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A Message from Cynthia Moss

Cynthia Moss

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Last minute addition:

A MESSAGE FROM CYNTHIA MOSS

Cynthia Moss has just started a tour in the USA to promote her book ["Elephant memories", see Reference No. 2340 (page 132), and a review by John F. Eisenberg (pages 70-72) in this issue] from March to June 1988. Through a telephone conversation, Cynthia conveyed to the editor how dire the elephant situation is in East Africa, especially in Kenya. [Iain Douglas-Hamilton has also written us about the plight of elephants in Africa; see pages 85 and 103 in this issue.] Following is a summary of Moss' message:

Elephant numbers are being halved (reduced by 1/2) every 8 to 10 years. For example, in 1973 elephants in Kenya were estimated to be 165,000; today this number is down to 20,000. In 1969 Tsavo's population was estimated to be 42,000; today this number is down to 5,700. This drastic decline is due mostly to poachers who supply the ivory market. About 80% of the ivory sold is illegal. Poachers are armed with automatic weapons (e.g., AK47), while the Wildlife Department is facing them with antiquated guns. The public is getting mixed messages as to what exactly has happened in Africa. In South Africa, for example, elephants are being culled on a regular basis [controlled killing by the authorities to reduce the number of elephants in a particular park (e.g., Kruger National Park), otherwise they would destroy their habitat]; while in East Africa they are being killed by poachers - also on a regular basis - and it is feared they will become "extinct." The African Wildlife Foundation (in Washington, D.C.) is launching an Elephant Awareness Campaign, beginning April 19, 1988. Extreme and effective measures must be taken to curtail the massacre of elephants; and one sure way to do it is to reduce the demand for ivory.

Another avenue in which one can help is to donate money to face the alarming poaching problems. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C., 20036 USA, and to "AFRICAN ELE-FUND" c/o East African Wildlife Society, P.O. Box 20110, Nairobi, Kenya. [See also other pertinent items in ELEPHANT NOTES AND NEWS, e.g., pages 80-81, in this issue.]