airport, he was spinning in circles and ricocheting from one side of the space to another – a clear sign of stress. I was deeply concerned for his welfare and worried that he had been damaged psychologically by his traumatic start to life.

But, as soon as little Willis had had his health check on arrival and he was let out into his large enclosure, I was disabused of my concerns. While stories like Maliki's weigh heavy on us, stories like Willis' bring us unending joy...

Continue reading this article and learn how Willis has settled into sanctuary life at bornfreeusa.org/joyfullwillis.

BRIGHTEN AN ANIMAL'S LIFE – ADOPT A MONKEY!

When you adopt a monkey, you provide monthly support and comfort to a rescued animal like Billie, a sweet, food-loving vervet who was rescued from a hoarding situation. Billie now has lifetime care at the sanctuary because of compassionate supporters. For only \$1 a week (\$52 a year), you can provide food, shelter, toys, and medical care. As thanks for your commitment, you will receive an adoption certificate, a photo of your monkey, their biography, and a plush toy!

Adopt today at bornfreeusa.org/monkeys

Want a new monkey's story and photo sent to you every month? Join our Monkey of the Month Club!



CAPTURING LIFE AT THE PRIMATE SANCTUARY

Ruth Montiel Arias is a Spanish visual artist and animal rights activist. Her impactful work explores the ways in which humans both exploit and care for nonhuman animals. Born Free USA was delighted to host Ruth as our Artist in Residence for three months last fall. Ruth captured portraits of the monkeys and staff and gained an intimate insight into the day-to-day operation of our primate sanctuary. Here, Ruth talks about some of her favorite images captured during her stay.

India and Gilbert



The truth is that I found it almost impossible to choose just a small number of the sanctuary residents for this article, but I had to include India and Gilbert as, from my first day at the sanctuary, I have had a very special connection with them. I was fortunate enough to share quiet moments of trust with them, and they were kind and patient with me as I waited with my camera to capture the perfect image.

Maude

Maude was one of the residents whose story impacted me most. She spent years in a laboratory, and was



initially extremely nervous around me, particularly when I tried to raise my camera in her direction. So, I spent quiet time every day in her presence and, slowly, her confidence and trust grew. By the end of my stay, she was not only comfortable with me, but she allowed me to photograph her.

Anna



What to say about beautiful Anna. Much like Maude, she was very nervous around me and would initially show signs of stress in my presence, so I would back away and give her space. Her housemate at the time I was there – Lucy – was far more confident and demanded attention directly. This meant that my relationship with Anna developed more slowly, through play and curiosity, as you see here in this photograph. Spying on me with her mirror was a favorite game of hers. As time went on, she allowed me to capture more images.

Doctor J



This photograph is special to me since it was the first time I documented the work Dr. J (Katie Jennings), the sanctuary's veterinarian. In this photograph, Dr. J is performing a castration. Ensuring that the animals do not breed is fundamental to the work of a true sanctuary. Their role is not to create more lives lived in captivity, but to provide a home for life for animals in need.

I would like to end by thanking everyone who makes up the sanctuary team. Being by their side for three months has been an experience, which has left a profound mark on me. I also want to thank all of the sanctuary's supporters and donors, who make the work of creating a true home of love and care for the monkeys possible. A million thanks to you all!

U.S. CAMPAIGN UPDATES

Documenting a Legacy of Shame

Revisiting Born Free's roots, we return to scrutinizing zoos and the detrimental role they play in animal welfare and species conservation in our newest captive elephant report overview, titled *Elephants in Zoos – A Legacy of Shame*. With this report, we honor the elephant who started it all, Pole Pole, whose palpable mental torment and premature death at the London Zoo inspired the creation of the Born Free Foundation in 1991. The report provides the



approximate number of African and Asian elephants held captive throughout Europe, the United Kingdom, and North America (totaling more than 1,000 individuals) and compare the vast and sometimes lethal

discrepancies between the physical, behavioral, and social affordances between captive elephants and their wild counterparts. Globally, deaths of captive elephants have outnumbered births almost every year since 2000. Using case studies from five elephants around the United States, we highlight the persistent and universal issues that captive elephants suffer, including stereotypic behavior, high infant mortality rates, poor health, and reduced life spans. Yet, despite the data indicating that elephants cannot thrive in captivity, the demand for elephants by the zoo industry persists while elephant populations continue to decline in the wild. Our report concludes that elephants should not be kept in captivity. We recommend that the keeping of elephants be phased out to better allocate funding to meaningful *in-situ* conservation efforts.

Explore the report at bornfreeusa.org/elephantsinzoos.



Telling the Stories of Former Pet Monkeys

Born Free USA strives to practice compassionate conservation in every project we undertake. No matter how large-scale the issue, multiplied by however many orders of magnitude, we remember that within the bigger picture remains one individual animal's experience. These individual stories of trauma, abuse, and suffering fuel our fight against the exploitation of wild animals. In October 2021, we launched our report *Public Danger, Private Pain: The Case against the U.S. Primate Pet Trade*, which examined the private trade of nonhuman primates in the United States through public health, animal welfare, sanctuary management, international trade, and legislative lenses to support the Captive Primate Safety Act. Our research indicated that it is legal to own most primate species in almost 60% of the United States, including great ape species like chimpanzees. Most of these primates live solitary lives in small cages, never experiencing proper socialization or enjoying the outdoors, once they develop into the unpredictable and aggressive adult animals they evolved to be. To underline the ethical and safety concerns that owning a nonhuman primate as a pet entails, we featured the stories of three monkeys rescued by the Born Free USA Primate Sanctuary: Betsy, Charlie, and Freeman. Now, using the Born Free USA Primate Sanctuary as the main setting, we are collaborating with filmmaker Jack Wootton to create a short film that features some of these individual stories and interview clips with a previous primate owner that so poignantly illustrate why the private primate trade must end.

Keep an eye out for the film's launch!

To read *Public Danger, Private Pain*, please visit bornfreeusa.org/petprimatesreport.

Exploring How Social Media Aids the Exotic Pet Trade

Social media is a part of everyday life and there is a lot to like about it. It enables us to communicate with one another across the globe and to come together to enjoy and share viral moments, funny memes, entertaining videos, and much more. But, this ease of sharing also has a dark side and social media has become a driving force behind the exotic pet trade.

There are countless accounts featuring images and videos of captive wild animals across the most popular social media platforms. When people watch videos or see pictures of wild animals in unnatural settings or performing unnatural activities – a baby monkey wearing a dress at a tea party, a tiger cub being held and cuddled by humans, baby otters swimming in a bathtub – it normalizes captivity. This content portrays exotic pet ownership as cute, funny, and harmless, while obscuring the suffering and danger inherent to keeping a wild animal as a pet. This, in turn, drives demand for wild animals as pets, as viewers wish to have their own pet monkey, tiger, or otter.

In addition to driving demand for exotic pets, social media platforms have also been directly involved in the sale of trafficked and captive-bred wildlife.

On social media, those looking to buy wild animals can easily find those looking to sell. While some social media companies have taken steps to crack down on online wild animal sales, it is still a major problem.

Born Free USA is working on a new campaign that aims to harness the power of social media to counter the typical captive wild animal content and spread the word that wild animals suffer immensely when kept as pets. Keep an eye out for the campaign launch later this year and, to take action immediately, be sure to never comment on, like, or share social media content featuring captive wildlife!

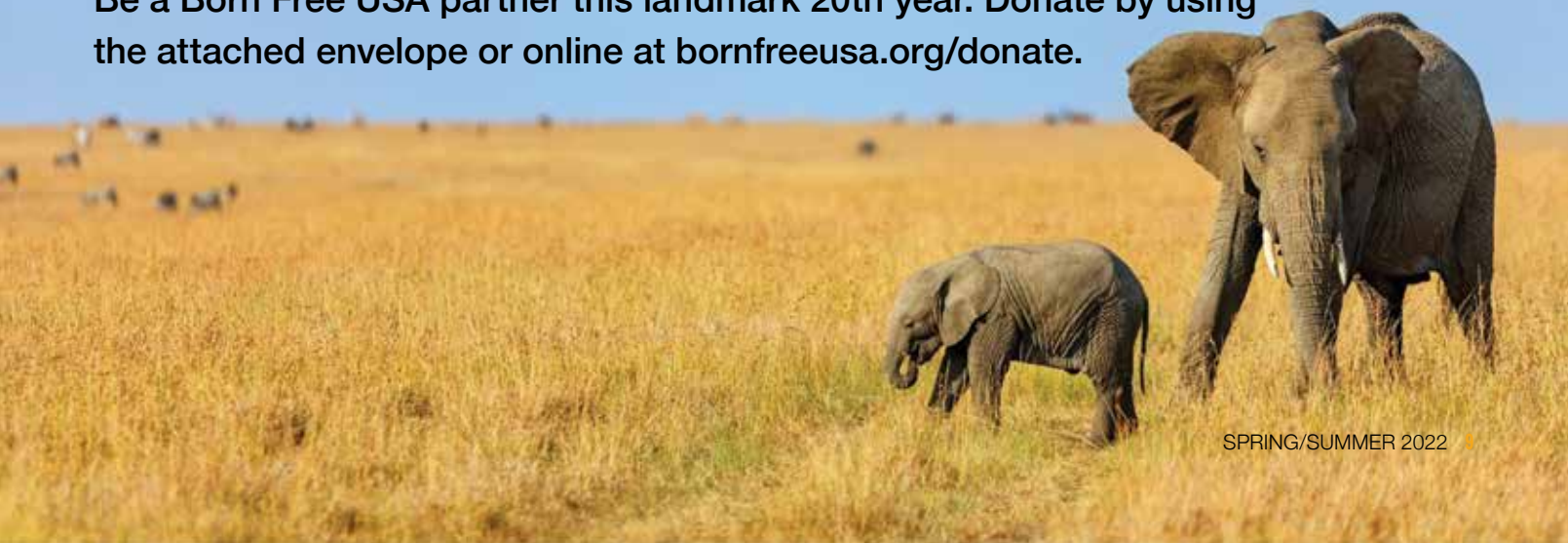


20 YEARS OF PROTECTING WILDLIFE... EMPOWERED BY YOUR SUPPORT

Your support wins victories for animals every single day.

Be their voice, save species, and safeguard the future of wildlife!

Be a Born Free USA partner this landmark 20th year. Donate by using the attached envelope or online at bornfreeusa.org/donate.



WEST AFRICAN VULTURES: UNDER THREAT FROM WILDLIFE CRIME

There is no denying it – vultures are never going to win a beauty contest by popular vote. However, if you have ever seen one in the wild, you know they are spectacular. Many species are highly social and playful – not at all the “ugly” harbingers of death they are commonly believed to be. Vultures are also an essential component of West Africa’s ecosystems. They keep the environment clean and prevent the spread of disease to other animals (both wild and domestic) and to humans. Vultures have special cultural value to many countries and they are highly distinctive.

West African vultures are under increasing threat from wildlife crime through poisoning, poaching, and illegal trade. IUCN has categorized three species of West African vultures as Critically Endangered and two as Endangered – this means they

are all facing a very high threat of extinction in the wild. The threat is real and escalating – as many as 8,722 Critically Endangered hooded vultures are estimated to be traded each year. This level of trade is highly unsustainable and will have enormous ramifications on the species as a whole, individual animals, and the ecosystem.

Born Free USA is working hard to ensure that West Africa’s vultures receive the highest levels of protection. At the 74th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (March 7-11, 2022), we promoted the adoption of measures that will enhance vulture conservation, prevent illegal trade, and implement demand-reduction strategies. We are happy to report that these measures were supported by the CITES Standing Committee and will now be debated,

and hopefully adopted, at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in Panama City later this year.

We are also working directly with countries in West Africa to protect vultures and many other species from the threat of wildlife crime. We are supporting countries in developing national wildlife crime strategies that will address the threat that wildlife crime poses. We are also assisting countries with the establishment of Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Forces – specialist units that will undertake intelligence-led investigations and operations to track down and prosecute the perpetrators of wildlife crime, including those trafficking in vultures.

**BORN FREE USA IS WORKING
HARD TO ENSURE THAT
WEST AFRICA'S VULTURES
RECEIVE THE HIGHEST
LEVELS OF PROTECTION.**



FIGHTING WILDLIFE CRIME:

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIUS TALLA



Marius Talla is a wildlife law enforcement expert based in Yaounde, Cameroon. He joined Born Free USA as a Policy and Capacity Building Consultant in October 2021. Here, he speaks with Alice Stroud, Born Free USA's Africa Policy and

Capacity Building Program Director, about his work to help West African nations develop strategies to combat wildlife crime.

Alice Stroud: Marius, tell us about your background and experience before coming to work at Born Free USA.

Marius Talla: I am an expert in wildlife law enforcement. I have a specialized background as a wildlife lawyer and am particularly experienced in issues relating to governance and strategy development. I have provided technical assistance to a number of African countries regarding management of their natural resources.

AS: What is your role within Born Free USA's Africa Programs team?

MT: My role is to support 15 West African countries in implementing the West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC). This strategy aims to ensure that all 15 countries are fully equipped to undertake wildlife law enforcement activities both nationally and regionally.

AS: You visited Benin and Côte d'Ivoire earlier this year. What was the purpose of these missions and were they successful?

MT: In Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, I facilitated needs assessment workshops to support the countries with their development of National Wildlife Crime Strategies (NWCS). These workshops also discussed the establishment of Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Forces (WLETFs) – specialized units that will help each country to implement their NWCS. The workshops were both highly successful!

AS: How would you describe the level of threat that wildlife crime poses to wildlife in the region?

MT: Wildlife crime in West Africa is causing wide-scale environmental damage – huge areas of forest are being illegally logged and many species, such as grey parrots, are on the brink of localized extinction. Only today, I heard about a massive seizure of 1,700 python skins in Niger, which gives us an alarming insight into the scale of the problem!

AS: Do you think the international community should do more to prevent illegal wildlife trade?

MT: Organizations such as Born Free USA and USAID are already doing a great deal to combat illegal wildlife trade in West Africa, but much more needs to be done if West Africa's environments are to be protected. Individuals can also do more, such as not buying wild animals as pets.

Keep an eye on Born Free USA's social media and website for more from Marius!

SHINING A LIGHT ON CRUEL TRAPPING!

It's hard to believe we're only just months away from the Congressional mid-term election this November. After that, just another few months before the current congressional session – the 117th Congress – adjourns and the 118th Congress is gaveled in. And yet, there is still so much to do for our wildlife!

One of Born Free USA's longest standing priorities has been the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act (H.R. 4716). This important bill, which bans both the possession and private use of all body-gripping traps within the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), was reintroduced by Congressman Jerry Nadler (D-NY) on July 27, 2021.

This bill is crucial in limiting the scope of trapping on federal lands. There are currently 568 refuges within the NWRS, and these refuges contain one of the most diverse collections of fish and wildlife habitats in the world. It provides a home for more than 380 endangered species. It also harbors species of more than 700 birds, 220 mammals, 250 reptiles and amphibians, and 1,000 fish.

These areas are also popular tourist destinations – attracting more than 61 million visitors every year. People bring their families, friends, and companion animals to enjoy these pristine places.

But more than that, the inherent purpose of these refuges is to be a sanctuary for our native wildlife. And yet, trapping is inexplicably allowed within the NWRS. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website, trapping currently occurs on 242 refuges across 46 states – that is nearly 43% of the entire refuge system!

The use of cruel body-gripping traps violates the mission of the NWRS and is a safety threat for wildlife, humans, and pets. As Born Free USA's recently published trapping investigation so starkly details, trapping is brutal and barbaric. Body-gripping traps – strangulation snares, Conibear kill traps, and the infamous steel-jaw leghold trap – are by their very nature indiscriminate. They cause untold amounts pain, trauma, and suffering for any animal that steps into them.

The passage and enactment of the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act would significantly curtail the scope of trapping in this country and would make these federally protected lands true refuges for animals and the millions of visitors who stop by every year. This is why we were thrilled when the House Natural Resource Committee included this important bill as part of a legislative hearing this past January. We are now working with Congressman Nadler and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on some technical edits to the bill, and hope it can earn a committee vote before the end of the year and this busy congressional session!

Stay up-to-date on the latest wildlife news and ways to take action for animals by joining Born Free USA's email list! Sign up today at bornfreeusa.org/newsletters.



CHALLENGING BRITISH COLUMBIA'S ONE-SIDED WAR AGAINST WOLVES

They call them “Judas wolves” – the wolves caught by the British Columbia government wildlife managers, fitted with radio-telemetry collars, and released. The wolves join their families, unknowingly broadcasting their location to gunmen in helicopters who then shoot them all from the sky. This abomination is one of the tactics used in a “conservation” strategy implemented by British Columbia in 2007 as the Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan (MCRIP). “Mountain” caribou are actually woodland caribou found in mountainous British Columbia, where they and other large herbivores (elk, moose, and mule deer) have co-existed with wolves, cougars, and bears for tens of thousands of years at numbers much higher than what we see today.

This kind of “management” plan comes as no surprise. As a direct result of human activity, especially since the beginning of the technological age less than two centuries ago, we have created a bizarre natural imbalance. Some 36% of the total mammal biomass (the weight of all mammals combined) is made up just humans. Another 60% is made up of domesticated and farmed animals – mostly cows and pigs – there for human use. The remaining 4% of the mammal biomass is comprised of the

approximately 6,400 remaining species of mammal – everyone from pygmy shrews and bumblebee bats to whales, elephants, and, yes, wolves. And yet, despite humankind’s overwhelming planetary takeover, we still feel the need to kill animals.

Several subspecies and numerous populations of both wolves and caribou have been exterminated or locally eliminated, or endangered across the continent. In British Columbia, clearcutting forests has devastated habitat essential to caribou and other wildlife and continues to hurt wildlife populations along with mining enterprise, pipelines, roads and traffic, rail lines, and many “back country” recreational activities. These practices have all been identified as causing the severe reduction in mountain caribou and directly relate to the fires and floods that have put the province on the international map. Yet, these activities continue while wolves are killed by the thousands.

Part of the program involves penning mother caribou with their calves to protect against predation, but that does nothing whatsoever to get at the well-known, scientifically documented root causes of declines in caribou, whose winter diet heavily depends on local lichens that flourish in old growth forests. Research confirms that the



greater the human activity, the less caribou thrive. It is really that simple.

And, thanks to British Columbia’s “management” plan, wolves will also not thrive. Wolves, unlike coyotes, are proven vulnerable to eradication because of their social nature and hierarchical pack structure. Conservationists worry that the plan is not really meant to “control” wolves, but rather to simply eliminate them.

Born Free USA’s Canadian office is actively involved in promoting opposition to the MCRIP, which is already strongly opposed by both the majority of British Columbia citizens and independent scientists and naturalists. At the time of publication, the British Columbia government continues to respond with form letters that refuse to acknowledge the true causes of caribou decline. Rather than curtail human activities proven to harm these animals, the province prefers to spend taxpayer money to scapegoat and brutally attack wolves.

DONOR DIARY:

VISITING BORN FREE IN MAGICAL MERU

I have been going to Africa for almost 30 years, but I had not been to Meru until last fall when I had the extraordinary opportunity to tour this beautiful region. During my stay, I had a very special visit to Born Free's lion, giraffe, and elephant projects.

Meru is an unprecedented array of majestic scenery, animals, colors, scents, and gracious people. In Meru, the Born Free teams support endangered African wildlife by monitoring the animals and working with the local communities to nurture tolerance and reduce human/wildlife conflict. I was offered the rare privilege of tagging along with the Born Free lion, elephant, and giraffe teams.

Each day, the Born Free teams identify and monitor the animals. They watch for injured wildlife and work with the community to sustain a peaceful coexistence. One of their most dangerous, but critical, responsibilities is to search for and remove snare traps that kill or maim animals indiscriminately.

The protection that Born Free provides is vital to wildlife in Meru. I was moved by the evident passion and dedication to the animals. The teams are devoted to the conviction that every life and every effort counts.

I stayed at Elewana Elsa's Kopje, cottages built above the site of George Adamson's original camp where he raised

lions. As I am sure you know, the film *Born Free* tells the true story of conservationists Joy and George Adamson, who rescued a lioness cub and returned her to the wild. The rooms at Elsa's Kopje are filled with memorabilia from the Adamsons and the making of the film *Born Free* that



starred the organization's founders, Virginia McKenna OBE and Bill Travers MBE. On the property, you can visit the gravesite of Elsa – the lioness from the film who is featured on the Born Free logo.

Elsa's Kopje rooms are built into the side of the hill, and each has its own unique style. My room, built around a live tree, had breathtaking views from every side. At night, we would hear the haunting animal sounds in the background. It was truly magical.

My time in Meru brought back so many memories from the *Born Free* movie. I came home and watched it yet again. I feel honored to have seen the Born Free teams in action, working each day to protect wildlife so future generations will be able to experience the magnificence of animals in the wild.

Judy Andersen Baker





Photo: J. Baker



Photo: J. Baker



Photo: J. Baker

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