
FOREWORD

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IN SEPTEMBER 2007 I travelled to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on the Canadian prairies, to meet with a group of Roots & Shoots youth—one of the hundreds of extraordinary and dedicated such groups around the world. Before my evening talk began, I met with Dr. Jerry Haigh of the University of Saskatchewan’s Western College of Veterinary Medicine. Over tea at the Bessborough Hotel, we discussed our common conservation interests—chimps and Africa’s bushmeat crisis in particular. Since then, Dr. Haigh has kept in touch with me, fascinating me with his stories about and interest in lion research in East Africa. One image is still vivid in my mind since it illustrates the conservation efforts the Maasai *morans* of Kenya.

The Trouble With Lions is about the complex relationships between people, livestock and wildlife. If you look on page 419 of this book you will see a photograph taken by researcher Leelah Hazzah, which even one year ago would not have been possible. This picture of a *moran* holding a radio transmitter, that allows him to track lions, illustrates the new direction of conservation efforts in East Africa. Dr. Haigh explains the reasons why the young Maasai warriors near Amboseli National Park have changed from being traditional ceremonial and revenge killers of lions to lion conservationists over a rather short period of time.

As Dr. Haigh has found from research done by Seamus MacLennan, between 2001 and the end of 2006 at least 116 lions were killed by people in Maasai lands, some within national park boundaries. Traditionally, a young warrior had to kill a lion to prove his manhood, but lions who killed or were suspected of killing cattle were also hunted. But then, in March 2007, a group of *moran* suddenly renounced the killing of lions, and instead vowed to be guardians of lions, conservationists, and community educators. How did this happen? Lion researcher Laurence Frank and his team made a powerful video explaining the issues. It was part of their outreach program, and its message reached the hearts of the Maasai community in the area. With these young men now working toward establishing and maintaining healthy lion populations in their traditional lands, the hope for a future that includes lions is burning brighter than it has in many years. The *morans'* commitment to conserve rather than kill the greatest of the predators, symbol of strength and courage, is extraordinary. It will demonstrate that protection requires as much or more courage than killing, these young men can legitimately feel proud. And they will have a job that will be respected. They will be a new kind of role model for the youth of their community, and it will effect others around the world.

The Trouble With Lions is not only about the plight of lions: Dr. Haigh regales us with stories about a variety of wild animals affected by humans and their livestock. He tells of the rhinos, threatened by encroaching human development, that he helped to translocate to parks or ranches in the 1970s. He describes the sanctuaries where dedicated African staff care for chimpanzees, orphaned mainly by the bushmeat trade, at Sweetwaters in Kenya and Ngamba Island in Uganda. Many of these youngsters have been so traumatized that they will be scarred for life. As Dr. Haigh points out, Af-

rica is now a sea of human development and agriculture with mere islands set aside for wildlife—and even these fragmented remnants of wilderness are seldom completely safe because of the threat of illegal activities—poaching, plundering for firewood and so on—by surrounding people, often living in extreme poverty. And there is increasing danger from transmission of diseases from domestic animals. The human–livestock–wildlife balance in Africa is indeed a delicate one.

When I speak to Roots & Shoots youth around the globe, I always emphasize the power of the individual to make a difference in the world. Truly our planet is under siege, the problems and dangers can seem utterly overwhelming—but it is not too late to effect change. There is the amazing human brain, the resilience of nature, the indomitable human spirit. If only each one of us would learn more about the consequences of the choices we make each day—how they effect the environment and human and animal welfare—more and more people would start to make wiser and more compassionate decisions. Collectively this would lead to big changes.

We humans, unfortunately, are capable of inflicting great harm, either through ignorance or greed or apathy. But we are also capable of love, compassion and altruism. Young people who develop the right values, learn that this life is about more than just making money, and that by acting together, holding hands, we can make this a better world for all. Roots make a firm foundation, shoots seem small; together they can break apart the brick walls of environmental and social problems that confront us. Together we can and must find ways to live in greater harmony with each other and with the natural world.

Dr. Haigh has written a book that tells the interconnected stories of people, agriculture, and wildlife conservation, about species as diverse as rhinos, chimpanzees, domestic cattle, and Ugandan kob. In writing *The Trouble With Lions*, as in choosing a career as a veterinarian and teacher, Dr. Haigh made a decision to make a difference. His book will make you want to do the same. ✱

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